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The Preparation Of Educators To Implement An SEL Curriculum

Helen Elayan

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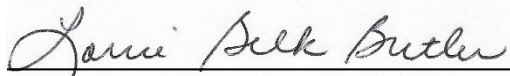
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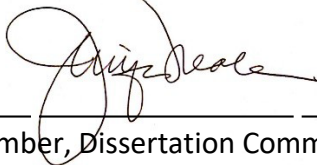
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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

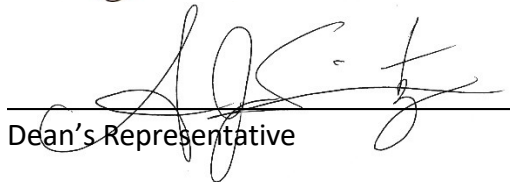
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Date Approved

The Preparation of Educators to Implement an SEL Curriculum

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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of the requirements of

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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Abstract

Professional development and training for adults in a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum are essential to the successful implementation of SEL for students. The purpose of my study was to determine the perceptions of teachers' professional development for implementation of a social emotional learning curriculum. The context of this study was a small independent school as well as schools throughout the US. The findings of my study indicated that educators in both contexts wanted training prior to student implementation, preferred training with peers, and wanted to only implement one schoolwide initiative per year. I recommended that leaders at all schools provide an SEL curriculum with educators receiving a year of training prior to the implementation.

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Preface

I am passionate about social emotional learning (SEL). I believe SEL and building emotional intelligence (EQ) makes all of us better human beings. The ability to recognize our own emotions and to recognize those of others is foundational to all learning. Further, to then understand what one needs or what the other person may need to regulate and express those emotions is key to lifelong learning and success. If a person enters a classroom or workplace and is not emotionally ready to learn or to work, they contribute at a level below their full potential.

I chose to study social emotional learning through the context of adult learning. I believe that students and children will model the adults most present in their lives. It is for this reason that social emotional learning and the building of emotional intelligence begins with adults. The preparation of adults to implement an SEL program should be a well thought out process led by experts in the SEL field. The process of training adults should have dedicated time and support without the added responsibility of student implementation. I believe adults must first understand and learn the impact of their own emotions before they successfully model it for students.

My personal and professional connection to this topic is largely due to being a school counselor and licensed clinical professional counselor. I have spent a large amount of my adult life in the counseling field, and I am a firm believer in the power of emotional intelligence. In therapeutic settings, I worked hard at helping my clients understand the connections between their emotions and the choices they made. In my current school counseling setting, I support students to understand how their emotions

and how they feel about themselves impact their relationships, academics, and life choices.

The lessons I have learned during the writing process of this study have largely to do with power or patience and perseverance. I felt the need to rush the process and jump ahead at many points during the writing process. I often found myself getting too far ahead with ideas and thoughts, most likely due to my passion for this subject area. Having passion in a subject matter is also crucial to the writing process. The more invested a person is, as well as one's belief in the matter, the better one's writing process becomes. I learned the importance of guidance and listening to advice and being okay with not knowing. I learned that being ignorant about a process and acknowledging you need support is a strength.

The leadership lessons I have gained have come from reading and observations. They have come from process and mentorship. I have learned the value of being authentic in everything you do and the power of transparency. I have found that in leadership, showing your own passion and dedication to something can be contagious. I have learned that being transparent about goals, a process, and the results of those goals and processes are the makings of good leadership. I have grown as a leader through this educational leadership program and through the process of this dissertation. I have always had a growth mindset and feel that I have become even more of a leader who wants to seek out opportunities to learn and improve my skills continuously. I have grown in my confidence as a leader and to trust in my own intuition and decision-making abilities. I have grown in my ability to set goals and hold myself accountable for

achieving them. I have learned the importance of having a team of others you can collaborate with and who also share similar goals.

My hopes for the future of student learning are to prepare students to be successful in their lives and in their careers. My hope is that as educators we help prepare students to understand what it means to be human and the connection between themselves and others in their lives. I hope that students are taught and modeled the skills they need to become emotionally and intellectually intelligent individuals who positively contribute to their communities and to the world. I also hope that students are given the space to be creative individuals and express themselves in multifaceted ways.

My hope for the influence upon education and society is that it empowers individuals to live and learn to their full potential and that all education is equitable for all who seek it. I hope that we as a society understand the power of our emotional wellbeing and how it impacts everything we do. In that regard, to understand how all things are interconnected. Life success connects to education, to experience, to emotional wellbeing, and to equal opportunity. I hope that education values the importance of global citizenship and that we become increasingly aware of what our responsibilities are to the world community and how we can contribute to the betterment of society.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge a number of people for all the support and encouragement I received throughout the dissertation journey. First and foremost, I would like to thank my husband who never stopped encouraging me and believing in me, even in moments when I did not believe in myself. I want to thank my daughters for their patience, humor, and positivity. They had to endure three years of a mom who sometimes could not participate in all their weekend activities and yet, they remained upbeat and understanding throughout.

I want to acknowledge my dissertation chair, Dr. Lorrie Butler. I cannot thank her enough for the time, support, and dedication she provided throughout this process. I appreciate her for challenging me and believing in my abilities to accomplish this feat. I thank her for her positivity, kindness, and motivation. I would also like to thank my head of school for planting this seed in the first place and pushing me to believe in my abilities and to trust my instincts, always.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my husband and my children who supported me throughout the process even if it meant we spent less time together some weeks.

I also dedicate this work to Seth Hanford, my mentor. For always challenging me and believing in things I could not always see for myself.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The ability to view a child holistically, to see the academic needs as well as social emotional needs, does not come easily for all in the field of education. Teaching to the whole child means understanding the connections between emotional wellbeing and academic rigor. Educators need effective and comprehensive training to help them navigate the realm outside of traditional education to understand the vital role social-emotional learning plays in the overall successful development of students (Brackett et al., 2019). Educators may struggle with accessing their own social emotional wellbeing and thus have difficulty teaching it or modeling it to their students. It is for this reason leaders must dedicate time and resources to adult social emotional learning (SEL) training and professional development.

A student's social emotional intelligence is a key piece in the larger puzzle of not only their academic success but also their ability to grow into healthy, emotionally regulated, adults (Oberle et al., 2016). A child's ability to connect to their developmentally aligned peers and to successfully build relationships throughout their lifespan is largely dependent on their ability to understand their own emotions and the emotions of others. When children and the adults who care for and teach them are socially and physically well and self-regulated, they think better (Immordino-Yang et al., 2019, p. 196). The science behind this growing body of research on the brain indicates a need to educate the whole child and includes engaging the families and communities in the process. Educating the whole child means factoring in external impacts outside the school environment (family life, upbringing, community), social emotional learning, and equitable academic practices.

A key component of social emotional learning (SEL) is the environment the child is exposed to throughout their developmental years. Oftentimes, their greatest role models are not just their caregivers but their teachers and those who work at their school. A study by Walton and Hibbard (2019) found that "adults' perceptions of their own emotions, ability to manage their own emotions, ability to manage others' emotions, and ability to utilize emotions were positively correlated with knowledge of children's emotional expression" (p. 202). This study found that the higher an adult's emotional intelligence, whether or not they have had an educator or childcare experience, the more they generally knew about children's emotional development.

According to Pena Teeters et al. (2021), social emotional health and wellbeing are related to the culture that the adults in the building cultivate. Students will ultimately benefit from educators who are happier and feel more emotionally regulated. Children spend the majority of their youth at school. The modeling of not just good study habits but also the ability to self-regulate and to connect to others emotionally and socially is demonstrated by their teachers and classmates. It is for this reason that teachers, school leaders, and staff should be properly trained in SEL and with preparation should be done thoughtfully, allowing the educators to tap into their own social emotional wellbeing thus making the process intrinsic and the modeling natural (Pena Teeters et al., 2021).

I conducted my study with two groups of educators. One group included educators in a specific school who had not, prior to the study, received SEL training, but would be participating in a SEL professional development initiative. The school under study was a small, urban, independent school (non-profit school without ties to any public, parochial, or commercial entity) in a midwestern state in the United States. There

were three divisions within the school (Lower School PreK-4, Middle School 5-8, and Upper School 9-12). There were 220 students and 34 faculty and teachers combined throughout all three divisions. This independent school was one of the oldest schools in the nation and had a rich history in rigorous education and the educators prided themselves on fostering self-confidence, responsibility, and independent thinking. Educators at the school under study prided themselves on personalized learning and inspiring their students to be creative and compassionate human beings. The school was a small community that has long-standing ties to the larger surrounding community where it resides. The school did not have an SEL program or curriculum in place.

Educators in the second group of this study were those who had received SEL training and were not affiliated with the independent school. I wanted to include the perceptions of educators who had received staff development for SEL and implemented the curriculum with students. Their experience provided me with an understanding of how the SEL training impacted them and how their implementation impacted their students.

Purpose of the Program Evaluation

The purpose of my study was to investigate the preparation of educators to implement a social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum. I chose to evaluate faculty perceptions for this study because social emotional learning begins with adults modeling in the classroom. I know that students, and children, benefit more from seeing, hearing, watching, and learning from the important adults in their lives. Educators are prominent figures in children's lives and need to understand and model the behaviors they wish to see in their classrooms.

I consider it essential for student success to have educators who teach them well-versed in their own social emotional wellbeing and able to model the healthy emotional habits for their students. I evaluated the perceptions of teachers as they progressed through yearlong staff development opportunities to implement an SEL curriculum that teachers would fold into the academic curriculum. The authors of the SEL curriculum approach designed it in phases that began with Adult SEL training for a full school year before student implementation. I also surveyed and interviewed educators in the U.S. who had previously been trained and subsequently implemented SEL to gain their perspectives on the training they received.

I used a mixed method design using qualitative and quantitative data from surveys and interviews in this study. The quantitative data consisted of data from Likert scale items on educator surveys. The open-ended survey questions and the interview responses generated qualitative data.

Rationale

My reasons for selecting this topic to evaluate were largely due to my passion for supporting students emotionally and academically. In my experience, I have found that young minds learn most from what they see and hear from the prominent individuals in their lives, so it is important to ensure that leaders provide these important adults with the proper amount of training and support they need to provide an all-encompassing education to students. I also chose this topic because the school under study had not had any previous SEL programs/curriculums in place and was relatively new to the understanding of SEL.

This study was important to schools and to the community. It explored the efficacy of sufficient and comprehensive professional development and training for all educators prior to implementation of a new program or curriculum as opposed to simultaneous training while implementing the program. Researchers found that effective and consistent SEL done in classrooms is linked to greater academic achievement and to better work-life success later in life (Greenberg, 2023).

Goals

The primary goals of my program evaluation were 1) to develop a policy with recommendations for best practices when preparing educators to implement SEL, and 2) to implement recommendations for preparation for educators in the school under study. An additional outcome intention was to provide school leaders with an understanding of the importance of professional development when it comes to the implementation of a new SEL curriculum. Adults who are responsible for the educational and social emotional wellbeing of students should be properly prepared. My goals are related to improved student learning. Teachers who are adequately trained in social emotional learning and understand the links between emotional wellbeing and successful academics are better teachers. Student learning and academic achievement will increase as a result.

Research Questions

I developed two research questions to guide my evaluation. The first question was: How can leaders best support educators in preparation to implement a new SEL curriculum? The second question was: What specific types of professional development opportunities promote educators' understanding of SEL? The qualitative and quantitative data I collected allowed me to answer those questions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided an introduction to my program evaluation. My study aimed to examine the preparation of educators as they train to implement an SEL curriculum. In the next chapter, I discuss published research on SEL, its importance and the importance of professional development for successful student implementation to happen.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I reviewed literature on the importance of social emotional learning (SEL) as it relates to students in education. I explored information concerning SEL implementation and how it can vary from one school environment to another in regard to when, how, and who implements the SEL curriculum. I examined various types of SEL curriculums as well as the professional development for SEL implementation provided for educators. The main bodies of literature I examined evaluated SEL and how it is related to student academic and life achievements as well as the need for educator professional development.

I conducted the literature review using the Academic Search Complete database hosted by Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO). I reviewed scholarly articles on the topic of social emotional learning written from approximately 2018 to 2022. The research reviewed focused on the importance of SEL. I also looked for articles that addressed the impact of SEL and the preparation of educators to implement an SEL program or curriculum. I reviewed literature on how effective professional development can ensure the sustainability of an SEL curriculum. I also reviewed articles written by researchers on the topic of effective leadership.

The Importance of SEL in the Educational Environment

Many schools and districts incorporate SEL into their curriculums to improve students' ability to manage their social and emotional interactions and help students be more mentally present to absorb academic material (Rowe & Trickett, 2018; Schonert-Reichl, 2019). Arby et al. (2016) stated that "school based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs help foster youth adjustment through the promotion of protective

cognitions, behaviors, and affective characteristics” (p. 193). According to research by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), “students exposed to SEL programs have healthier attitudes and behavior, improved social and emotional skills, and better academic performance as compared to peers” (Zuckerbrod, 2018, p. 40). A student's ability to successfully master academic material on a given school day mainly depends on their emotional state.

Addressing students' social- emotional wellbeing in a given day can "increase their engagement in school, along with their test scores and grades, and reduce conduct problems while promoting desirable behaviors. In the long term, children with greater social emotional competence are more likely to be ready for college, succeed in their careers, have positive relationships and better mental health, and become engaged citizens" (Greenberg et al., 2017, p. 13). These benefits make a case for SEL programs and the necessity of ensuring educators correctly implement and sustain them over time. In Greenberg et al.'s (2017) study, the researchers argued that schools are ideal sites for interventions with children and that school-based SEL programs can improve students' competence, enhance their academic achievement, and make them less likely to experience future behavioral and emotional problems. The authors cited many others who have completed research on the positive effects of universal and targeted approaches to school-based SEL.

Immordino-Yang et al. (2019) described the neurobiology of SEL and the instructional implications for educators. The researchers provided insights on adverse experiences such as bullying, harassment, and threats and how these negative experiences can release hormones in response that can increase the likelihood of health and mental

health problems. These adverse experiences can affect students' ability to regulate emotions and remain focused in class. Immordino-Yang et al. suggested supportive learning environments with attention to SEL to help students deal with those adverse experiences.

CASEL (2023) identified supportive learning environments as equitable for students across all classrooms and supported by caring, engaging teachers who establish authentic, trusting relationships with their students. Immordino-Yang et al. (2019) stated that supportive learning environments would include SEL programs that involve project and problem-based learning with classmates, learning skills for emotion recognition in oneself and others, emotional expression, and emotion regulation strategies, as well as developing communication skills in multiple modalities.

Immordino-Yang et al. (2019) capitalized on the growing body of research that is “revealing that brain development and the learning it enables are directly dependent on social emotional experience” (p.185). This social emotional experience would ideally begin in the home environment where children’s emotional and social wellbeing is nurtured and sets a solid foundation for continued growth. Ideally, SEL in a school would then add to or provide continuity of social- emotional development. Immordino-Yang et al. stated that “when given adequate opportunity, support, and encouragement, children naturally think, feel emotions, and engage with their social and physical worlds. These patterns of thoughts, feelings, and engagement organize brain development over time and, in age-specific ways, influence growth, intelligence, and health into the future.” (p. 186). The authors added that much as a garden grows differently in different climates, has different plants, and requires different gardening styles, so does a person’s brain. The

idea is that a person's brain develops depending on many factors, including environment and experiences. Other factors include the predispositions with which they are born. The authors found that social emotional interactions are epigenetic forces that make brain development possible and contribute to individual variability. In other words, to grow into fully functioning humans, people must have adequate opportunities to interact with others meaningfully and to learn.

When children, and the adults who care for and teach them, are socially and physically well and self-regulated, they think better (Immordino-Yang et al., 2019, p. 196). The science behind this growing body of research on the brain indicates a need to educate the whole child and includes engaging the families and communities in the process. Educating the whole child means factoring in external impacts outside the school environment (family life, upbringing, community), social emotional learning, and equitable academic practices.

Jones et al. (2019) examined social emotional learning and how it relates to human development. Jones et al. (2019) summarized significant areas of research that indicated that social, emotional, and cognitive development are intertwined in the brain and behavior and influence school and life outcomes. These authors also suggested that "social, emotional, and cognitive skills and competencies grow in supportive relationships and are influenced by experience and context" (p. 129). The authors discussed the growing body of SEL programs that have been created and heavily researched to effectively cultivate and support these competencies in human development. The SEL programs' writers incorporated brain science research that

indicated the need for preventive and supportive programs for all children that educators can implement in formal and informal learning environments at all ages.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to not only manage one's own emotions but also express them with self-control. It is also the ability to recognize one's own emotions and that of others. The formation of emotional intelligence in human beings is mainly dependent on not just their genes but also their environment. In an article on the neuropsychological support of children, Chystovska et al. (2022) reported on the neuropsychological means of developing emotional intelligence in children. The authors used a growing body of research to explain that "mental development depends on the emotional wellbeing of the environment and emotional competence, which is formed based on the ability to empathize and is determined by the peculiarities of mental development" (p. 153). The researchers stated that "the dynamics of the child's ontogenetic development, the peculiarities of their mental activity and the formation of emotional intelligence are directly related to socialization." (p. 153).

Chystovska et al. (2022) further concluded that "the effectiveness of developing the emotional intelligence of younger students depends on the creation of psychological conditions in secondary schools methodological support and awareness of specialists of the need for this professional activity" (p. 157). The authors argued that "the subject of special attention of psychologists, teachers, and educators should be such concepts as emotional talent, emotional balance, emotional style, emotional freedom, emotional maturity. They should know and consider that emotionally significant situations for the child encourage self-expression" (p. 157). The authors further provided an argument for the need for social emotional learning in schools. They indicated that school personnel

(psychologists, educators, administrators) should pay special attention to certain concepts such as “emotional talent, emotional balance, emotional style” (p. 157) to build social-emotional learning for students. Their statement further proves that all members of a school community should be involved in SEL training and student SEL implementation. Chystovska et al.’s article also provided insight into how raising the emotional intelligence level of the whole school community benefits all stakeholders.

Brackett et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis focused on SEL interventions that demonstrated that “a systemic process for promoting students’ social and emotional development is the common element among schools that report an increase in academic success, enriched relationship between teachers and students and a decrease in unwanted behavior” (p.156).The expectation of students to successfully learn to value emotions and develop their social emotional skills is largely dependent on how and who is teaching or implementing these SEL lessons. Brackett et al. stated, “research shows that learning in an emotionally safe and supportive environment is optimal for development and future success” (pp. 144-145).

Brackett et al. (2019) said that “systemic SEL implementation requires strong leaders as the agents of change” (p. 156). The authors argued that relying solely on school support staff such as social workers and counselors is not enough to produce successful results in an SEL implementation. According to Brackett et al., SEL implementation is only effective when every adult is involved. To create an SEL-infused school, all school personnel must tap into their own social emotional wellbeing to successfully implement the program for students and families.

Researchers have found that school administrator support and adult SEL skill development not only improve teacher stress and wellbeing but also enhances classroom practices (Jennings et al., 2017; Shewark et al., 2018). In their study, Jennings et al. found that school-wide social and emotional competencies are largely dependent on the emotional wellbeing of educators. Jennings et al. (2017) looked at the impact of a program titled Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE for Teachers). The CARE program was a research mindfulness-based professional development program developed to promote teachers' social and emotional competence and improve the quality of classroom interactions. The researchers investigated the efficacy of the program using a cluster-randomized trial design involving 36 urban elementary schools and 224 teachers. The researchers observed classrooms for student to teacher interactions that involved responses to behavioral issues and learning challenges. The researchers found that "CARE for Teachers had statistically significant direct positive effects on adaptive emotion regulation, mindfulness, psychological distress, and time urgency" (p. 1010). They found the program also had a significant positive effect on the emotional support of the classroom. Teachers were able to respond quickly to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of the students in their classrooms. Programs like CARE for Teachers are an example of the significant need for the time and attention leaders should dedicate to adult SEL and how those developed competencies directly affect successful classrooms and students.

SEL Curriculum

Abry et al. (2017) examined the contribution of specific SEL components to the quality of teacher-student classroom interactions. They found that "teachers' greater use

of Morning Meeting was associated with higher levels of emotional support, and Academic Choice was associated with higher levels of emotional and instructional support" (p. 199). The "Morning Meeting" is a part of some, if not most, SEL curriculums and is a form of a check-in and reflection time at the start of the student's day. The "Morning Meeting" is meant to be a time for teacher-student emotional and social connections. There is value here in saying that careful examination of programs' active ingredients can help to inform the optimization of teacher professional development.

Wallender et al. (n.d.) conducted a study on the effects of an explicit curriculum on social emotional competencies in elementary and middle school students. This study focused on the SecondStep curriculum. SecondStep is a research based, CASEL accredited SEL curriculum that is available for preschool through 8th grade students. SecondStep is designed for all stakeholders in the community to implement and provides ongoing professional development resources and support for educators as well as parents. The researchers looked at the effects of SecondStep on the areas of self-regulation, self-awareness, and problem-solving, particularly on elementary and middle school students. In order to measure the competencies, the researchers administered self-assessments to all students. The students in this study received direct instruction from the school counselor on SEL topics from the SecondStep curriculum.

The findings of the study were that "elementary students showed a significant difference in self-perception in the areas of self-regulation and problem-solving skills." (Wallender et al., n.d., p. 38). The authors also noted that many of the students under study had received the curriculum the year before as well and had some established SEL

skills. The authors discussed using “kernels” of social emotional learning (p.40). These “kernels” may be more cost effective than purchasing a formalized program. “Kernels” are defined as evidence based, low cost strategies that impact behaviors, discipline, self-control, and emotional management (Bailey et al., 2019). Wallender et al. (n.d.) concluded that day-to-day, purposeful integration of SEL is key for students to understand their own emotions and that of others as well as how SEL can impact their academics and social life.

Marc A. Brackett from the Yale Center of Emotional Intelligence developed a curriculum called RULER (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, Regulating) that he calls a “theory-driven, systemic approach to social, emotional, and academic learning” (Brackett et al., 2019, p. 144). Educators implement this SEL approach not just school-wide or district-wide but community-wide. RULER’s strategy is a phased approach that begins with school-wide Adult SEL first and foremost. “In sum, RULER is as much about adult SEL as it is student SEL. as much about the individuals, as it is about the setting, and as much about the short term as it is about the long term.” (p. 146). The researchers evaluated teacher-level impact in two different studies. In the first study, researchers gave teachers surveys before and after a 30 hour RULER training. In the second study, the researchers surveyed teachers before and after a 24 hour RULER training of three months. In regard to the impact of RULER on teachers, Brackett et al. found that teachers reported “higher ratings of work engagement, specifically with regards to vigor and absorption. Furthermore, they reported higher ratings of positive teacher-student interactions, with significantly higher scores on personalized interactions, responses to emotions, and caring beyond the classroom.” (p. 155). The authors

discovered that teachers also reported significantly lower levels of burnout and felt a better sense of personal accomplishment.

Bracket et al. evaluated student-level impact in two different studies. In a quasi-experimental study of 273 fifth- sixth grade students across 15 classrooms in three elementary schools where some classrooms implemented RULER with other classrooms not receiving RULER as a comparison group. The researchers found that “children in RULER classrooms demonstrated greater end of year performance on two emotion-related tasks; making fewer errors in emotion recognition and increased ability to label emotions.” (p. 156). As part of a pilot study, one suburban high school with an implementation team composed of six teacher leaders and two administrators adapted four of the high school lessons in the curriculum to fit into a 20-minute advisory period. In this study, half of the students received RULER advisory lessons, and the other half did not. They found that “Although grade point averages increased for both groups, those students who received the RULER lessons showed a 10% improvement in grades than those who did not receive RULER instruction” (p. 156). The researchers found that overall, all their initial pilot studies on the impact of RULER have proven to show some level of positive impact on students.

Professional Development for SEL Implementation

Researchers have found that educators often feel that they do not know enough about SEL to implement it successfully and have expressed the need for professional development (Kaye et al., 2020). Teachers reported limited SEL knowledge and skills as well as limited awareness of evidence-based interventions and resources to support

children's behavioral health. This lack of knowledge and experience presents as barriers for teachers who may feel that they are not confident enough to deliver SEL lessons.

Teachers are in need of proper support and training in order to successfully implement SEL with students (Jagers et al., 2019; Shultz, 2022; Walker & Martin, 2020). Along those same lines, it is also important for leaders in a school community to be aware of competencies among school staff in regard to social emotional learning. Nielsen et al. (2019) discussed that successful implementation is about more than the activities in the specific program. It is rather about elements in synergy and professional learning over time. Based on previous research, researchers know that supporting teachers in developing professional competencies in using SEL approaches, and support for the implementation, can be critical. "Some designs of activities for school staff are more likely to support successful implementation than others; a whole school approach, working locally with both school staff like teachers and school leaders as well as students is emphasized" (p. 411). The researchers found that for implementation to be successful, it would need to be more than just the program but all the elements in synergy. A part of this synergy is accomplished in professional learning over time which can ensure the fidelity of an SEL program implementation.

Professional development, when done well, is able to provide knowledge and support for educators. In a study by Kaye et al. (2020) program consultants facilitated a collaborative professional development. The researchers believed that support for educators occurred through individuals actively interacting and sharing experiences. Kaye et al. (2020) found that "effective SEL requires a comprehensive framework that is rooted in prevention and integrates academic and social, emotional, and

behavioral health in all spheres of school policies, programs, and practices" (p. 79). Further, the researchers found that "meeting the social and emotional needs of students requires building a comprehensive SEL infrastructure that often starts with increasing teachers' awareness, knowledge, and skills in SEL" (p. 79). The researchers' implication for leaders is the need to focus on building the capacity of school-based staff through continuous ongoing training and consultation. The focused work on building up the educators' knowledge of SEL can lead to effective systemic change.

In further research that explored the benefits of professional development for educators when implementing SEL, educators reported that training provided by a knowledgeable leader, such as a social worker, made all the difference in their ability to successfully implement the SEL program on students (Anyon et. al, 2016; Haymovitz et al., 2017). In order to successfully promote SEL, school administrators need to invest in a full-time leader, like the school social worker, who will coordinate social emotional programs, activities, and training of staff, parents, and community members. Elias (2019) discussed the recommendation of providing professional development that is problem and context-driven, job-embedded, and collaborative with colleagues uses effective modeling, involves ongoing implementation support, and features consistent use of mutual feedback and reflection.

Lars Dietrich (2021) argued that teachers would be better prepared to meet the growing expectations of student social emotional development in their work if they received support in two ways. First, they would need reliable feedback on those aspects of their daily interactions and routines with students that most strongly impact students' social emotional development. Second, teachers would need professional development

training that considers and builds on this feedback. Dietrich believed that “teachers’ professional development should be informed by psychodynamic theories and based on group analytic pedagogical methods, which can help teachers’ ability to create a holding classroom climate and to improve their own mentalization skills” (p. 323). The researcher described the need for teachers to be equipped with new competencies so that they can better understand the underlying causes of students’ misbehavior and be able to respond effectively to difficult classroom group dynamics. The researcher went on to argue that these adaptations or additions could positively impact students’ social emotional development and students’ relational experiences in schools, which, in turn, could positively impact the reduction of school violence.

In Oliveira et al.’s (2021) study, *A Meta-analysis of the Impact of Social and Emotional Learning Interventions on Teachers’ Burnout Symptoms*, the researchers sought to understand the significance of teacher burnout and the premeditating factors. They conducted their study on 994 in-service pre-kindergarten to 12th-grade teachers. The participants were mostly female. One of the research questions the researchers asked was, “Are SEL interventions for teachers effective in reducing teachers’ overall burnout and its symptoms?” (p. 1799). The results indicated that SEL interventions targeting adult social emotional learning had a positive and significant effect on personal accomplishment and a medium negative and significant effect on emotional exhaustion. Oliveira et al. concluded that SEL addressed intrapersonal factors that promote teachers’ sense of personal accomplishment, a dimension of burnout mainly related to the appraisal of personal resources. SEL also addressed one’s perceived ability to respond to job demands and decrease the presence of feelings of emotional distress by promoting

emotional resources (p. 1799). The same study later found more significance in teacher-focused SEL as it relates to personal growth rather than how it helps students. Their conclusion was that educators feel less burnout when administrators are addressing their wellbeing.

In another study, Walton and Hibbard (2019) sought to investigate the relationships between adults' emotional intelligence and knowledge of children's social emotional competence (SEC). The researchers also hoped to learn more about the relationships between childcare workers' education, time spent working in childcare, and their knowledge of children's social emotional competence. The researchers' primary focus was to understand how the level of adult emotional intelligence impacted their abilities to respond to the social emotional needs of children. The findings of the study revealed "a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge of children's emotional development among both those with experience in a childcare setting and those never employed in the childcare field" (p. 202). The researchers went on to find that "adults' perceptions of their own emotions, ability to manage their own emotions, ability to manage others' emotions, and ability to utilize emotions were positively correlated with knowledge of children's emotional expression" (p. 202). This study found that the higher an adult's emotional intelligence, whether or not they have had an educator or childcare experience, the more they generally knew about children's emotional development.

Conclusion

The various researchers mentioned in this chapter provided results that indicate the need for SEL in all schools and the emphasis on how SEL positively impacts the

whole child, mind and body. The studies indicate the growing need for not only student SEL but also the importance of adult SEL and how that directly impacts how teachers interact with their students. Professional development is an essential piece of the SEL implementation process.

Chapter Three: Methodology

In this chapter, I explained the research design for my study. I identified my participant groups as well as how I gathered and analyzed my data. I discussed the ethical considerations of my study and the limitations of my study.

Research Design Overview

In my study, I used a formative evaluation (Patton, 2008, p. 140) with a critical issues focus (Patton, 2008, p. 301). According to Patton, evaluators conduct a formative evaluation to determine how a program can be improved, while the critical issues focus looks at how the program can be improved based on data from the intended users of the program. In my study, I wanted to determine how SEL training and implementation could be improved. I based my recommendations on the viewpoint of educators as they trained before implementation and those who had completed training and were implementing an SEL program.

I used a mixed-method research design using qualitative and quantitative data collected through surveys and interviews. I surveyed educators at one school in the United States who were receiving year-long training before implementing an SEL curriculum. I surveyed and interviewed educators not affiliated with the school who had received staff development for SEL and implemented the program. I chose this method because I felt it would provide the best data for me to answer my research questions:

1. How can leaders best support educators in preparation to implement a new SEL curriculum?
2. What specific types of professional development opportunities promote educators' understanding of SEL?

Participants

There were two stakeholder groups in this evaluation. The first group included educators of PreK-12th grade students at a small, independent school in the midwestern part of the United States who were receiving staff development in preparation for implementing an SEL curriculum. I asked all 45 educators at the school under study to participate in my study by completing two 13-question surveys (Beginning and Mid-Year) and one 14-question survey (End of Year). Out of the 45 potential participants, 20 consented to complete all three surveys. The group included male and female educators and represented an age span between 21 and 75. The Beginning of the Year survey (13 questions) was completed by 15 educators of the 20 educators who consented, the Mid-Year Survey (13 questions) was completed by 14 of the 20 educators who consented, and the End of the Year Survey (14 questions) was completed by 12 of the 20 educators who consented.

The second group of participants were educators not affiliated with the school who had previously received staff development and implemented an SEL curriculum. I created a flier with survey topic and details, I emailed the potential participants to request their participation. I also asked the recipient to forward the email to other educators they knew who may be interested in participating in my study. There were three educators who volunteered to take my survey. Of these three participants, two volunteered for an interview.

Data Gathering Techniques

To implement this study, I gathered data from educators in the school under study and from SEL trained educators throughout the United States. I gathered qualitative and quantitative data using four surveys. I gathered quantitative data through a semi-structured interview.

Educator Survey (One Independent Private School)

The Beginning of the Year survey (13 questions) (Appendix A) was completed by 15 educators of the 20 educators who consented, the Mid-Year Survey (13 questions) (Appendix B) was completed by 14 of the 20 educators who consented, and the End of the Year Survey (14 questions) (Appendix C) was completed by 12 of the 20 educators who consented.

The beginning of the year and mid-year surveys consisted of 11 Likert Scale questions and two open-ended questions for a total of 13 questions. The end-of-year survey had 11 Likert Scale questions and four open-ended questions for a total of 15 questions. I chose to do three surveys on this group to collect data on the educator's perceptions of SEL and the professional development they were receiving and to compare how their perceptions changed as the year progressed.

Educator Survey (SEL Trained Educators)

I surveyed educators throughout the United States who had previously received staff development and implemented an SEL curriculum. I provided this group with one electronic survey (See Appendix D). The survey had seven Likert Scale questions, two multiple-choice questions and three open-ended questions for a total of 12 questions. The

data collected from the surveys allowed me to understand the educators' perceptions of SEL, the training they had received, and how implementing SEL impacted their students.

Semi-Structured Interviews (SEL Trained Educators)

I asked in the final question of the survey for educators SEL Trained Educators if the participant was willing to be interviewed. I interviewed three teachers who consented. The purpose of the interviews was to gather first-hand feedback from individuals on what worked and what did not work during their SEL professional development and with the implementation of SEL with their students. I conducted the interviews via Zoom and asked each participant five questions (see Appendix E for a copy of the interview questions). I asked and received permission to record each meeting in order to transcribe it.

Data Analysis Techniques

I collected qualitative data for my program evaluation through surveys and interviews. There were two opened ended questions on the Beginning of the Year and Mid-Year surveys for teachers in the school under study, and four opened ended questions on the End of the Year surveys. The survey for Educators in the U.S. had two open-ended questions. The final source of qualitative data was the semi-structured interview of educators in the U.S.

According to Schava et al. (2021), “Qualitative content analysis involves a process designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretations” (p. 554). For the surveys, I looked for similar responses and determined the overarching theme of those responses. I accomplished the analysis of the semi-structured interview data by recording the interviews and then transcribing each.

I repeated the process I used with the open-ended survey questions and looked for similar responses and identified themes.

I also collected quantitative data for my program evaluation. The quantitative data was generated from the Likert-type scale items and multiple-choice items on the surveys. I analyzed the data by determining the percentage of times a specific response was selected.

Ethical Considerations

I provided informed consent to all my participants, disclosing the collection methods, how I would use the data, and the educator's right to abstain from the study. I maintained the anonymity of survey participants by not collecting identifying information. I kept all data files of compiled results in a password-protected folder on my personal computer.

I emailed informed consent to the interviewees before the interview. I conducted the interviews in my private office, and I asked for permission to record the interview. Participants did not have to answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. I maintained the confidentiality of the interviewees by excluding any identifying information from my results. I kept all data files of compiled results in a password-protected folder on my personal computer.

Limitations

The low number of participants for my surveys was a limitation of this study. The three surveys for the school under study had only 15 participants at maximum and varied depending on the beginning of the year survey, mid-year survey, and the end of the year survey. I did not collect any identifying information on surveys so I cannot verify

whether the same people did the survey each time. The survey for SEL trained educators in the U.S. had three volunteers for the survey despite multiple efforts to advertise. Only two of the three participants who completed the survey consented to my interview.

Another limitation was the method of recruitment I used for the previously trained educators. I used convenience and snowball methods of recruitment. My first source of potential participants were professional contacts whom I then relied upon to forward my email invitation to others they felt would be interested in the study. This limited my pool of potential participants to only those my original group of invitees felt comfortable contacting.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the methodology of my program evaluation. This formative evaluation used critical issues focus (Patton, 2008) to discover the best ways educators can be prepared to implement an SEL curriculum on students. The following chapter will discuss the results of this evaluation.

Chapter Four: Results

The goals of this program evaluation were to collect data that could provide best recommendations or practices when preparing educators to implement SEL. Another goal was to provide school leaders with an understanding of the importance of professional development when it comes to the implementation of a new SEL curriculum. These two goals relate to student learning because when teachers are adequately trained in SEL and understand the connections between emotional wellbeing and academic success, they are better teachers. Kaye et al. (2020) found that "meeting the social and emotional needs of students requires building a comprehensive SEL infrastructure that often starts with increasing teachers' awareness, knowledge, and skills in SEL" (p. 79). The Kaye et al. implication for leaders is the need to focus on building the capacity of school-based staff through continuous ongoing training and consultation. The focused work on building up the educators' knowledge of SEL can lead to effective systemic change for all stakeholders.

In this chapter, I will discuss the results of my program evaluation. The data collected from the school under study and the educators in the U.S. will be shared as well as the interpretations of the data. The findings from the data collected will help leaders have a better understanding of the preparation needed to prepare all educators to implement an SEL program or curriculum for student learning.

Findings

In this section, I present the findings of my surveys and interviews.

Findings: School Under Study Teacher Surveys

I asked all 45 educators at the school under study to participate in my study by completing two 13-question surveys (Beginning and Mid- Year) and one 14-question survey (End of Year) given at three different points throughout one school year. Out of the 45 potential participants, 20 consented to complete all three surveys. The Beginning of the Year survey (13 questions) was completed by 15 educators of the 20 educators who consented, the Mid-Year Survey (13 questions) was completed by 14 of the 20 educators who consented, and the End of the Year Survey (14 questions) was completed by 12 of the 20 educators who consented. Both the Beginning of the Year and Mid-Year Surveys asked the identical 13 questions with questions 1-11 being Likert scale type with choices of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Questions 12 and 13 for these two surveys were the same and were short answer responses.

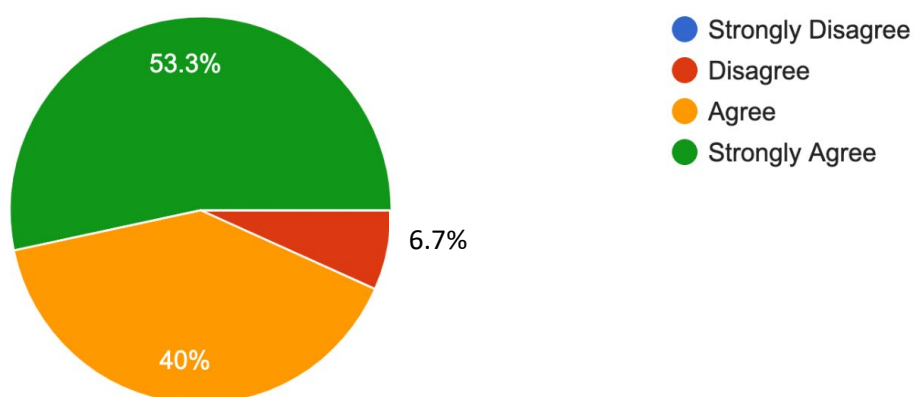
The End of Year Survey had 14 questions with 1-12 being identical to the first two surveys. However, the open ended, short answer items numbers 13 and 14 asked different questions. On the Likert scale questions for all three surveys, I asked for feedback ratings on SEL and its importance to them as educators, to their classrooms, and to their students. In Question 12 for all three surveys, I asked educators to provide a written response as to what they felt teachers needed in order to implement a new SEL program with fidelity effectively. In Question 13 for the first two surveys (Beginning and Mid-Year), I asked educators to provide a written response regarding their feedback on the SEL curriculum training they were receiving. In Question 13 for the last survey, the End of Year Survey, I asked educators to identify which method of training used for the new SEL curriculum was the most helpful to them. In Question 14 for the last survey, the End of Year Survey, I asked for a written response to what the educators felt was the

most valuable information they received that school year from the training that they believed would make the most impact on their SEL instruction.

In Question 1 for all three surveys, I asked the educators to rate from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4) this statement: I feel I have a good understanding of what social- emotional learning is. The Beginning of Year Survey results were 53.3% of the educators strongly agreed, 40% agreed, and 6.7% disagreed (Figure 1). The Mid-Year Survey results were 50% strongly agreed, 50% agreed (Figure 2). The End of Year Survey results were 50% strongly agreed, 41.7% agreed, and 8.3% strongly disagreed (Figure 3).

Figure 1

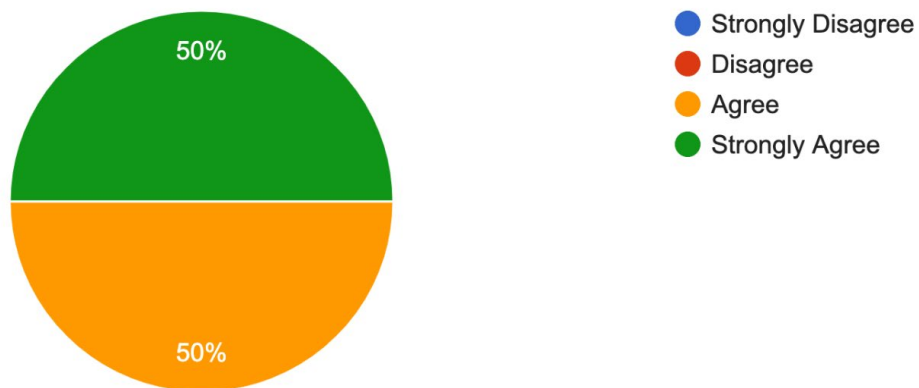
Beginning of the Year Survey Question 1: I feel I have a good understanding of what social- emotional learning is.



Note. N = 15

Figure 2

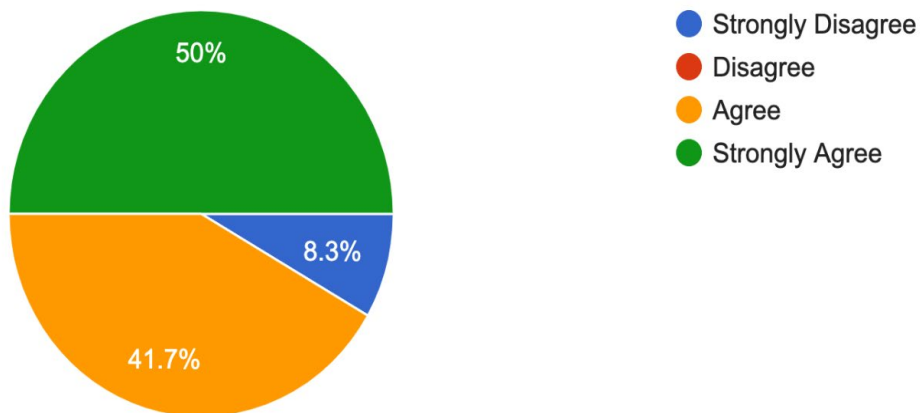
Mid-Year Survey Question 1: I feel I have a good understanding of what social-emotional learning



Note. N = 14

Figure 3

End of Year Survey Question 1: I feel I have a good understanding of what social-emotional learning is.

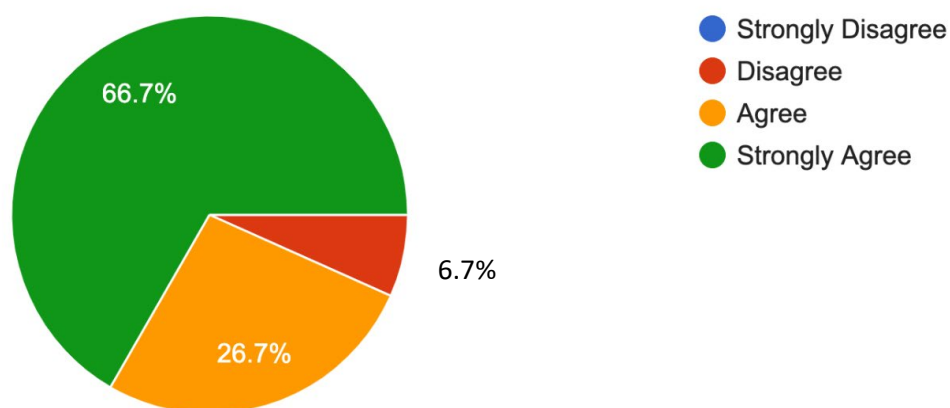


Note. N = 12

In Question 2 for all three surveys, I asked the educators to respond to the following statement using a scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4): I feel that social -- emotional learning (SEL) is important to my classroom. The Beginning of the year survey results; 66.7% strongly agreed, 26.7% agreed, and 6.7% disagreed (Figure 4). The Mid-Year Survey results were 71.4% strongly agreed and 28.6% agreed (Figure 5). The End of Year Survey results were 58.3% strongly agreed and 41.7% agreed (Figure 6).

Figure 4

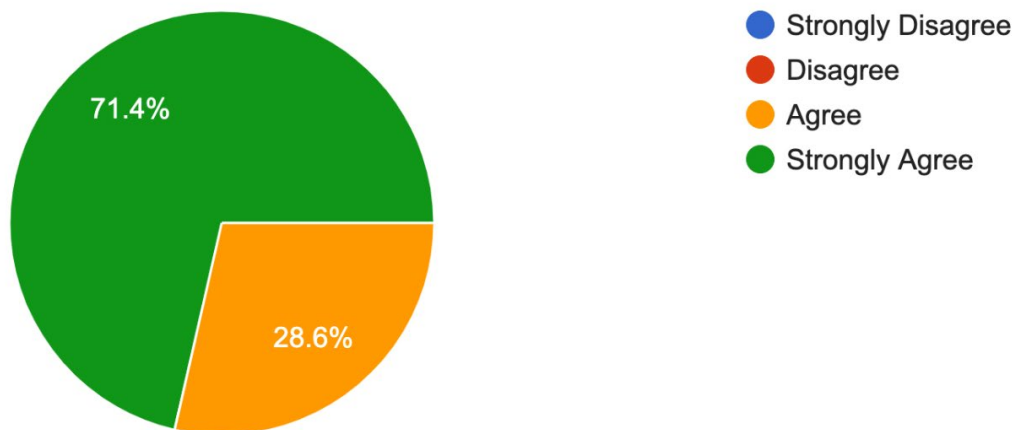
Beginning Year Survey Question 2: I feel that social emotional learning (SEL) is important to my classroom.



Note. N = 15

Figure 5

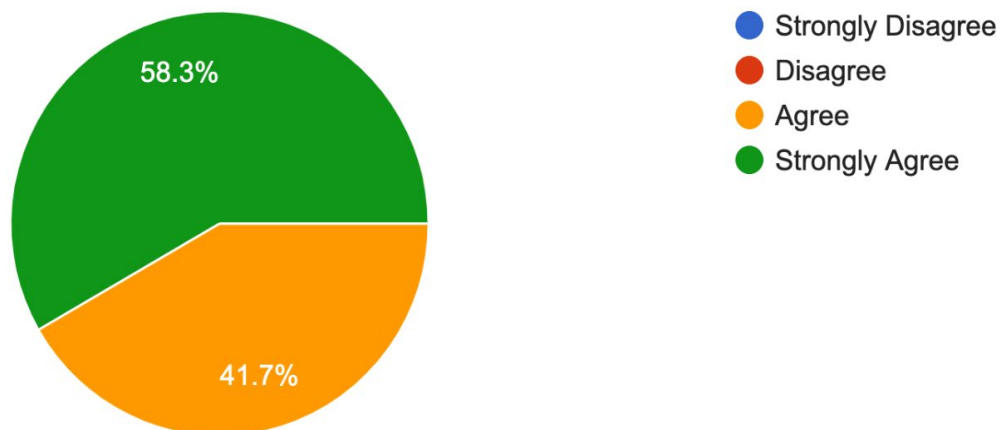
Mid-Year Survey Question 2: I feel that social emotional- learning (SEL) is important to my classroom.



Note. N = 14

Figure 6

End of Year Survey Question 2: I feel that social emotional learning (SEL) is important to my classroom.

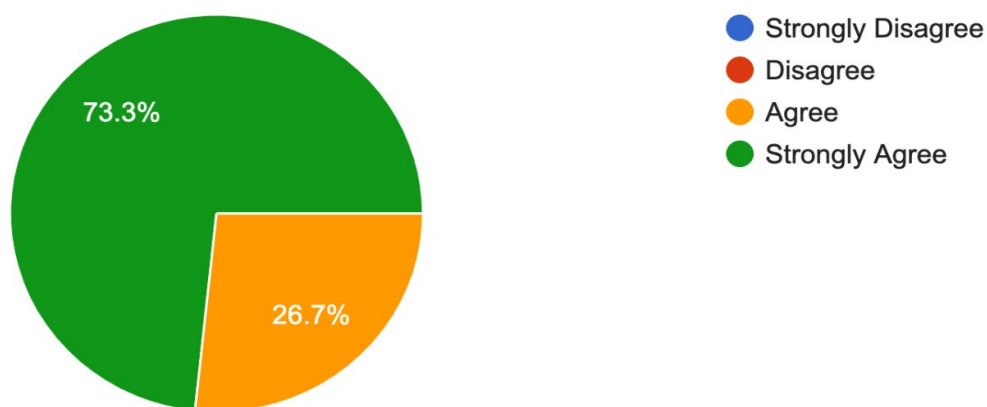


Note. N = 12

In Question 3 for all three surveys, I asked the educators to respond to the statement: I understand how my own emotions impact the students in my classroom. In the Beginning of the Year survey the results were that 73.3% of educators surveyed strongly agreed and 26.7% of educators agreed (Figure 7). In the Mid-Year Survey, the results were 85.7% strongly agreed and 14.3% agreed (Figure 8). In the End of Year Survey, 66.7% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed (Figure 9).

Figure 7

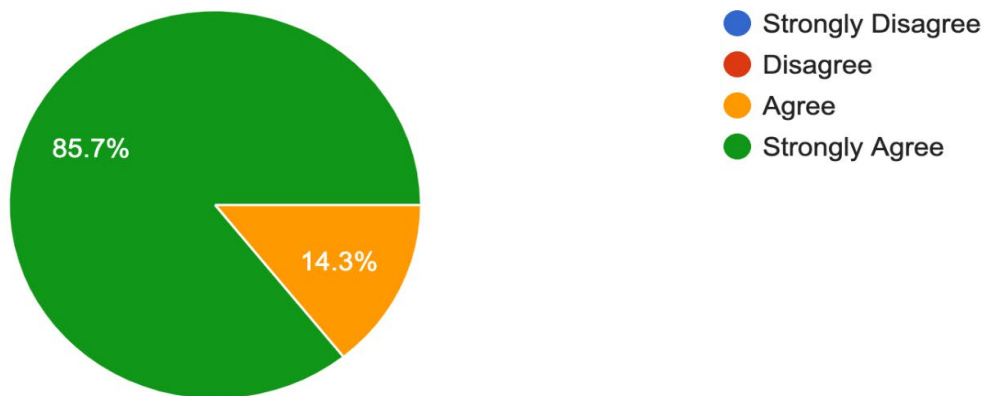
Beginning of Year Survey Question 3: I understand how my own emotions impact the students in my classroom.



Note. N = 15

Figure 8

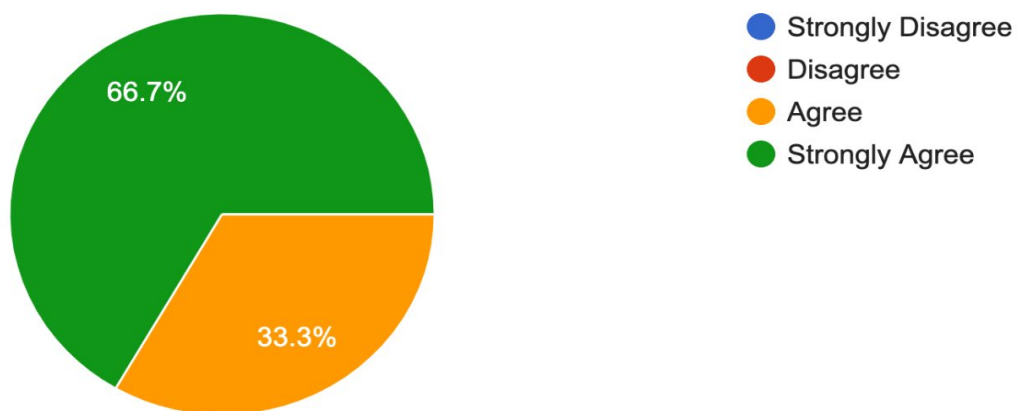
Mid-Year Survey Question 3: I understand how my own emotions impact the students in my classroom.



Note. N = 14

Figure 9

End of Year Survey Question 3: I understand how my own emotions impact the students in my classroom

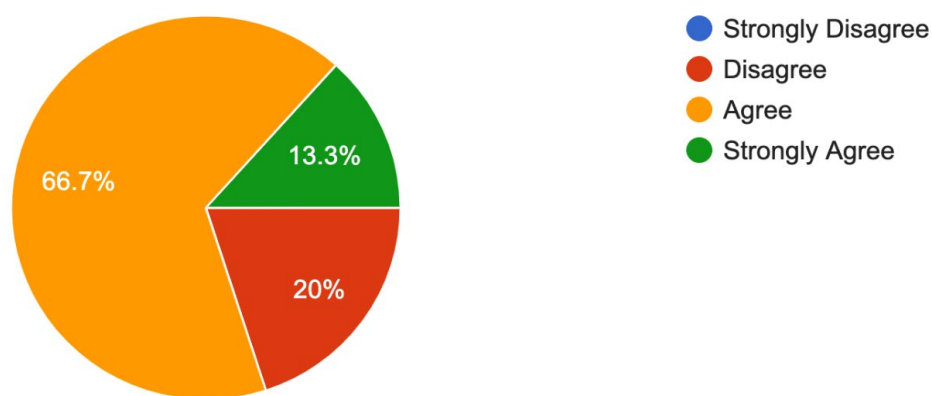


Note. N = 12

In Question 4, I asked the educators to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement: I know how I want to feel when I come into work and how I am going to achieve that feeling on a daily basis. In the Beginning of the Year Survey, the results showed that 13.3% strongly agreed 66.7% agreed, and 20% disagreed. (Figure 10). In the Mid-Year Survey 28.6% strongly agreed, 64.3% agreed, and 7.1% disagreed (Figure 11). In the End of the Year Survey, 33.3% strongly agreed, 58.3% agreed, and 8.3% disagreed (Figure 12).

Figure 10

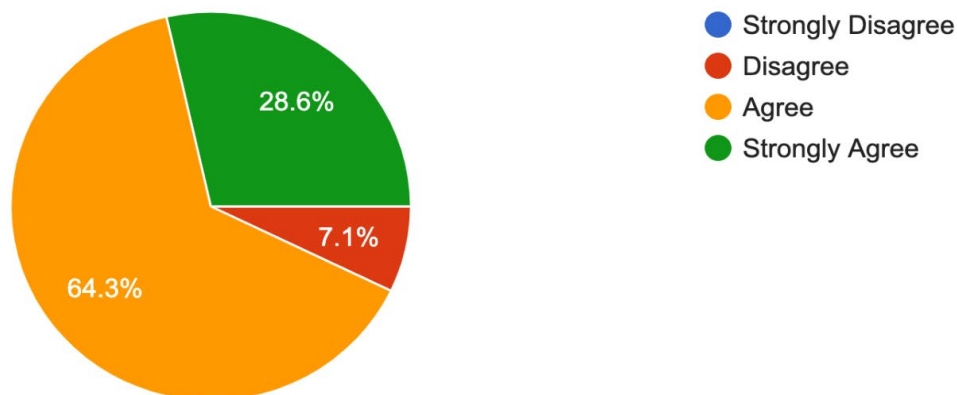
Beginning of the Year Survey Question 4: I know how I want to feel when I come into work and how I am going to achieve that feeling on a daily basis.



Note. N = 15

Figure 11

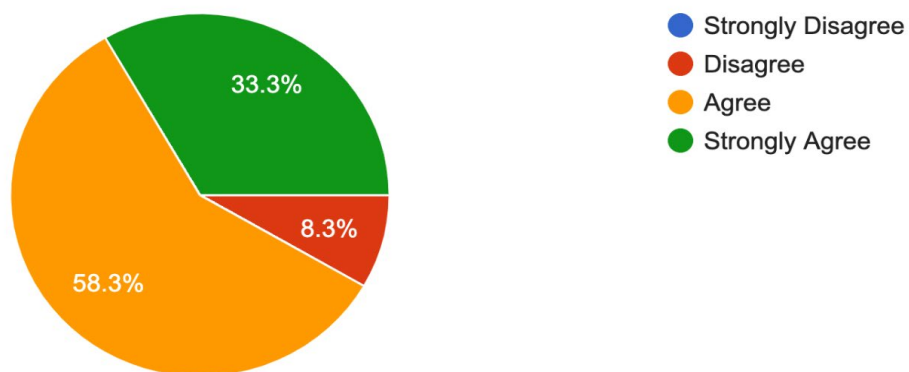
Mid-Year Survey Question 4: I know how I want to feel when I come into work and how I am going to achieve that feeling on a daily basis.



Note. N = 14

Figure 12

End of Year Survey Question 4: I know how I want to feel when I come into work and how I am going to achieve that feeling on a daily basis.



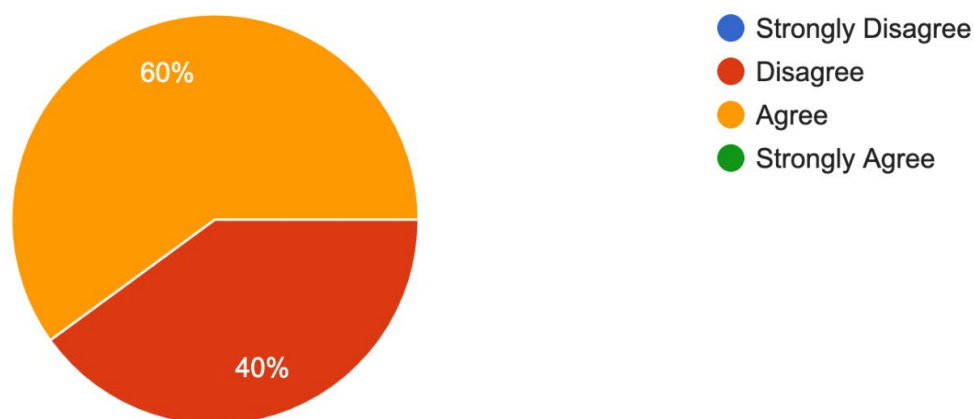
Note. N = 12

In Question 5 for all three surveys, I asked the educators to respond from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4) to the statement: I often stop and reflect on my feelings

before, during and after classes. In the Beginning of the Year survey, educators responded with 60% agreeing and 40% disagreeing (Figure 13). In the Mid-Year Survey, educators responded with 57.1% agreeing and 42.9% disagreeing (Figure 14). In the End of the Year survey, 8.3% strongly agreed, 66.7% of the educators agreed, and 25% disagreed (Figure 15).

Figure 13

Beginning of the Year Survey Question 5: I often stop and reflect on my feelings before, during, and after class.



Note. N = 15

Figure 14

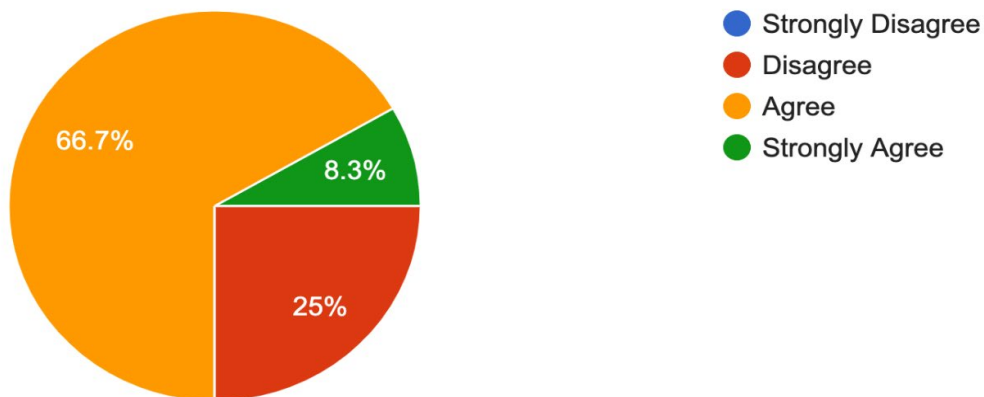
Mid-Year Survey Question 5: I often stop and reflect on my feelings before, during, and after class.



Note. N = 14

Figure 15

End of Year Survey Question 5: I often stop and reflect on my feelings before, during, and after class.

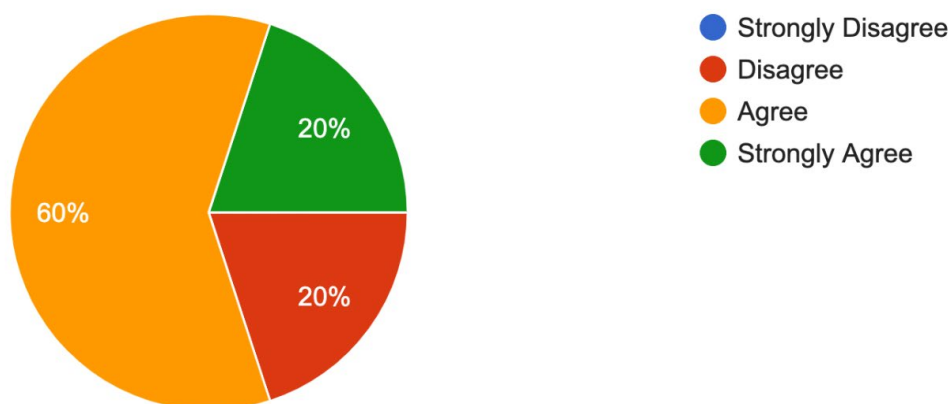


Note. N = 12

In Question 6 for all surveys, I asked the educators to respond to the statement: When I feel overwhelmed by a student's behavior, I stop and do a self-talk in order to respond in the most appropriate way for the student. I asked the rate their response from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The Beginning of the Year Survey results showed that 20% strongly agreed, 60% agreed, and 20% disagreed (Figure 16). The Mid-Year Survey results showed 14.3% strongly agreed, 78.6% agreed, and 7.1% disagreed (Figure 17). The End of Year Survey results showed that 8.3% strongly agreed, 83.3% agreed, and 8.3% disagreed (Figure 18).

Figure 16

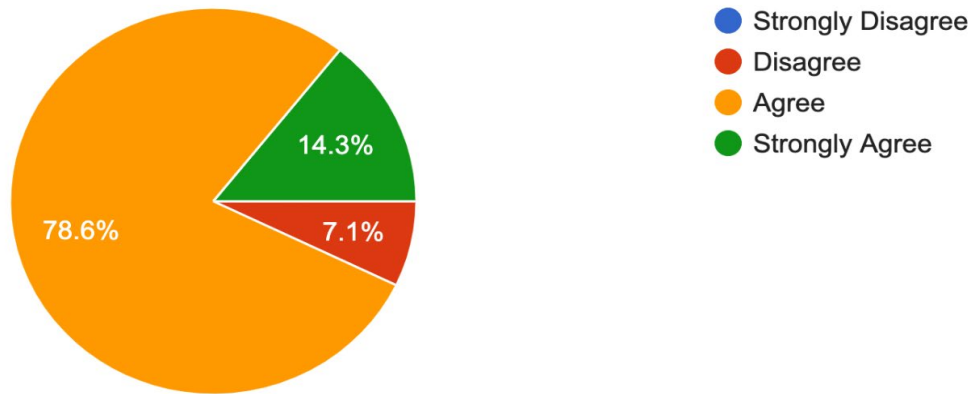
Beginning of Year Survey Question 6: When I feel overwhelmed by a student's behavior, I stop and do a self-talk in order to respond in the most appropriate way for the student.



Note. N = 15

Figure 17

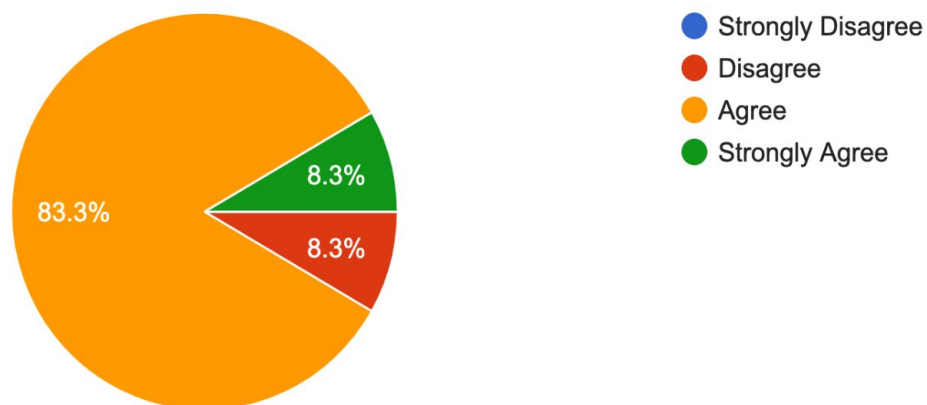
Mid-Year Survey Question 6: When I feel overwhelmed by a student's behavior, I stop and do a self-talk in order to respond in the most appropriate way for the student.



Note. N = 14

Figure 18

End of Year Survey Question 6: When I feel overwhelmed by a student's behavior, I stop and do a self-talk in order to respond in the most appropriate way for the student.



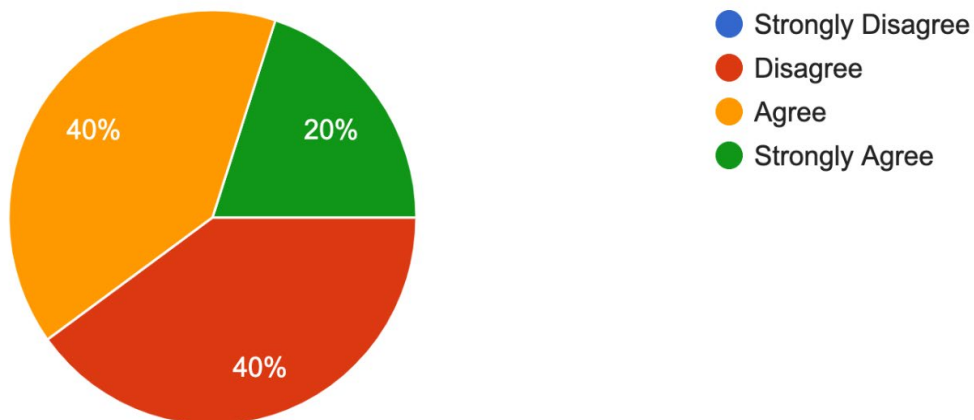
Note. N = 12

In Question 7 for all surveys, I asked how much the educators agreed or disagreed with the statement: I consistently use conflict resolution activities/meetings with my

entire class. In the Beginning of the Year survey, the results were 20% strongly agreed, 40% agreed, and 40% disagreed, and (Figure 19). In the Mid-Year Survey, the results were 14.3% strongly agreed, 42.9% agreed, and 42.9% disagreed (Figure 20). In the End of the Year Survey, the results were 25% strongly agreed, 41.7% agreed, 25% disagreed, and 8.3% strongly disagreed (Figure 21).

Figure 19

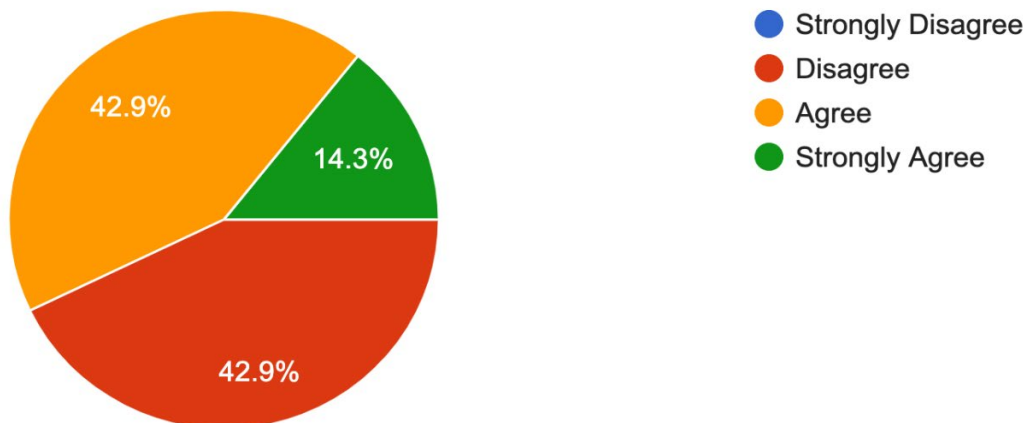
Beginning of the Year Survey Question 7: I consistently use conflict resolution activities/meetings with my entire class.



Note. N = 15

Figure 20

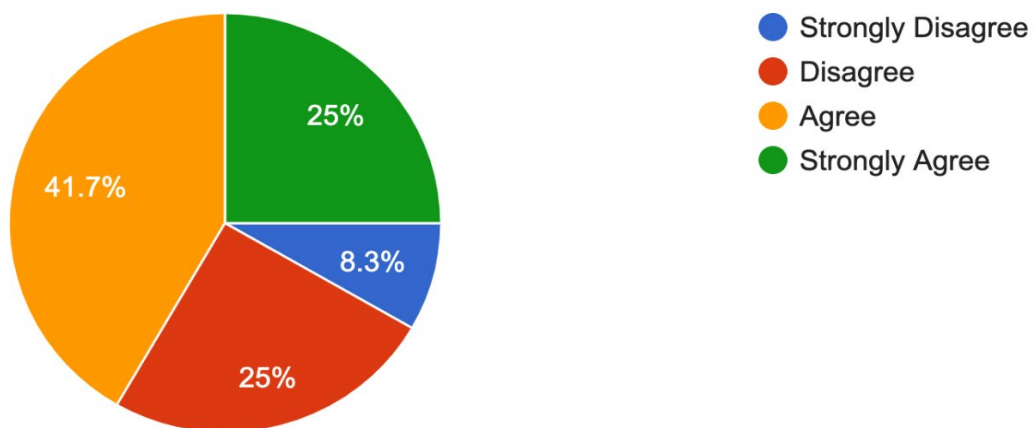
Mid- Year Survey Question 7: I consistently use conflict resolution activities/meetings with my entire class.



Note. N = 14

Figure 21

End of Year Survey Question 7: I consistently use conflict resolution activities/meetings with my entire class.

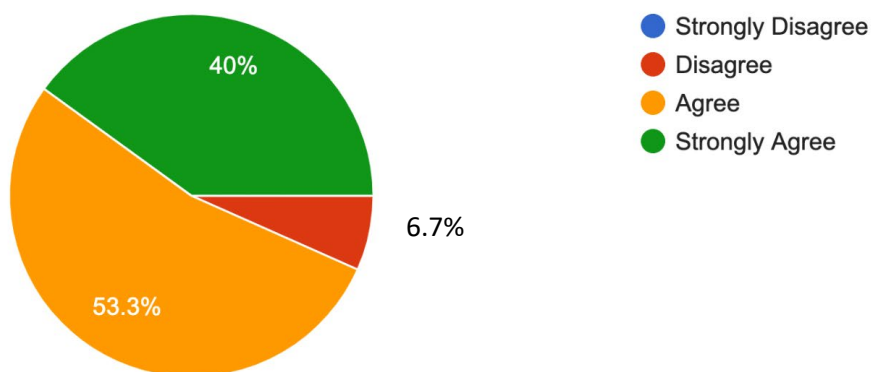


Note. N = 12

In Question 8, for all three surveys, I asked the educators to respond to the statement: I think it is important to acknowledge students' emotional status throughout the day. The educators rated the statement from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The results for the Beginning of the Year Survey were 40% strongly agreed, 53.3% agreed, and 6.7% disagreed (Figure 22). The results for the Mid-Year survey were 42.9% strongly agreed and 57.1% agreed (Figure 23). The results for the End of Year survey were 33.3% strongly agreed and 66.7% agreed (Figure 24).

Figure 22

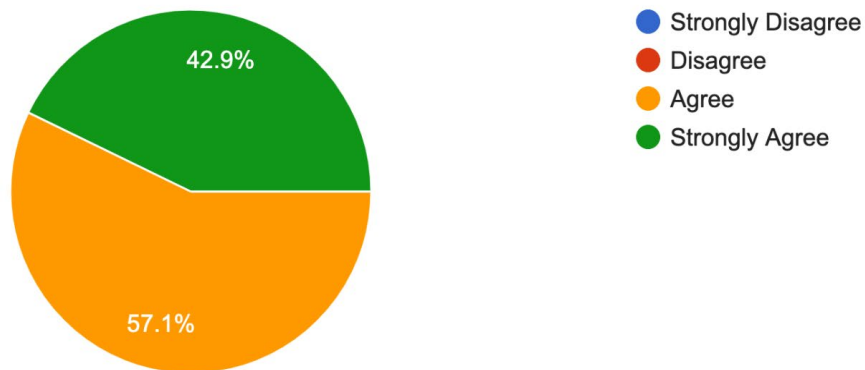
Beginning of the Year Survey Question 8: I think it is important to acknowledge students' emotional status throughout the day.



Note. N = 15

Figure 23

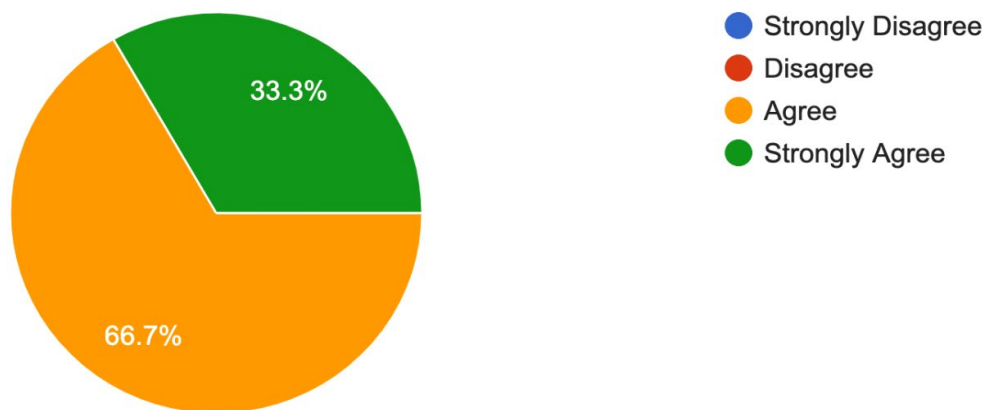
Mid- Year Survey Question 8: I think it is important to acknowledge students' emotional status throughout the day.



Note. N = 14

Figure 24

End of Year Survey Question 8: I think it is important to acknowledge students' emotional status throughout the day.

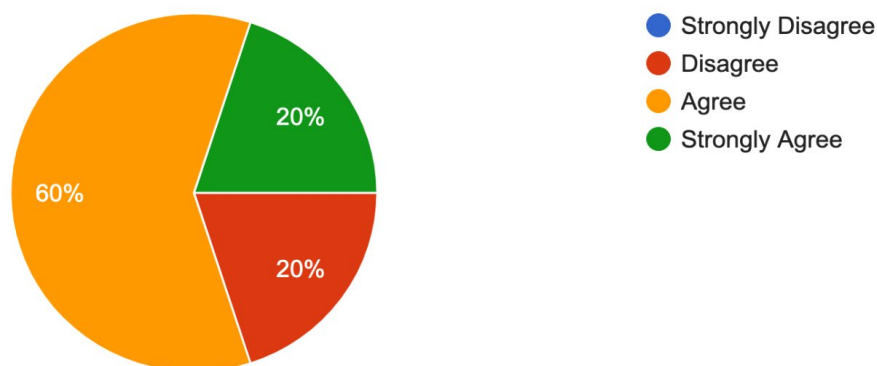


Note. N = 12

In Question 9 for all three surveys, I asked the educators to respond to the statement: I take time to validate a student's emotional status. The educators rated their responses from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4) with the statement. In the Beginning of the Year Survey the results were 20% strongly agreed, 60% agreed, and 20% disagreed (Figure 25). For the Mid-Year survey, the results were 42.9% strongly agreed, 50% agreed, and 7.1% disagreed (Figure 26). For the End of the Year Survey the results were 33.3% strongly agreed, 50% agreed, and 16.7% disagreed (Figure 27).

Figure 25

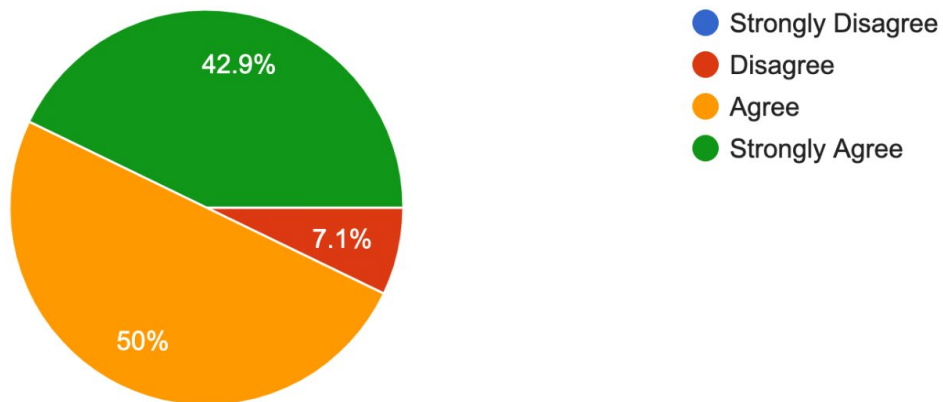
Beginning of the Year Survey Question 9: I take time to validate a student's emotional status.



Note. N = 15

Figure 26

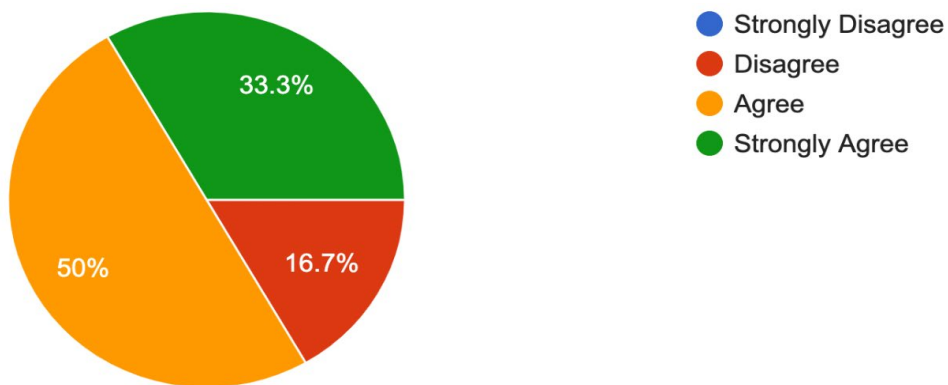
Mid-Year Survey Question 9: I take time to validate a student's emotional status.



Note. N = 14

Figure 27

End of Year Survey Question 9: I take time to validate a student's emotional status.



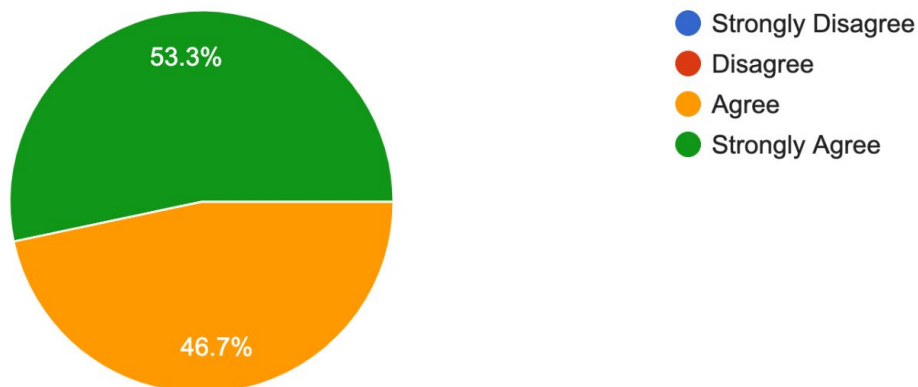
Note. N = 12

In Question 10, for all three surveys, I asked the educators to rate from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agreed (4) their opinion on the following statement: Effective training and instructional support on new initiatives enhances the learning experience for

my students. In the Beginning of the Year survey, the results were 53.3% strongly agreed, and 46.7% agreed (Figure 28). The Mid-Year survey results were 42.9% strongly agreed and 57.1% agreed (Figure 29). The End of Year survey results were 50% strongly agreed, 41.7% agreed, and 8.3% disagreed (Figure 30).

Figure 28

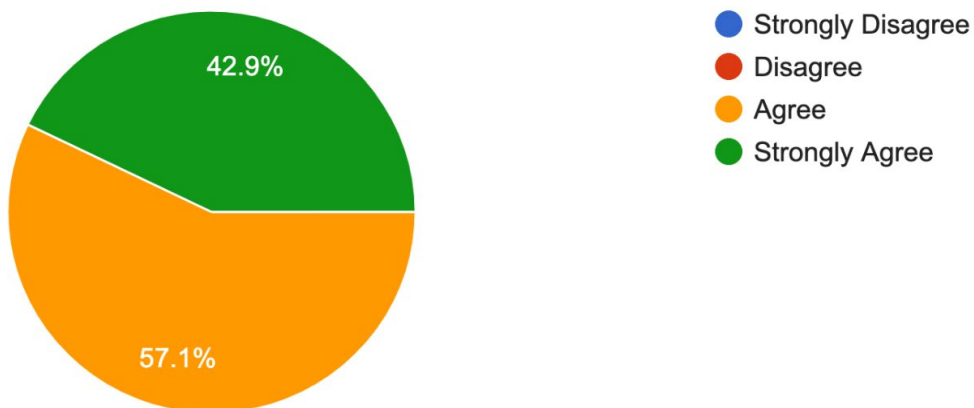
Beginning of the Year Survey Question 10: Effective training and instructional support on new initiatives enhances the learning experience for my students.



Note. N = 15

Figure 29

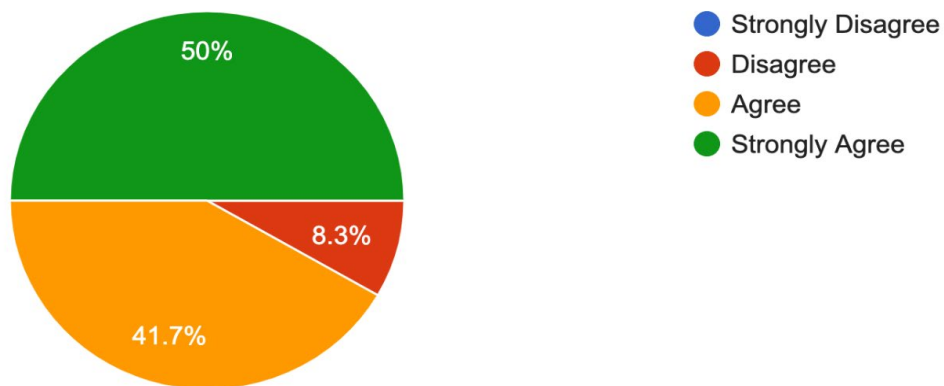
Mid-Year Survey Question 10: Effective training and instructional support on new initiatives enhances the learning experience for my students.



Note. N = 14

Figure 30

End of Year Survey Question 10: Effective training and instructional support on new initiatives enhances the learning experience for my students.

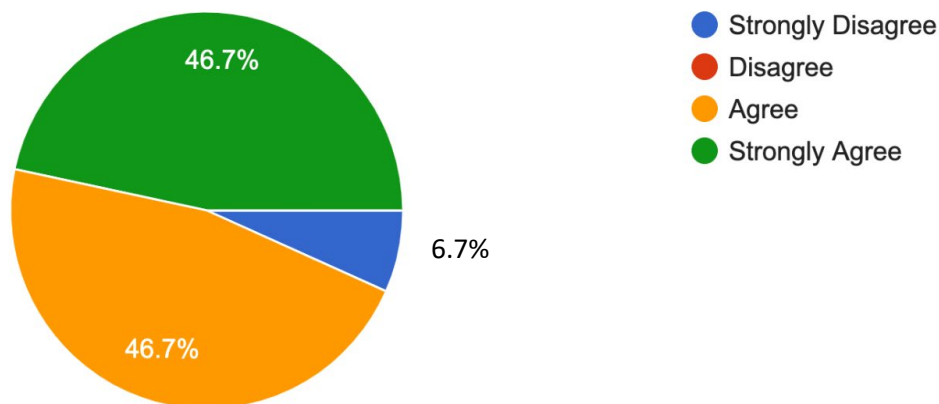


Note. N = 12

In Question 11 for all three surveys, I asked the educators to respond to the following statement: Working in groups with my teaching colleagues during training enhances my reception to new material. The educators rated the statement from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agreed (4) for all three surveys. The Beginning of the Year survey results were 46.7% strongly agreed, 46.7% agreed, and 6.7% strongly disagreed (Figure 31). The Mid-Year Survey results were 21.4% strongly agreed, 71.4% agreed, and 7.1% disagreed (Figure 32). In the End of the Year Survey, the results were 41.7% strongly agreed, 41.7% agreed, and 16.7% disagreed (Figure 33).

Figure 31

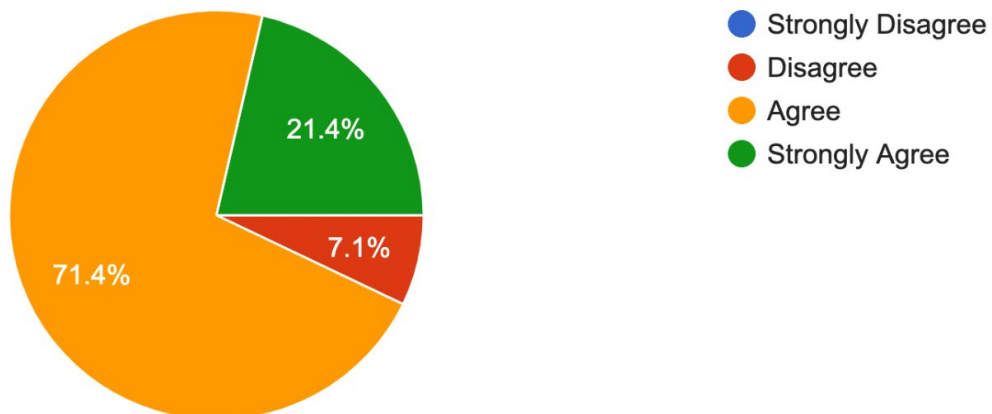
Beginning of the Year Survey Question 11: Working in groups with my teaching colleagues during trainings enhances my reception to new material.



Note. N = 15

Figure 32

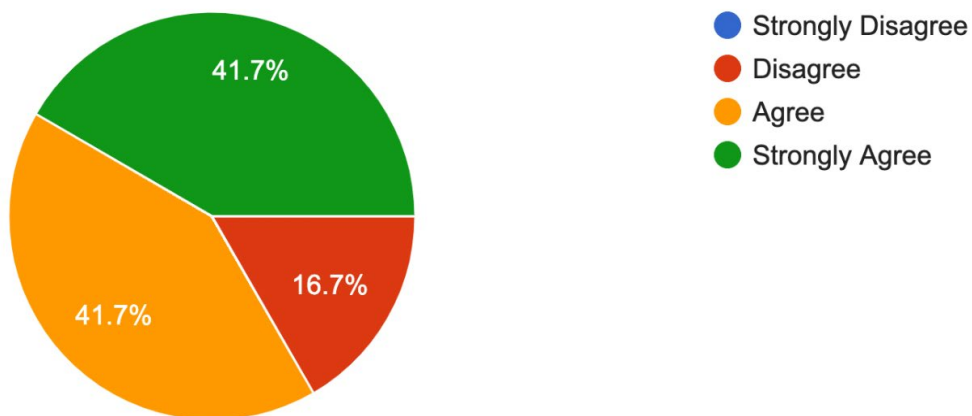
Mid-Year Survey Question 11: Working in groups with my teaching colleagues during trainings enhances my reception to new material.



Note. N = 14

Figure 33

End of Year Survey Question 11: Working in groups with my teaching colleagues during trainings enhances my reception to new material.



Note. N = 12

When I analyzed the results of the Likert-scale type questions, I noted some similarities and differences in the responses from the three surveys. The majority of participants chose a scale rating of Agree or Strongly agree for all questions on all three surveys. What was evident across the surveys was some reduction in educators disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with a statement. For question number 4, 20% of the educators disagreed on knowing how they want to feel when they come into work and how they would achieve that emotion on a daily basis. This percentage decreased in the Mid-Year Survey to 7.1% which could indicate that the educators gained SEL training that could help with self-awareness. This percentage continued to remain low in the End of the Year survey at 8.3% of educators. In the Beginning of the Year survey question 7, 40% of the educators disagreed with consistently using conflict resolution activities/meetings with their class, 42.9% disagreed in the Mid-Year Survey, which dropped to almost half of that percentage in the End of Year Survey with only 25% disagreeing. This could be indicative of the quality of training received in regard to what the educators gained in knowledge and experience in conflict resolution methods over the course of the year.

In Question 12 for all three surveys, I asked the educators to provide a written response to the question: What do you feel teachers need in order to effectively implement a new SEL program with fidelity? In the Beginning of the Year Survey most educators mentioned the need for time to process and to learn the curriculum with the help of leaders to encourage and support them along the way. Educators also mentioned the need for consistent communication and the need to have time to work with fellow colleagues on SEL implementation ideas. The Mid-Year survey responses to this question

resembled the beginning of the year survey in that the educators still mentioned the need for time for training and professional development. Many of the educators felt that there needed to be fewer initiatives running simultaneously at school. One educator added input that they felt the need for more support from their administrators. This educator wanted to see administrators give the same support to teachers that they were willing to do for students. The End of the Year Survey responses to this question mirrored a lot of responses in the previous two surveys. The educators overall felt that dedicated time, support, and guidance were needed to implement the SEL program with fidelity. Another common theme through all three surveys was the need for consistent communication and the ability to work in teams with their colleagues.

In Question 13 of the Beginning of the Year and Mid-Year Survey, I asked the educators to provide a written response to the question: Is there anything else you would like to provide feedback on regarding the SEL curriculum or training you are receiving this year? In the Beginning of the Year Survey, most educators' responses alluded to feeling there was too much going on simultaneously. Some educators wished there were no other initiatives running at the time so they could focus more on SEL implementation. Most participants felt the SEL curriculum was a welcome addition to the school and were hopeful about the selected curriculum. For the same question on the Mid Year Survey, most educators' responses were positive in nature, stating that they were happy overall with the curriculum and the thorough training up to that point. One educator commented on having some discomfort with the activities during training, asking them to divulge personal emotional thoughts. The educator remarked that as a private person they had always been taught that sharing emotions, thoughts, and personal feelings with colleagues

was considered to be unprofessional. They went on to add that they saw value in the curriculum but that they were struggling with sharing private emotions, thoughts and feelings. Responses from other participants continued to emphasize the need for time and support.

In Question 13 for the End of the Year Survey, I asked for a written response to the question: What method of training for the new SEL curriculum was most helpful to you? A few of the educators found value in the mixed version of implementation, where they could work independently on training modules and also take part in activities with their colleagues. Educators also commented that working in groups with their colleagues was helpful and were happy with the online resources for the curriculum.

In Question 14 for the End of the Year Survey, I asked for a written response to the question: What was the most valuable information you received this year from the training that you believe will make the most impact on your SEL instruction? A few of the educators commented on feeling they benefited from learning more about SEL and how it helped their students academically. The educators also commented on the valuable tools the curriculum has provides that they can bring into the classroom. Another theme was the value of creating a common SEL language or terminology. Some also commented on finding value in hearing the thoughts and ideas of their colleagues.

In Question 15 for the End of the Year Survey, I asked for a written response to the following question: Is there any else you would like to provide feedback on regarding the SEL curriculum/training you received this school year? Overall, the feedback given was positive and portrayed excitement about the further implementation with students. Many of the educators were happy for the added SEL focus at the school but also wished

it was not done simultaneously with other new initiatives. One educator expressed apprehension about how the SEL curriculum would work with older high school students. Participants also expressed some worry about not having enough planning time with colleagues to best prepare for lessons.

Findings: SEL Trained Educators

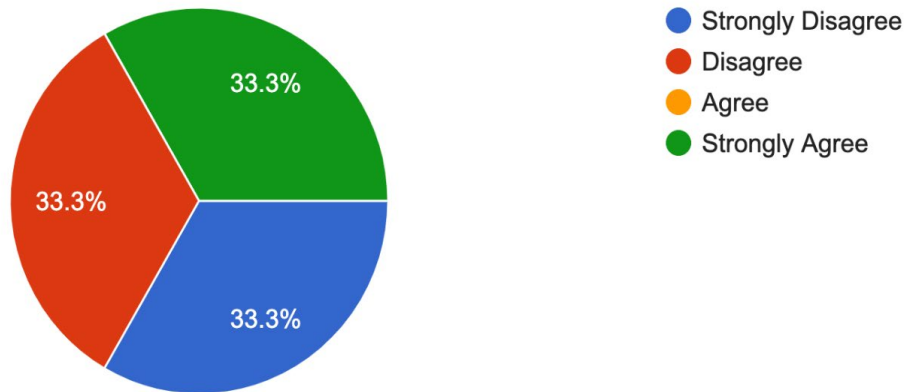
The second group of participants was United States educators who had previously received staff development and implemented an SEL curriculum. I created a flier with the survey topic and details and sent it through email. I asked the email recipients to send it on to other educators who might be interested in participating. I had three educators who volunteered to take my survey. Of these three participants, two volunteered to participate in interviews.

The survey had a total of eight Likert Scale questions that asked the educators to either rate their responses from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4), or rate from Weekly, Twice a month, Monthly, and Quarterly. In Question 9, I asked the educators to select from multiple-choice list of answers: Independently, Small group (grade level or content area), Large Group (entire staff), or Combination (independent, small group, large group). The survey had two open-ended short-answer responses as well, with a final question asking if they would like to volunteer to participate in a 15-minute interview.

In Question 1, I asked educators if they were formally trained to provide SEL instruction with students. The responses were equally divided. Of the respondents 33.3% strongly agreed, 33.3% disagreed, and 33.3% strongly disagreed (Figure 34).

Figure 34

SEL Trained Educators Survey Question 1: I was formally trained to provide SEL instruction with students.

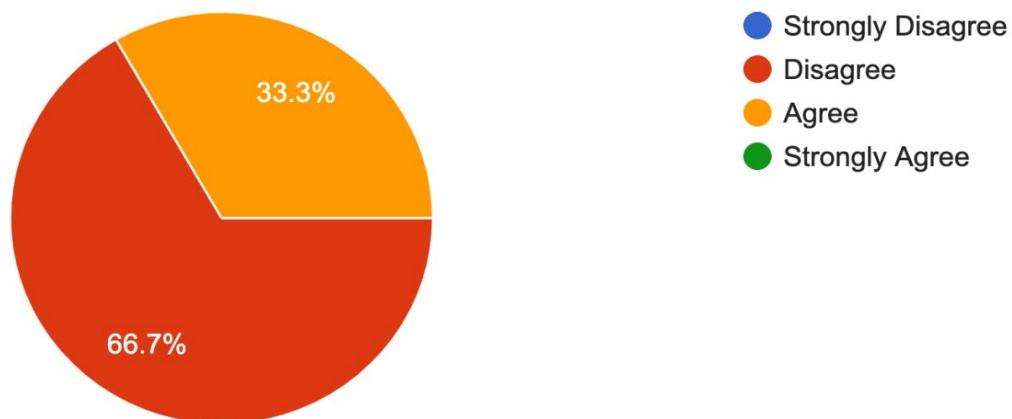


Note. N = 3

In Question 2, I asked the educators to respond to the following statement: SEL was a new concept to me when I received training. The majority of the participants disagreed (66.7%). The remaining participant (33.35%) agreed.

Figure 35

SEL Trained Educators Survey Question 2: SEL was a new concept to me when I received training.

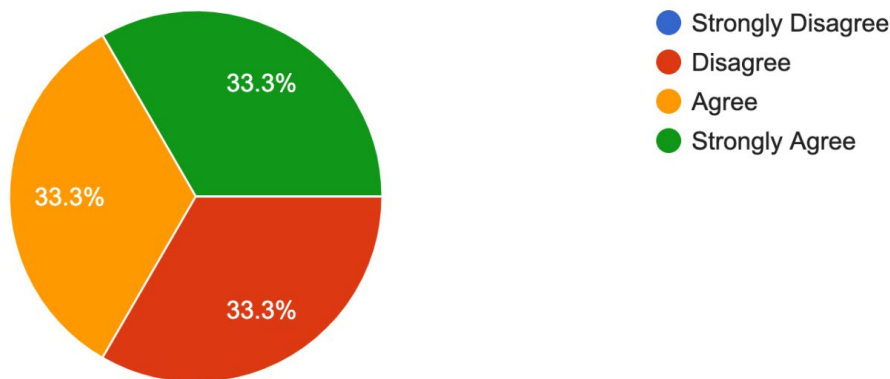


Note. N = 3

In Question 3, I asked the educators to respond to the following statement: I received ongoing professional development during the first year of implementing the SEL curriculum. The participants' responses were evenly divided between strongly agree, agree, and disagree. The participants strongly agreed, agreed, and disagreed 33.3% each (Figure 36).

Figure 36

SEL Trained Educators Survey Question 3: I received ongoing professional development during the first year of implementing the SEL curriculum.

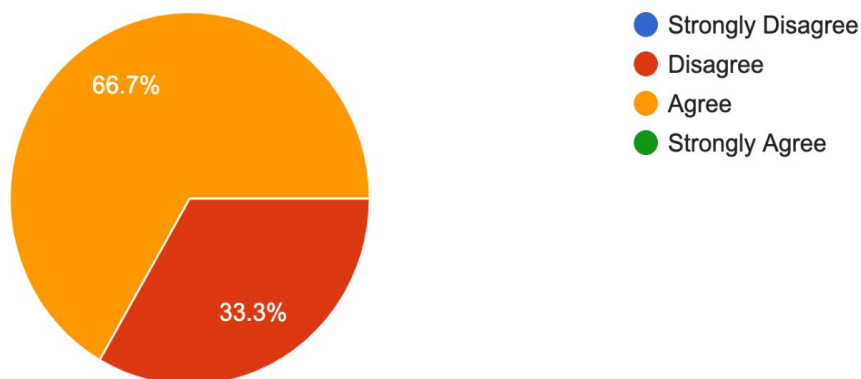


Note. N = 3

In Question 4, I asked the educators to respond to the statement: The training I received was differentiated to my needs. The majority of the participants agreed (66.7%). The other participant disagreed with the statement (33.3%). (Figure 37).

Figure 37

SEL Trained Educators Survey Question 4: The training I received was differentiated to my needs.

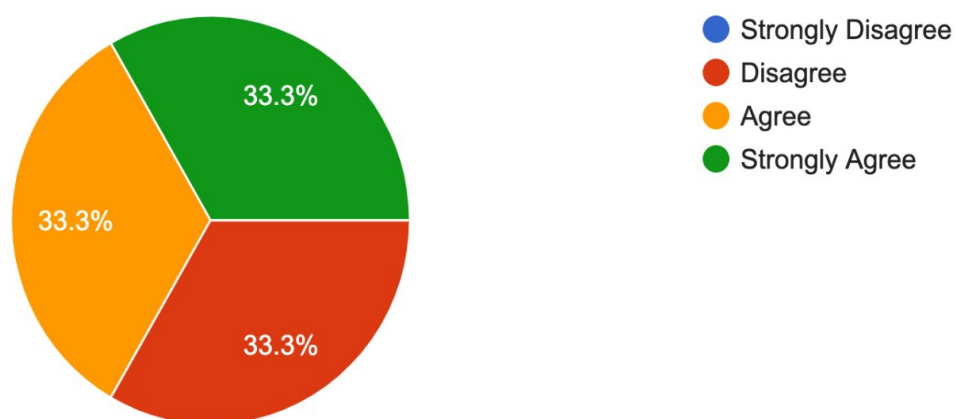


Note. N = 3

In Question 5, I asked the educators to respond to: I was expected to implement the SEL curriculum while I was receiving training. There was an equal response to this statement. Of the respondents, 33.3% strongly agreed, 33.3% agreed, and 33.3% disagreed (Figure 38).

Figure 38

SEL Trained Educators Survey Question 5: I was expected to implement the SEL curriculum while I was receiving training.



Note. N = 3

In Question 6, I asked the educators to respond to the following statement: I learned how my social emotional wellbeing affects students during professional development, 100% Agreed (Figure 39). This was the only survey question where all participants chose the same response.

Figure 39

SEL Trained Educators Survey Question 6: During professional development, I learned how my social/-emotional wellbeing affects students.

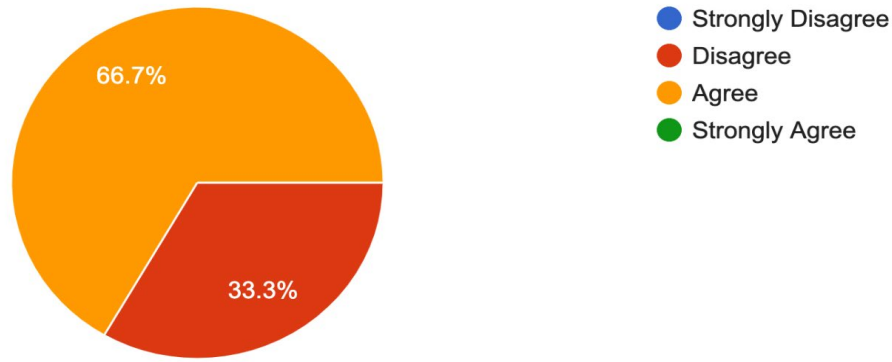


Note. N = 3

In Question 7, I asked the educators to rate from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4) the statement: The professional development I received was helpful to the successful implementation of the SEL curriculum. The majority of the participants agreed (66.6%). The other 33.3% disagreed (Figure 40).

Figure 40

SEL Trained Educators Survey Question 7: The professional development I received was helpful to the successful implementation of the SEL curriculum.

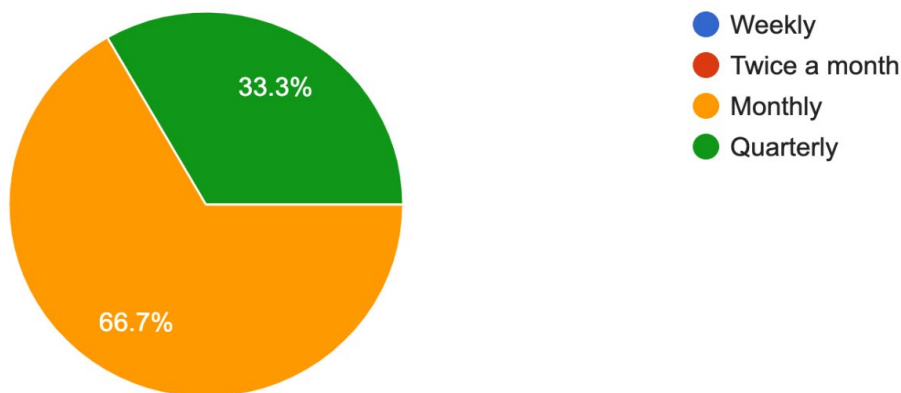


Note. N = 3

In Question 8, I asked educators to respond to the question: How frequently were the professional development sessions provided? I provided choices of Weekly, Twice a month, Monthly, or Quarterly for their responses. The majority of the participants (66.7%) responded Monthly, and one participant (33.3%) responded Quarterly (Figure 41).

Figure 41

SEL Trained Educators Survey Question 8: How frequently were the professional development sessions provided?

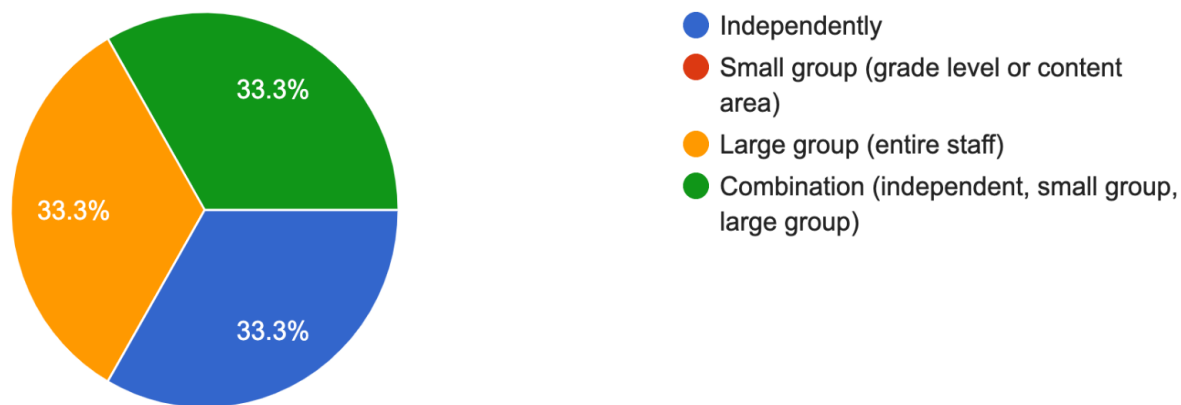


Note. N = 3

In Question 9, I asked the educators to respond to the following statement: How were the professional development sessions provided? I provided the educators with the options of responding with one of the following: Independently, Small Group (grade levels or content area), Large Group (entire staff), or Combination (independent, small group, large group). The participants responded with 33.3% indicating Independently, 33.3% reporting Large Group, and 33.3% indicating a Combination (Figure 42).

Figure 42

SEL Trained Educators Question 9: The professional development sessions were completed.



Note. N = 3

When I analyzed the results from the Likert-scale type questions, I noted some similarities and differences in the responses from the participants. The three participants for this survey chose “agree” for most questions. Each of the three participants made different choices for the first question when I asked if they had been formally trained in SEL. One of the participants strongly agreed, one disagreed, and one strongly disagreed. Most educators indicated they knew what SEL was as a concept before implementing or training at their school sites. 100% of the educators agreed that they learned how their social wellbeing affected their students during their professional development. For question 7, most of the educators agreed that the professional development they received was helpful to the successful implementation of the SEL curriculum at their sites. The participants mostly, with 66.7% agreeing, received professional development monthly. Each of the three participants responded differently to how the professional development

was completed, with 33.3% indicating large group training, 33.3% independently, and 33.3% indicating a combination of large group, small group, and independently.

In Question 10, I asked the educators to describe their experiences with the preparation and implementation of the SEL curriculum. Further, I asked about the advantages and disadvantages of the professional development they received and what the benefits were for their students. One of the educators responded that an advantage was that their students needed the SEL at the time and were excited about it. They indicated the disadvantage was that simultaneously learning the SEL curriculum as they were teaching the SEL lessons was difficult. Another one of the three educators indicated they received a binder with suggested SEL lessons as well as online resources. They went on to report that the training they received only benefited adults as it focused on mental health and ways to create less stress in their lives while they are teaching. The last educator indicated that the educators at their school learned of the SEL curriculum during the beginning of the year's professional development. This educator went on to say their site supervisors gave the teachers time to look through the SEL lessons, and they watched educational videos about the SEL program. They were given monthly professional development and observed through administrators' walk-throughs during implementation. The educator felt this was an advantage and reported that she also received support from the school social worker, who would sometimes come in to help guide lessons. The disadvantage for this educator was that the training material and resources never involved the educators seeing actual implementation within the classroom. She would have liked to have an in-person presentation of an actual lesson taught to students.

In Question 11, I asked educators if there was anything else they would like me to know about their teacher preparation for the implementation of an SEL curriculum. One educator felt that the training needed to start with the adults first and that SEL needed to be embedded into standards and frameworks. Another educator felt that teachers needed training and that school leaders should not assume that teachers know how to implement an SEL curriculum. The last educator felt that new teachers did not get formal training on the program the way the previous educators had. In Question 12, I asked the educators if they would be willing to participate in a 15-minute interview. If so, I asked that they provide their name and contact information. Of the three that took the survey, two volunteered for the interview.

Findings: SEL Trained Educators

I asked all three teachers who completed the SEL Trained Educators survey if they would like to volunteer for an interview. Out of the three teachers who completed the survey, two agreed to participate in a follow-up interview. I have referred to them in this section as Participant 1 and Participant 2. The interview consisted of five questions (Appendix E). The interviews took place via Zoom, and with the audio recorded for both interviews. I used the program Sonix.ai to transcribe the interviews.

In Question 1, I asked the educators to please describe how they were trained in providing SEL to their students. Participant 1 shared that her school adopted a new SEL curriculum a few years ago. At the time, her district provided all the educators with professional development at the beginning of the school year. Leaders provide presentations via google slide presentation that walked through the components of the new SEL curriculum. Participant 1 also shared that throughout professional development,

teachers had time to collaborate with their colleagues on the ways they felt the curriculum could benefit students and how they could use some of the tools themselves. Participant 1 went on to add that the school social worker offered support as well and would push into classrooms and co-teach some lessons.

Participant 2 answered this question by sharing that district staff recently retrained teachers in a new, updated version of her school district's chosen SEL curriculum. She shared that her training consisted of attending a meeting where a representative from the publishing company presented via Zoom. The presentation walked the educators through the new online platform for the curriculum and highlighted various online resources via the new platform. She shared that no further training occurred after this 2-hour presentation by the representative which concluded with all educators receiving pamphlets to review. Both participants indicated district and school leaders expected them to train and implement on students simultaneously.

In Question 2, I asked what the most important thing they learned about SEL during the time they were trained. Participant 1 shared that the most important thing she learned was how to guide her students with more support. She went on to share how valuable it was to learn how to teach her students to manage social interactions with their peers as well as with adults. She also shared that it was valuable to understand how the adults' social emotional wellbeing impacted the classroom. Participant 2 shared how she learned the value of social emotional learning in the classroom, especially as it applied to their students who are from low-income homes. Participant 2 also shared how the impact of the pandemic had led to an increase in SEL instructional minutes at her school as a tool to help support students through a stressful period in their lives. Participant 2 also

emphasized that learning how social wellbeing affects a student's learning ability was valuable.

In Question 3, I asked both participants to describe the effects of implementing their SEL curriculum on their students as it related in three areas: academically, behaviorally, and socially (making friends, conflicts, emotions). Participant 1 shared that she felt SEL positively affected her students because they were more aware of why they may be academically struggling. The participant also shared that she began to see a correlation between negative peer and home life situations and how it impacted students' classroom progress. She went on to include that the combination of the SEL curriculum and good training helped her with the tools needed to support her students. She believed that having a good SEL curriculum impacted student academics positively.

In regard to how the SEL instruction affected students behaviorally, Participant 1 shared that the curriculum had given her a common language to use. She went on to explain that when students exhibited behaviors, they received a consistent response from all educators in the building. In regard to social impact, Participant 1 felt that the SEL curriculum had had a positive impact on social interactions both on the playground and in the classroom.

Participant 2 responded to this three-part question sharing that she felt the SEL curriculum positively impacted educators' awareness of how a student's emotional state impacted their academics. Participant 2 recognized how a negative emotional state definitely takes away from the student having the ability to be present and learn the content. She went on to share that the SEL curriculum has allowed the students to be seen

and heard, which has created a safe learning environment where they can be more present.

As it related behaviorally, Participant 2 shared that the SEL curriculum in their district came with videos that were part of lessons for students. These videos were helpful because they showed students of same-aged peers going through emotional situations and walking through conflict resolution tools. She shared that these videos and lessons helped the students identify different behaviors and problem-solve. Regarding the social impact, Participant 2 shared that the SEL curriculum videos and stories helped the students make friends, navigate conflicts, and regulate their emotions.

In Question 4, I asked the educators to describe what leaders should know when selecting a curriculum for SEL and providing professional development for teachers to implement the curriculum on students. Participant 1 shared that she would like to see an SEL curriculum with more activities for the students rather than a teacher talking to them and then having a discussion. She shared that having videos is helpful but would like to see more engaging activities for students. She would also like to see more continued professional development, not just at the start of learning a new SEL curriculum but ongoing throughout implementation. A downside for Participant 1 was feeling like leaders handed teachers a binder of material, provided some initial training, and then expected implementation without any more check-ins or support.

Participant 2 felt leaders should know that being given tools and binders with resources were very helpful. Participant 2 also shared that she found visuals (videos, posters) very helpful. Participant 2 shared that she would like to have had more opportunities to collaborate with her peers when it came to the implementation of the new

curriculum. She would have also liked to have seen more dedicated time to learning the new curriculum and its online dashboard.

Lastly, in Question 5, I asked the educators to tell me anything else they would like me to know about SEL curriculums and the professional development provided to them. Participant 1 indicated that she would have liked more professional development, not just at the beginning but throughout implementation. She would have also wanted to see more professional development opportunities that allowed more collaboration with colleagues. Participant 2 would have liked to see more structure out of an SEL curriculum and more dedicated time to training. She shared that she would leaders to provide like clear expectations on how much time should be allotted to SEL. Another suggestion she made was to do away with training where educators sit together and watch informational slideshows with administrators talking over it. She stated more colleague collaboration and adult SEL activities would have been helpful.

Interpretation

The educators under study benefited from professional development by implementing a social emotional learning curriculum for students. This finding answered two of my research questions: How can leaders best support educators in the preparation to implement a new SEL curriculum? and What are the specific types of professional development opportunities that promote educators' understanding of SEL? The results indicated a need for training on SEL and that most individuals benefited from working with one another and in groups with their colleagues. The results also suggest that educators find it challenging to teach academics to meet expectations while being mindful of the emotional support a student needs. The results indicate that overall,

educators see the need for social emotional support of students but struggle with finding the time or the space to support them. The educators also struggled with juggling multiple initiatives implemented in the school year.

My interpretations of the data are that educators care about their students' wellbeing and see the need for emotional support but struggle with meeting individual teaching expectations, making it difficult for them to stop in a moment to address students' emotional concerns. Brackett et al. (2019) described the need for adult SEL implementation before full-scale student SEL implementation. My research found that SEL implementation is best sustained over time when all stakeholders play a role. Therefore, meaningful and dedicated time to adult training and professional development is what educators in this study have found needed or beneficial, depending on how their schools provided training. Brackett et al. (2019) also found that SEL teachers reported "higher ratings of work engagement, specifically with regards to vigor, and absorption." Another study found that even though teachers knew what SEL was, they had limited knowledge or awareness of evidence-based interventions and resources on how to support students' behavioral health (Kaye et al., 2020). Overall, regardless of time constraints, teachers need proper support and training to implement SEL successfully with their students. As evidenced by the data collected in my study, teachers wanted more dedicated time and support to learning the SEL curriculums and would have appreciated not implementing other initiatives simultaneously.

The small number of participants was a limitation of this study. The three surveys for the school under study had only 15 participants at maximum and varied depending on

the beginning of the year survey, mid-year survey, and the end of the year survey. The same 15 participants who consented were sent the three surveys at the same time throughout the year, but I cannot verify that the same 15 participants responded consistently. There were only three participants who completed the educators in the U.S. survey. Only two of the three who took the survey consented to interviews.

Despite those limitations, the data was consistent among educators at the school under study and the SEL trained educators. The data answered both of my research questions. From this data, I inferred that educators need dedicated and supported professional development prior to SEL student implementation and that the type of professional development also matters. The data from my study indicated a need for collaborative, activities-based professional development where educators could work with their colleagues.

Conclusion

I surveyed and interviewed educators at one independent, private school and educators throughout the United States to understand their perceptions of their training to implement an SEL curriculum and their perceptions of the SEL curriculum's impact on their students. The results indicated that educators need dedicated and supported professional development prior to SEL student implementation and that the type of professional development matters. In the next chapter, I discuss the state of SEL based upon my study results and describe an ideal future situation.

Chapter Five: Change Plan

In Chapter 4, I discussed the results of my evaluation. The results indicated that all educators, both at the school under study and educators in the U.S., understood what SEL is but struggled with having the experience and training to implement it for students. Educators also indicated that having enough time in a workweek to plan lessons and work with colleagues was a barrier. Educators in the school under study received a full year of SEL training before student implementation and were happy not having to implement it with students at the same time. All educators in the study indicated wanting more time to work with colleagues and having fewer initiatives running simultaneously. In this chapter, I will discuss my findings using the lens of Wagner et al.'s (2006) arenas of change.

As-Is

According to Wagner et al. (2006), leaders need to address four areas to bring change to a system or organization. Referred to as the 4 C's, the areas are contexts, culture, conditions, and competencies. Wagner et al. explained that to start to bring about change, one needs to analyze the problem in each area of the 4 C's as they currently exist. In the next section, I use the results of my study to analyze the state of social emotional learning in the school under study and in the United States (see Appendix F).

Contexts

The context of an organization or system refers to “the larger organizational systems within which we work, and their demands and expectations, formal and informal” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 104). Wagner et al. (2006) explained that the context is

essentially the “social, historical, and economic context in which all the efforts of a system takes place” (p. 104). Understanding all the contextual information is essential to be better informed and to better shape the work that must happen to transform a system or organization.

I conducted this study at a private, independent school on the outskirts of a large midwestern city and with educators throughout the United States. The school is composed of students from Pre-K through 12th grade, most of whom come from middle to high socioeconomic backgrounds and pay yearly tuition. The school at the time of this study had a total of 285 students. At the time of this study, no social emotional learning curriculum had been in place, and educators had received limited social emotional professional development. The school under study has a reputation for its high academic achievement and is well known for its rigorous curriculum. The graduation rate is 100%, and 100% of the students go on to four-year universities.

In regard to educators in the U.S. trained in SEL, the context is public schools governed by state laws, rules, and regulations. The educators all reported demands and expectations that exceeded what they felt was doable. These educators also expressed frustration with expectations to deliver a curriculum to students when they did not fully comprehend the methods of implementation (for example, lessons and activities). All educators participating in this study reported a demand for teachers to implement multiple initiatives simultaneously. The expectations for all teachers in this study were to learn new initiatives and, for the most part, implement them on students simultaneously. Limited budgets for programs, professional development, and staffing were present for all educators in this study.

Culture

Wagner et al. (2006) defined culture as “the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school.” (p. 102). The authors further explained the culture of a school refers to “the invisible but powerful meanings and mindsets held individually and collectively throughout the system” (p. 102). The culture of a system or school is less about how things should get done and more about how things actually get done at a school. It is the common thoughts and shared threads of communication that are the reality of what shapes the organization.

The school under study is a long-standing institution that has been around for over 180 years. It is a school rich in history and traditions. The educators at the school pride themselves on a rigorous curriculum and high standards of achievement. The students must meet a certain “mold” to attend this institution. This “mold” has caused most, if not all, faculty to teach to one type of student and struggle, therefore, teaching different student learning styles. The current culture has impeded the students struggling with learning difficulties related to emotional wellbeing and specific learning disabilities. The leaders at the school under study do not require educators to complete professional development, nor is it provided for them on campus. Leaders encourage the educators to receive outside training and professional development of their choice as it relates to their subject matter.

The shared assumption amongst educators is that all students attending this institution are ready to learn and need limited assistance with academics. In my professional experiences, elite private and independent school educators believe they are

there to teach academics alone and have a limited understanding of a student's emotional wellbeing. The interpretation that shapes this organization's behavior is that the educators have become accustomed to providing support only as it relates to academics.

The educators at the school seem to want to support their students and their families but face a culture of high needs and demands but low levels of funding, support, and professional development. Educators face frustration with low budgets and high needs. Educators also feel pressure to teach to standardized tests, which in many cases reflects on a teacher's pay increase and job security.

Conditions

Wagner (2006) defined the conditions of the organization as the “external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources.” (p. 101). Conditions of a school largely describe how educators spend time with students as well as how they spend time dedicated to working with colleagues, parents, and the larger community. The conditions of the organization also refer to financial resources and school-wide budgeting for school resources. Teacher-to-student ratios also factor into conditions as well as expectations around the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders.

The school under study consisted of three divisions of students with their subsequent faculty members. The three divisions are Lower School with grades PK-4th, Middle School with grades 5-8th, and Upper School with grades 9-12th. It is a small institution that consists of one classroom per grade level in the Lower School and faculty who teach in more than one division. Over the past ten years, the school has begun to see a decline in its enrollment and has increased its marketing and recruitment efforts to bring

in more students. This decline has led to a limited budget. The financial issues the institution faces have made it difficult in recent years to hire more support faculty, more difficult to bring in and support new innovative initiatives and has led to the decline in professional development opportunities on campus for staff.

Due to the organizational structures of the school under study, it can be difficult to create structures for collaboration. The faculty at the school under study tend to gravitate toward their shared division colleagues, which has led to a disconnect between divisions. Each division also functions differently in regard to student schedules and class times. The educators felt time constraints. All educators reported not having enough time to collaborate with their colleagues as well as not having enough resources, support, and training. Educators did not have sufficiently trained mental health staff in all buildings to help support and train for SEL curriculums and other social emotional initiatives. Expectations around their roles and student outcomes, either tied to state law or contracts, put a strain on educators. Educators felt stressed under expectations of teaching academic and SEL standards.

Competencies

The competencies of a school or organizational system, as defined by Wagner et al. (2006), are “the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning” (p. 99). In regard to schoolwide competencies among educators, it would be the amount of experience, training, and ongoing professional development accrued. In order for positive change to succeed, the organization’s people must possess various skills to take part in leading change plans. Fullan (2008) stated that learning is the work and that results were not possible unless “each and every teacher is learning how to improve every day” (p.

86). Moreover, the individual educator's competence plays a role as it relates to their personalities, leadership styles, and how they communicate with others.

The faculty at the school under study had no exposure to a social learning curriculum prior to the implementation of this curriculum. The school under study had one school counselor who, up until this new curriculum, was the person on campus responsible for addressing the students' social emotional wellbeing.

Bracket et al. (2019) described the importance of adult personal and professional learning. Brackett et al.'s study proved that SEL was best implemented, integrated, and sustained over time when all stakeholders received SEL skill-building training and support (p. 154). According to Bracket et al., all school community members should receive SEL training (administrators, faculty, office staff, coaches, families, and students). Teachers were the only ones who received the entire SEL training in the school under study. Only two of the three administrators participated. None of the school office staff or coaches participated in any of the training. At the school under study, the school counselor led the training and an SEL team of educators from each school division (Lower School, Middle School, Upper School). This SEL team had undergone a six-week training on the curriculum the spring before the fall implementation for adults.

SEL trained educators in the U.S. indicated much of the same initial competencies among staff. These educators reported limited understanding of how to implement SEL on students and struggled with communication from leaders in their buildings. These educators reported that only teachers and student support staff (counselors, social workers, psychologists) received training. The office staff, coaches, and administrators were not part of the training. These educators expressed frustration with administrators

“taking a back seat” in the training and the limited amount of dedicated time and finances to training. The educators did feel that their onsite student support staff were knowledgeable and helpful with SEL lesson demonstrations.

Envisioning the Success To-Be

In this section, I will discuss the ideal future context, culture, conditions, and competencies of school systems in regard to social emotional learning (see Appendix F). The following framework aims to create a plan for successful change that will benefit student learning. The To-Be framework relies on effective leadership and creating achievable goals for educators in a school system.

Future Contexts

The skill demands for all students to succeed as providers, learners, and citizens will have a foundation built on students' physical, social, and mental wellbeing. Schools will build their organizations around a system many have referred to as "whole child education" (Elias, 2019, p. 233). Educators will operate from a mindset that all learning is social emotional and that academic instruction begins with brain-friendly learning principles (Immordino-Yang et al., 2019). Brain-friendly learning focuses on mindfulness training, stress reduction strategies, empathy enhancement, emotion regulation, self-efficacy, and stronger feelings of emotional connection to others (Immordino-Yang et al., 2019).

“Emotional intelligence is crucial to both social and work success” according to Goleman (2005), who found that ‘as long as an individual has the intellectual ability to meet the demands of the work, emotional intelligence is more important to success than higher levels of IQ’ (Lubit & Lubit, 2019, p. 19). The authors stated, “whether someone

is a student, researcher, professional, or entrepreneur, success requires the ability to maintain their own focus and motivation in the face of frustrations” (p. 19). It is essential for students to learn to recognize their emotions and to have the tools they need to help themselves regulate. Only when students are learning how to regulate their emotions are they able to successfully attend to academic instruction.

All schools, whether large districts, private, charter, or independent, will have a social emotional curriculum or program in place. This program or curriculum will be research based and found to be effective. Educators will implement the social emotional program from early preschool to the senior year of high school. Leaders will prioritize budgeting for the SEL programs and emphasize SEL instruction to a higher degree than academic core subjects. In order to create a setting where all school employees, students, families, and other community members are learning SEL and then subsequently implementing SEL lessons, leaders will ensure that those providing the implementation are also receiving the support they need to implement successfully.

Future Culture

Educators will create a culture that highlights the importance of social emotional learning and emotional intelligence and how mental health and wellbeing affects the student learner in each classroom. Lubit and Lubit (2019) stated that

Students cannot learn effectively if distracted by disruptive emotions or external stressors. If students are troubled by problems at home, anxiety about doing well, or frustration due to struggling academically, they may lack sufficient emotional and mental reserves to do well in school. (p. 21)

It is my professional opinion that the emphasis on building a culture in which SEL is made fundamental to learning is essential for academic success.

Faculty and administrator culture will dedicate more time to team building and fostering connections among colleagues. Fullan (2008) explained that “the average human being has an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it if he or she can” (p. 21). Fullan (2008) explained that adults need to feel supported and connected to their peers and their leaders. This connection and “love,” as Fullan described it, can lead to job satisfaction and a commitment to the school and its students.

As the great Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “What you are stands over you the while, and thunders so that I cannot hear what you say to the contrary” (James, 1903, p. 3). A person’s actions speak louder than their words. Children will model and identify with adults in their lives, even when they do not like what the adult is doing. The importance of modeling what healthy coping and support look like is vital for children’s success into adulthood. According to Pena Teeters et al. (2021), and in my professional experience, social emotional health and wellbeing are related to that the adults in the building cultivate. Students will ultimately benefit from educators who are happier and feel more emotionally regulated.

Future Conditions

As previously mentioned, the explicit expectations in becoming an educator would be a requirement in social emotional learning courses that focus on supporting the building of students’ emotional intelligence. All school and district leaders will build their space and resources, prioritizing social emotional learning programs and curriculums. Each school building will have more counselors, psychologists, and social

workers, so the student ratio to student support is smaller and more individualized. Student support personnel contracts will ensure that counselor caseloads remain low in student-counselor proportions to ensure the counselors can dedicate more time to personalized student support when needed.

School leaders will build time each week for adult SEL support and adult wellbeing clinics or workshops. As mentioned, children will model the important and consistent adults in their lives whether they like what the adult is doing or not. Because adults need to take care of their own social emotional health before they model and implement for students. It will be a priority for each school leader to allocate financial resources to adult social emotional wellbeing. As the flight emergency plan goes, one must put the oxygen mask on oneself first before one can help put the mask on the person sitting beside one.

Leaders are not able to successfully impact students' emotional intelligence if they are not dedicating time and resources to the adults who spend the majority of their weeks with them. Brackett et al. (2019) stated that "schools that serve as professional learning communities reflect a climate where educators maintain a shared standard of heightened professionalism and where everyone contributes to a positive and professional climate." (p. 154). The researchers go on to report findings that "educators' perceptions of school climate, including the cultural atmosphere of the school, the supports available for teachers, and the relationship between and among adults and students, may influence teachers' emotional states and how they interact with children." (p. 154). A negative work environment, or one where teachers do not feel supported by leaders and administrators, can lead to conditions that cause higher levels of work-related stress. These findings

indicate the need for conditions that do not overload teachers with multiple initiatives and little time to complete important student-related tasks.

There will be ample time in a given week for school staff to be able to work on social emotional lesson planning and collaboration with their colleagues. Leaders will minimize the number of other new initiatives. When staff must implement other initiatives simultaneously, leaders will prioritize the time and energy needed for social emotional implementation and development first.

Future Competencies

To carry out positive changes in support of student emotional wellbeing, educators and their leaders will be equipped with various significant skills. All preservice educators will complete competencies in areas of social emotional wellbeing in addition to academic teaching requirements. Leaders will require all school staff to complete training and courses on the influences of social emotional learning on students' academic life and work success.

All schools, whether private or public, will have a social emotional team dedicated to selecting a researched SEL curriculum that has the approval of CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning). This team will be responsible not only for picking the SEL curriculum but for managing the adult SEL training and facilitating professional development opportunities both at the school location and external locations. The SEL team will also facilitate the support needed for SEL student implementation and will collect the necessary data points measuring the progress of the selected curriculum or program.

School-wide training and professional development will be ongoing throughout each school year and will include all employees. Each school will have a designated social emotional team who have the background knowledge and experience to assist with training, implementation, and ongoing support. These professionals will be available to demonstrate SEL lesson instruction and attend to personnel needs and questions.

The shared expectations of all educators, administrators, and those that govern them (state licensing board, school board) will be that pre-service teachers not only teach academics but to also receive required formal and ongoing degree program training in social emotional learning. This ongoing SEL training would be for them as adults and to learn how to teach it to students effectively. Leaders will require pre-service teachers to shadow school counselors, school social workers, or school psychologists as part of their student teaching experience. As well as the SEL requirements for pre-service teachers, there will be requirements for all educators to continue professional development in the field of emotional intelligence and social emotional learning. Educators will have to meet his requirement to keep their teaching certificates up to date.

Conclusion

The school under study and schools throughout the U.S. have frameworks that make it difficult for educators to receive sufficient and supportive SEL training. The current framework will need agents of change willing to prioritize the time and resources required for educator SEL because time and resources directly impact student SEL implementation. When students receive SEL from educators who receive sufficient support, they will be more likely to reap the benefits of SEL related to their personal, academic, and future success.

Chapter Six: Strategies and Actions, Implications, Policy Recommendations

In the previous chapter, I discussed the As-Is and the ideal To-Be state of social emotional learning (SEL) professional development and implementation in the context of the school under study and in the United States. In this chapter, I will present the strategies and actions (see Appendix G) school system leaders must use to move from the current state (As-Is) to the ideal state (To-Be) regarding SEL. I also discuss the implications of the change and my policy recommendations.

Strategies and Actions

In his book *The Six Secrets of Change: What the Best Leaders Do to Help Their Organization Survive and Thrive*, Michael Fullan (2008) discussed his theory of the six necessary steps to achieve positive change in an organization or system. Fullan developed these six steps of change to apply to large-scale reform and as a theory in action to improve his work with the public school system of Ontario, where he was employed. Fullan described the six steps as “synergistic—each of the six feeds on the other five” (p. 10). He wrote that the steps are “heavily nuanced—that is, it takes a lot of thought and application to appreciate their meaning and use. They are motivationally embedded to motivate the vast majority of people to invest in passion and energy needed to get results, mobilizing a million change agents” (p. 11). Fullan’s six steps build off one another and work as companions, with many of the steps repeating the previous steps to accomplish an organization’s change initiative or goal in an organization. Fullan (2008) emphasized that organizations need all steps for the final step to succeed. The final step is for all individuals in systems to learn from one another and in the context of where they work.

Step One: Love Your Employees

Step one in Fullan's (2008) six steps is to love your employees or, for the purpose of my research, love our educators. "If you build your organization by focusing on your customers (students) without making the same careful commitment to your employees (teachers), you won't succeed for long" (Fullan, 2008, pp. 11-12). In other words, the education system's quality cannot exceed its teachers' quality. Fullan explained that the key to this step is "enabling employees to learn continuously and to find meaning in their work and their relationships with coworkers and the company as a whole" (p. 12). To address this first step, I will share the data I have collected with the administrators and board of the school under study.

The data from my study indicated that educators at the school under study and in the U.S. felt administrators expected too much from them. The interview results and the survey feedback indicated that the educators felt pressure and stress from leaders' expectations around simultaneously implementing more than one initiative. The educators also indicated a need to see more dedication and involvement from administrators and to have them be more visible and impactful. The educators also desired more time to collaborate with colleagues on student SEL lessons and develop ideas for engaging activities.

A school system is only as good as the quality of its faculty. "Higher levels of appreciation and compensation achieve lower turnover rates and employees who love and are motivated by what they do" (Fullan, p. 32, 2008). Educators who feel that leaders are investing their time and resources to provide them with the tools and knowledge they need to complete their job responsibilities are more likely to feel appreciated. Regarding

SEL, all schools will dedicate at least one school year to adult SEL before any student implementation. This initial school year of adult SEL implementation will include time built into work weeks for faculty to meet with colleagues to complete SEL-related activities focused on their emotional wellbeing. The initial year of adult SEL implementation will not include any other school comprehensive initiatives, and the expectations will remain on the emotional growth of the educators.

I have learned from previous studies that students model behavior from the important adults in their lives (Lubit & Lubit, 2019). Happy adults who feel loved and supported by others will exude this energy to the students they teach. In order to accomplish this, school leaders will need to dedicate ongoing time and support to their educators well past the first year of adult SEL implementation. The school system will “create an enthusiastic workforce - fair treatment, enabling achievement, and camaraderie” (Fullan, 2008, p. 37). School leaders will do this by creating on-site and off-site meetings for educators to collaborate with one another in both professional and social settings. Building in social activities where the focus is more on team building will also achieve this first step by demonstrating a love for the employee. In my professional experience, people are more likely to thrive in settings where they feel connected to their colleagues and the organization. Social emotional learning and wellbeing are all tied to the satisfaction adults feel in not just their personal lives but their professional lives as well. In my professional opinion and to Fullan’s point, people are happier when they feel connected to each other and a purpose.

Step Two: Connect Peers with a Purpose

Fullan's (2008) step two is to connect peers with purpose. Fullan stated that positive purposeful peer interaction works effectively under three conditions: (1) when the larger values of the organization and those of the individuals and groups mesh; (2) when information and knowledge about effective practices are widely and openly shared; and (3) when monitoring mechanisms are in place to detect and address ineffective actions while also identifying and consolidating effective practices (p. 45).

To create purposeful peer interactions, district and school leaders will eliminate many top-down directions from the hierarchy and work on cultivating peer groups. This will allow educators to build a connection to their organization and the larger school system. One strategy leaders will implement is one that Fullan (2008) described in his step two chapter, *Lateral Capacity Building* or the *We-We Commitment*.

Lateral Capacity Building uses the wisdom of the crowd in school initiatives where people in school districts, private schools, charter schools, and independent schools learn from one another in organized groups across a region of schools (p. 47). The governing bodies create these teams using the city or cities that schools are in or specific regions of schools. The idea is to create inter-school peer groups to influence the spread of effective practices. The inter-school peer groups will focus on SEL practices. They will discuss effective programs and curriculums and create a space for sharing effective lessons with peers in different districts or buildings. These groups will have leaders to help provide direction and intervene when things are not working as well as they could.

The We-We Solution (Fullan, 2008, p. 49) fosters commitment of all stakeholders to rally around a higher purpose. In this solution, the objective is for all stakeholders to find meaning in their own personal social and emotional wellbeing and understand how that connects to job satisfaction as well as student success and achievement. Fullan provided an example of this strategy:

When teachers within a school collaborate, they begin to think not just about “my classroom” but also about “our school.” When school leaders work in clusters of schools, they become almost as concerned about the success of the other schools in the network as they are about their own. When district leaders participate in a network with other districts, they become interested in the success of other districts, and indeed the system as a whole. (Fullan, p. 49-50, 2008)

When educators expand their influence beyond their school buildings and districts to educators in other surrounding schools and districts, the learning community will be endless in the number of shared experiences and lessons learned from peers. This will benefit everyone in the education field as a whole.

Step Three: Capacity Building Prevails

Fullan’s (2008) third step is *capacity building prevails*. Fullan described capacity building as “leaders investing in the development of individual and collaborative efficacy of a whole group or system to accomplish significant improvements” (p. 13). One way to achieve this step is for leaders and hiring committees to select their educators well and invest in their continuous improvement. By doing so, leaders in the school system are investing in building competencies, resources, and motivation among their educators. When leaders of a school system invest in their educators by continuing to put in time

and effort to develop knowledge and skills and continuously increase resources, they will yield fulfilled educators who are confident in their abilities.

As I referenced in this study, SEL needs to begin with the educator for it to be the most successful for students. The educator must be able to regulate and understand their social emotional wellbeing and to continue to grow that capacity. The adult teaching the SEL lessons is more capable of modeling and instructing if they understand their social emotional wellbeing and needs. These prospective educators must also be willing to continue to nurture their own social emotional learning as well as those of their students. Therefore, school leaders will alter their hiring process to target educators who have an understanding of what SEL is and have taken part in SEL initiatives.

Fullan (2008) described this as the objective to “hire and cultivate talented people” (p. 64). Fullan stated that this is not intended to eliminate “intellectual prowess but to put it in perspective. Intelligence is overrated, as anyone who has read about emotional intelligence knows. The point is that intelligence must be linked with other qualities that are more difficult to learn and discern” (p. 65). Leaders in charge of hiring will need to determine if new educators are willing to participate in ongoing development of SEL for themselves and their students.

Leaders will include lateral capacity building, as mentioned in step two, in this step as well. Administrators will develop peer groups at the school with leaders considered experts in the SEL and mental health field. The leaders will include administrators and teachers who complete more intensive training on SEL than the peer group members to continue to grow their knowledge and expertise of SEL. The peer groups will include educators with varying SEL experiences and knowledge to provide a

context for diversity. The peer groups will meet monthly to continue to increase teacher capacity in SEL competencies and increase motivation. The peer group leaders will meet an additional time once a month to reflect on educator responses and needs concerning their gained subject knowledge of SEL. These leaders will also bring in speakers and other outside support from the community who are experts in mental health and SEL.

Step Four: Learning the Work

Fullan's (2008) fourth step is "learning is the work" (p. 75). of This step follows step three closely and similarly. Fullan argues that while outside professional development is great, it is much more beneficial to learn from the work you do on a day-to-day basis. "In other words, there is far too much going to workshops, taking short courses, and the like, and far too little learning while doing the work" (p.13). Fullan stated, "Learning external to the job can represent a useful input, but if it is not in balance and in concert with learning in the setting in which you work, the learning will end up being superficial" (p. 14). The goal is to strike a balance between integrating what educators know, making them consistent performers and the new learning required for continuous improvement.

At the school level, administrators and other school leaders will create an SEL team of experienced individuals to lead ongoing adult SEL improvement and support. This same group will also focus on ongoing student SEL implementation and improvement that factors in new experiences while reflecting on what they know has worked. Learning will be constant where the people in the school system are detecting errors and correcting common mistakes. The SEL team will oversee the ongoing

collection of adult and student data that they will analyze for successes and challenges. This work will determine where leaders will make adjustments.

Another initiative to put this step into action is teacher-to-teacher classroom observations. Small groups of teachers will have a rotation of observing each other during SEL lessons to gain new ideas and perspectives. Leaders will build time into a school week for these teachers to collaborate on their observations and develop their SEL-driven lessons and language toolbox. This same system will also target the student's individual SEL needs. These observations provide a foundation to respond accurately with the right focused instruction and professional learning. This action could also help onboard new teachers and leaders to a school system which Fullan (2008) refers to as "learning in the context, embedded in the culture of the workplace" (p. 89). Learning from within the system, and not outside the organization, could allow new hires to learn from their colleagues and receive training from experienced educators in the system.

Step Five: Transparency Rules

Transparency rules is step five in Fullan's (2008) six secrets of change. Fullan describes transparency as more than a results-driven orientation but a learning process that gains understanding in practices that achieve desired outcomes or results. Fullan (2008) believed that when transparency is consistently evident, it creates an aura of "positive pressure"-pressure that is experienced as fair and reasonable, pressure that is actionable in that it points to solutions, and pressure that ultimately is inescapable" (p. 14). Transparency is being open about results and openness about what SEL practices work and what do not. "When data are precise, presented in a non-judgmental way, considered by peers, and used for improvement as well as for external accountability,

they serve to balance pressure and support” (Fullan, 2008, p. 98). Transparency can be a motivating force in an organization and a way to build trust with all stakeholders.

Each school system will select an SEL progress monitoring tool that will allow the collection of both adult and student data. Leaders will administer the data collection tool to educators and all adults in the building at the start, midpoint, and end of the year. The data collection tool will be a temperature measurement of the educators' social emotional wellbeing at different points in the year. This data will be available to all educators and serve as a conversation starter to understand the emotional needs of educators throughout a school year. The SEL team will use this data to implement different support systems throughout the school year and other wellness programs.

The SEL team will use this SEL measurement tool with students and administer it at the start, midpoint, and end of the school year. The SEL team will make the data available to the whole community, including parents. The team will analyze the data to gain an understanding of the emotional and mental state of the students at the different points of the year and will highlight the SEL lessons students are finding helpful and least impactful. Fullan (2008) stated, “People need to be able to compare themselves with themselves over time to assess their progress in achieving important personal and organizational goals. They cannot do this without clear transparency showing the causal relationship between practice and results, which enables them to make corrections as they go” (p. 103). In many ways, transparency is inevitable and unavoidable when discussing change leadership. A system must understand what is working, what the successes are and how to capitalize on them, what the challenges are, and how to provide agents of change to meet those challenges.

Step Six: Systems Learn

Systems learn is the last step in Fullan's (2008) six secrets of change. Fullan (2008) reminded the reader that his six secrets work together and are checks and balances that bring out the best in a given secret. "Transparency and learning in context flourish when capacity building trumps judgmentalism, when peer interaction fosters coherence, and when employees and customers are equally valued" (p. 103-104). The six secrets culminate in the last step, which discusses how the previous five steps lead to step six of how systems learn. The question is: How do these systems continue to learn and create a sustainable environment that continues to thrive?

A school system cannot merely focus on individual leaders. Leaders will come and go, and a system will experience its share of ups and downs. The first step is to focus on developing many leaders working in concert, instead of relying on key individuals. Second, the organization needs to be led by people who approach complexity with a combination of humility and faith that effectiveness can be maximized under the circumstances. (Fullan, 2008, p. 109)

Fullan (2008) stated that the first step in creating systems that learn is to enact the previous five steps. From this step, each school system will develop a plan to create leaders on all levels and steer away from a top-down approach. When many leaders work together, they can cultivate more leaders within their ranks for the system's future.

Fullan (2008) discussed how all leaders in a system also need to have global awareness. Leaders need to explore environmental complexity and be grounded in the community that surrounds their school systems. These leaders also need to have a solid understanding of the educational system as it applies to city, state, and national

implications. School leaders will need to participate in community groups outside of their school and be active participants in city board meetings better to understand the community's strengths and areas of improvement.

Policy Statement

The policy I am recommending is that all school systems have an SEL curriculum beginning in preschool and continuing through the twelfth grade. The SEL curriculum selected will be CASEL accredited. The SEL curriculum will include adult SEL training for the entirety of one school calendar year before student implementation, which means educators will not implement the curriculum for students while they are undergoing training. The SEL curriculum will have different phases of implementation that will include not only adults and students in the school system but all stakeholders (parents, board members, and coaches). Educators will attend peer group meetings monthly led by SEL team members throughout training and implementation.

The hiring of educators will shift so there is an equal emphasis on emotional intelligence and academic teaching experience. Educators, leaders, and administrators will demonstrate background knowledge in social emotional learning and teaching to the whole child, both academically and emotionally. The hiring committee will ask questions to understand a prospective educator's ability to support students' social and emotional wellness as part of all educator hiring processes.

Each school will have a designated clinical mental health therapist on staff who will serve as an instructional leader to guide SEL teams and work with educators individually to develop SEL teaching skills further. This will be the sole responsibility of this individual. Another clinical mental health staff would be beneficial in aiding

students' more significant mental health needs. All school counselors will have a ratio of one per 150 students. Leaders will also hire dedicated case managers or coordinators to manage 504, and IEP plans solely. These individuals will not have duties other than meeting with students on their caseload. These case managers will have at most 50 students each.

I recommend this policy because student support begins with the individual teaching them. Educators must have an understanding of their own social emotional wellbeing in order to model and teach SEL lessons to students effectively. Successful student implementation hinges on the educator's ability to recognize and regulate their emotions and support this same growth in their students. This policy will be effective because it will provide educators with additional SEL support and build in time for collaboration. The ultimate goal is to create effective SEL schools where the whole community becomes involved at some level in social emotional learning.

Considerations for Decision Makers

Earlier in this chapter, I explained how Fullan's (2008) six steps of change can guide the change process needed for all schools to prepare their educators to teach SEL and to do so thoughtfully where students' learning is improved. My policy statement indicates changes in allotted resources and time where the goal is for educators to receive more support from administrators and to lessen student caseloads per individual. In the following paragraphs, I will analyze my policy statement through the lenses of economic, political, legal, moral, and ethical impact.

Economic Analysis

My economic analysis of this policy will consider the potential costs and benefits of implementation in schools. A significant cost associated with my policy is the hiring of additional personnel. My policy requires school leaders to hire two clinical mental health therapists (one focusing on SEL training and implementation and one focusing on individual student counseling). My policy also requires school leaders to hire enough counselors to achieve a ratio of one counselor for every 150 students.

In my professional experience with independent schools such as the school under study, parents and guardians are willing to donate to cover the cost of specific initiatives when they value them. Independent schools could pursue fundraisers to cover the cost of the additional personnel. In public schools, decision-makers could allocate state funds to cover the cost of the additional personnel, or districts could raise funds through locally voter-approved sales tax increases. Both independent and public school leaders could pursue working with the local community to form partnerships to provide the necessary funds. Another avenue school leaders could use for funding would be to research and apply for public and private grants that support SEL programs in schools.

Another cost associated with the SEL policy is training teachers to deliver the SEL program. These costs include ongoing professional development, training materials, workshops and webinars, and the SEL program or curriculum cost. Leaders usually purchase SEL curriculums or programs and renew them every couple of years. The purchase price of these programs typically varies based on the school size and the number of employees receiving training. School leaders could use the same process to cover these costs as they did for funding the mental health counselors and additional guidance counselors.

Implementing SEL policies could result in infrastructure costs. The costs cover items such as adding spaces for counseling offices and meeting spaces designed for colleague collaboration. There would also be consideration for the requirement of space dedicated to SEL materials and other items used with students and for faculty training.

There are economic benefits to this SEL policy. "Students exposed to SEL programs have healthier attitudes and behavior, improved social and emotional skills, and better academic performance, as compared to peers" (Zuckerbod, 2018, p. 40). Educators who have dedicated time built into their own SEL are more likely to have successful classrooms and students who are likely to succeed. By minimizing stress and anxiety, SEL can improve students' abilities to focus and concentrate in class. If students are in healthy mental states and can focus and concentrate on academics, schools and districts can save costs on the need for remedial interventions, improving students' long-term outcomes. These long-term outcomes could be increased graduation rates and better employment opportunities. SEL policies can also help reduce problematic student behavior, leading to a more positive school atmosphere and overall better student outcomes. It can also reduce costs in hiring additional staff to supervise students needing restorative services.

Political Analysis

The political impact of this SEL policy mainly depends on the level of support for SEL by policymakers in a given school, district, city, or state. For example, in Illinois, state policymakers have pushed for increased mental health support in schools (Smylie, 2023). On the other side, educators in Florida have seen a reduction in support from policymakers regarding SEL and mental health education for young people (Wong, 2023). Regardless of the school's state location, stakeholders can make or break the implementation of an SEL policy.

Many school boards may find a divide amongst members, especially regarding the time spent away from academics when SEL becomes prioritized. There is also cause to say that traditional mindsets may find SEL to be lenient and designed for students to avoid *real-world* matters. Overall, policymakers with different focuses may prioritize other policies, impacting the resources provided for SEL policies. Educators must point out to those policymakers that employers today are seeking candidates based on more than academic success. Employers are seeking candidates who have a high emotional quotient and are able to work well with others in teams (Birt, 2023).

Legal Analysis

The legal analysis of the SEL policy has to take into consideration liabilities. Schools may be liable for damages if they fail to provide SEL services or if they provide services that cause harm to their students. Some of our nation's public school systems are required to provide SEL lessons that align with their state board of education. These school systems must ensure they have qualified and trained staff to provide SEL services. School system leaders would need to ensure the staff follows important mental health

protocols. These mental health protocols require qualified school staff to respond to the needs and concerns of their students. Failure to do so can result in legal action against the school.

Regarding specific state and federal laws, an SEL policy must comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2015 (US Department of Education, n.d). IDEA requires all schools to provide appropriate services and accommodations for students with disabilities. SEL learning must accommodate all students and educators must implement it so that all students receive equitable SEL education. SEL policy would also need to take into consideration anti-discrimination and anti-harassment protocols. This policy would need to address bullying and other forms of harassment so that teachers and students know their rights and the resources available to them.

Another possible legal impact of my policy would involve the teachers' unions because teacher contracts could be affected. Enacting my policy will require time, resources, and teacher professional development specifically for SEL. Teacher union leaders may need to work with school system leaders to design additional compensation for teachers related to their training. For example, teachers may need to attend training sessions during the summer or on weekends which would require payment.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

The goal of the SEL policy is to help the development of children and address their overall wellbeing. The SEL policy must be equitable and allow all students access to available resources and opportunities. School leaders are responsible for taking care of their students and teachers. Students' success is more than just academic achievement. Schools should prioritize developing the whole child, including emotional wellbeing and

intelligence. All SEL policies should be inclusive and respect the diversity of the school population. School leaders can accomplish this by recognizing and appreciating different cultural backgrounds and identities.

Educators must hold an individual's privacy and confidentiality with the utmost respect and importance. Students' and teachers' privacy and confidentiality should remain protected. During the process of teacher training, individuals may discuss personal emotional information with their peer groups. All individuals involved must understand that confidentiality is paramount amongst each other as educators. Educators and students must understand why leaders collected the data and receive the results of the data. In the same regard, students should maintain confidentiality for each other in their group lessons.

To ensure ethical standards, schools must provide adequate training and support for those adults tasked with student SEL implementation. Educators must feel well-informed and understand ethical policies if certain situations arise. SEL training must be culturally responsive and relevant to all educators and students. This may mean additional training to develop cultural competencies among educators.

Conclusion

The purpose of my program evaluation was to investigate the preparation of educators to implement a social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum. I evaluated teachers' perceptions as they progressed through yearlong staff development opportunities to implement an SEL curriculum. I surveyed educators at the school under study and surveyed and interviewed educators throughout the United States who had received staff development for SEL and implemented it to determine their perceptions of

their training and the effect of their training on students. My research questions were How could leaders best support their educators in preparation to implement a new SEL curriculum, and What specific types of professional development opportunities promote educators' understanding of SEL? The goal of my evaluation was to ultimately develop a policy with recommendations for best practices for educators implementing SEL.

This process addressed my program evaluation purpose by answering my two research questions. The educators under study benefited from professional development in implementing a social emotional learning curriculum for students. They also benefited from adult implementation before student implementation, with some participants remarking on the need not to have both done simultaneously. The participants appreciated the designated time for training and the support for the training. Overall, the participants felt that working in groups and teams with their peers was most beneficial. The results from the study also proved that educators see the value in SEL programs for themselves and their students. However, participants resoundingly questioned how administrators would schedule time for professional development into an already packed academic schedule with multiple simultaneous initiatives.

My goal was to develop a policy with best practices when preparing educators to implement SEL. I addressed this goal by gaining an understanding from my data collection and creating an SEL policy for school stakeholders. The SEL policy I have developed addresses the need for more time built into a school week dedicated to social emotional development for educators. This, in turn, will directly affect the students who will benefit from the educators' gained experience and knowledge in emotional wellbeing. It also addresses the need for organizational change in peer collaboration and

support. The policy brings in the concept of lateral capacity building (Fullan, 2008), where educators learn from one another in a school building in multiple school buildings across a district or region.

The policy addresses issues raised in my program evaluation in regard to additional support. My policy recommends smaller counselors-to-student ratios and additions of instructional educators who are clinical mental health practitioners. The organizational plan that led to the development of this policy focused on time built into a year for training and development, opportunities for team and peer groups, and the need for team building with all stakeholders. The plan emphasized that learning is the work and the importance of learning from one another and learning in the context of environments.

The research in this program evaluation can provide helpful information and inspire additional work in education. The participants overwhelmingly reported too many initiatives running simultaneously and needing more time. Time was a recurring theme throughout the study. This begins at the state or federal level. State and national education boards and their push for standards strain educational systems throughout the United States. School and district leaders face the pressure of accommodating multiple initiatives to keep in compliance. This ultimately hurts students and the quality of education they receive from overworked teachers. The heart of the problem is that U.S. school systems do not value the emotional wellbeing of educators and how that directly impacts students. It begins with more emphasis on SEL at the pre-service level and the continuity of this SEL throughout the educator's career. The results of this research will

bring changes to our educational system at all levels. As a result, leaders will prioritize the educator's emotional wellbeing and intelligence.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Beginning of Year Survey Questions for Educators

Appendix B: Mid-Year Survey Questions for Teachers

Appendix C: End of Year Survey Questions for Educators

Appendix D: Survey Questions for Educators throughout the United States

Appendix E: Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Educators throughout the United States

Appendix F: “As Is” and “To Be” Analysis Chart

Appendix G: Strategies and Action Chart

Appendix A

Beginning of Year Survey Questions for Educators

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please provide feedback ...

1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

Beginning of Year Survey Questions

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please provide feedback.

1- Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4= Strongly Agree

1. I feel I have a good understanding of what social emotional learning is.
2. I feel that social emotional learning (SEL) is important for my classroom.
3. I understand how my own emotions impact the students in my classroom.
4. I know how I want to feel when I come into work and how I am going to achieve that feeling on a daily basis.
5. I often stop and reflect on my feelings before, during and after classes.
6. When I feel overwhelmed by a student's behavior, I stop and do a self-talk in order to respond in the most appropriate way for the student.
7. I consistently use conflict resolution activities/meetings with my entire class.
8. I think it is important to acknowledge students' emotional status throughout the day.
9. I take time to validate a student's emotional status.
10. Effective training and instructional support on new initiatives enhances the learning experience for my students.

11. Working in groups with my teaching colleagues during training enhances my reception to new material.

Please provide a written response to the following:

12. What do you feel teachers need in order to effectively implement a new SEL program with fidelity?

13. Is there any else you would like to provide feedback on regarding the SEL curriculum/training you are receiving this school year?

Appendix B

Mid-Year Survey Questions for Educators

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please provide feedback ...

1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

Beginning of Year Survey Questions

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please provide feedback.

1- Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4= Strongly Agree

1. I feel I have a good understanding of what social emotional learning is.
2. I feel that social emotional learning (SEL) is important for my classroom.
3. I understand how my own emotions impact the students in my classroom.
4. I know how I want to feel when I come into work and how I am going to achieve that feeling on a daily basis.
5. I often stop and reflect on my feelings before, during and after classes.
6. When I feel overwhelmed by a student's behavior, I stop and do a self-talk in order to respond in the most appropriate way for the student.
7. I consistently use conflict resolution activities/meetings with my entire class.
8. I think it is important to acknowledge students' emotional status throughout the day.
9. I take time to validate a student's emotional status.
10. Effective training and instructional support on new initiatives enhances the learning experience for my students.

11. Working in groups with my teaching colleagues during training enhances my reception to new material.

Please provide a written response to the following:

12. What do you feel teachers need in order to effectively implement a new SEL program with fidelity?

13. Is there any else you would like to provide feedback on regarding the SEL curriculum/training you are receiving this school year?

Appendix C

End of Year Survey Questions for Educators

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please provide feedback ...

1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

1. I feel I have a good understanding of what social emotional learning is.
2. I feel that social emotional learning (SEL) is important for my classroom.
3. I understand how my own emotions impact the students in my classroom.
4. I know how I want to feel when I come into work and how I am going to achieve that feeling on a daily basis.
5. I often stop and reflect on my feelings before, during and after classes.
6. When I feel overwhelmed by a student's behavior, I stop and do a self-talk in order to respond in the most appropriate way for the student.
7. I consistently use conflict resolution activities/meetings with my entire class.
8. I think it is important to acknowledge student's emotional status throughout the day.
9. I take time to validate a student's emotional status.
10. Working in groups with my teaching colleagues during training enhanced my reception to new material.
11. Effective training and instructional support on new initiatives enhances the learning experience for my students.

Please provide a written response to the following:

12. What do you feel teachers need in order to effectively implement a new SEL program with fidelity?
13. What method of training for the new SEL curriculum was most helpful to you?
14. What was the most valuable information you received this year from the training that you believe will make the most impact on your SEL instruction?
15. Is there any else you would like to provide feedback on regarding the SEL curriculum/training you received this school year?

Appendix D

Survey Questions for Educators throughout the United States

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please provide feedback.

1- Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4= Strongly Agree

1. I was formally trained to provide SEL instruction with students.
2. SEL was a new concept to me when I received training.
3. I received ongoing professional development during the first year of implementing the SEL curriculum.
4. The training I received was differentiated to meet my needs.
5. I was expected to implement the SEL curriculum while I was receiving training.
6. During professional development, I learned how my social/emotional wellbeing affects students.
7. The professional development I received was helpful to the successful implementation of the SEL curriculum.
8. How frequently were the professional development sessions provided?
 - a. Weekly
 - b. Twice a month
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Quarterly

9. The professional development sessions were completed:
 - Independently
 - Small group (grade level or content area)
 - Large group (entire staff)
 - Combination (independent, small group, large group)
10. Please tell me about your experiences with the preparation and implementation of the SEL curriculum. What were the advantages and disadvantages of the professional development you received? What were the benefits for the students?
11. Is there anything else you would like me to know about teacher preparation for implementation of an SEL curriculum?
12. If you would be willing to participate in a 15-minute interview, please provide your name and contact information.

Appendix E

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Educators throughout the United States

1. Please describe how you were trained in providing SEL to your students.
2. What was the most important thing you learned about SEL during the time you were trained?
3. Please describe the effects of implementing your SEL curriculum for your students:
 - a. academically
 - b. behaviorally
 - c. socially (Making friends/conflicts/emotions)
4. What should leaders know when selecting a curriculum for SEL and providing professional development for teachers to implement the curriculum?
5. Please tell me anything else you would like me to know about SEL curriculums and the professional development that is provided to educators.

Appendix F

“As Is” and “To Be” Analysis Chart

As Is Problem Statement: Educators struggle with having the experience and training to implement SEL programs for students.

To Be Statement: SEL programs are implemented at all schools and educators receive proper training to implement programs for students and receive care for their own SEL needs.

Competencies

AS IS	TO BE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teachers have limited experience with providing SEL instruction to students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All pre-service Educators will complete competencies in areas of social emotional wellbeing in addition to academic teaching requirements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teachers do not have SEL instruction modeled for them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School-wide training and professional development that is maintained throughout each school year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leaders don't believe training applies to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All stakeholders included

Conditions

AS IS	TO BE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time not allocated for SEL professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and district leaders will build their space and resources prioritizing SEL programs and curriculums.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited adults in the building who specialize in working in SEL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More counselors, psychologists, and social workers at each building so that the student ratio to student support is smaller and more individualized.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are stressed with being tasked to teach academic subjects and SEL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders will build time into each week for adult SEL support and adult wellbeing clinics/workshops.

Culture

AS IS	TO BE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of differentiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All instruction will be differentiated while teaching to the “whole child.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching a type of student that is no longer at the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All instruction will be differentiated while teaching to the “whole child.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tradition of not discussing adult emotional needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators will create a culture that highlights the importance of SEL and emotional intelligence and mental health.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development is not valued unless it is a personal choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All educators will be required to complete professional development training throughout tenure.

Context

AS IS	TO BE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent and Public Schools in the United States are inconsistent in providing an SEL curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schools in the United States will have an SEL curriculum or program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students need support in learning how to apply strategies in understanding, acknowledging, and regulating their emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEL implementation from preschool through 12th grade.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are expected to implement multiple initiatives simultaneously 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders will prioritize the time and support educators need to implement SEL over other initiatives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited Budgets (Programs, professional development and staffing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders will prioritize budgeting for SEL programs and emphasize SEL instruction to a higher degree than academic core subjects.

Appendix G

Strategies and Action Chart

Strategies	Actions
Love your employees	<p>Examine more closely the relationship between employees(teachers) and customers (students) and how administrators conceive of these relationships. “The quality of the education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.” (Fullan, 2008, p. 23).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Invest in your educators ● Share my survey data results as it relates to teachers feeling appreciated ● Share interview feedback ● Discuss teacher concerns ● Provide research to school boards/ school leaders/governing body on the importance of Adult SEL as it relates to adult work success and student success ● Provide research on how higher levels of appreciation and compensation achieves lower turnover rates and employees who love and are motivated by what they do (tie it all back to SEL)- emotional wellbeing and modeling for students ● “Build a strong commitment to respect the teaching profession and invest in teachers’ development, with an equal focus on results” (p. 34). ● Create an “enthusiastic work force” - “fair treatment, enabling achievement, and camaraderie” (Fullan, 2008, p. 37).

Connect peers with purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Create more positive purposeful peer interactions than in top-down direction from the hierarchy” (Fullan, 2008, p.41) ● Create quality experiences that create quality results ● All work done in teams-success determined by how well teachers work with colleagues ● “Lateral Capacity Building”-Use the “wisdom of the crowd” school initiatives in which districts/schools learn from others in organized groups across many schools/districts- learn from each other- use peer interaction to influence the spread of effective practices (Fullan, 2008, p.47). ● PLCs (professional learning communities) ● “The We-We Commitment” School leaders work in a cluster of schools, District leaders participate in a network with other districts, (“identifying with an entity larger than oneself expands the self, with powerful consequences” (Fullan, 2008, p.49).
Capacity building prevails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Hire and Cultivate Talented People” (Fullan, 2008, p. 64) ● Hire based on more than intellectual intelligence but more on emotional intelligence ● More time dedicated to professional development throughout school years on SEL ● Interview protocols-include questions on emotional intelligence and SEL knowledge ● Governing school or school district body reposition and refashion human resources screen for educators who have a higher level of educational training in SEL, strong interpersonal and communication skills, a willingness to learn, and motivation to teach ● Develop leaders using fellowship programs

Learning is the work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Administrators/School Leaders create an SEL guiding team of experienced individuals to lead ongoing adult and student SEL● Consistency and innovation must go together, achieved through organized context● Increase depth of understanding of SEL● Constant learning- detecting errors and correcting common errors- SEL group or team in charge of ongoing analysis of adult and student data collection according to success and challenges and make adjustments where necessary- “Successes are recognized, challenges are addressed” (Fullan, 2008, p. 83).● Workshops for small groups of educators● Programs created at district and school level geared towards one-on-one individual SEL tutoring● Teachers will need to engage in observations of each other in the classrooms, and classrooms of teachers in other schools.● Identify the learning needs of each individual and respond accurately with the right focused instruction and professional learning.● Learn from within, not outside the organization- new educators are coached and trained by experienced educators in the system. “Learn in the context, embedded in the culture of the workplace” (Fullan, 2008, p.89)
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Transparency rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The use of data to guide growth and change in a system● Schools will report SEL data to community gathered by adults and students, all stakeholders. They will highlight success/growth and draw attention to challenges. The data is used as a tool for improvement● Establish open data collection and use● Achieve public confidence and accountability<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ “Enables us to make corrections as we go” (Fullan, 2008, p. 103)
Systems Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Develop all leaders in a system, not just administrators. District and school leaders create leaders on all levels of the system