

St. Cloud State University

The Repository at St. Cloud State

Culminating Projects in Special Education

Department of Special Education

8-2023

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING: FOCUSING ON ELEMENTARY STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

Angela White

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/sped_etds



Part of the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

White, Angela, "SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING: FOCUSING ON ELEMENTARY STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES" (2023). *Culminating Projects in Special Education*. 159.
https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/sped_etds/159

This Starred Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Special Education at The Repository at St. Cloud State. It has been accepted for inclusion in Culminating Projects in Special Education by an authorized administrator of The Repository at St. Cloud State. For more information, please contact tdsteman@stcloudstate.edu.

Social Emotional Learning: Focusing On Elementary Students with Intellectual Disabilities

By

Angela White

A Starred Paper Proposal

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science

in Special Education

August 2023

Starred Paper Committee:
Bradley Kaffar, Chairperson
Michele Barron-Albers
Frances Kayona

Table of Contents

	Page
List of Tables.....	3
 Chapter	
Chapter I: Introduction.....	4
Research Question.....	6
Focus of the Paper.....	6
Historical Insight.....	6
Rationale.....	11
Definition of Terms.....	13
Chapter II: Review of Literature.....	15
Chapter III: Summary of Findings.....	26
Conclusion.....	28
Recommendations for Future Research.....	30
Implications for Practice.....	31
Summary.....	32
References.....	34

List of Tables

Table	Page
I: Summary of Chapter II Findings.....	22

Chapter I: Introduction

Since the landmark decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education Topeka, Kansas* on May 17, 1954, children with disabilities in the 21st century have more educational rights and opportunities. Two hundred years ago, children with special educational needs were predominantly cast aside, hidden away or isolated by being excluded from attending the burgeoning United States educational system for children (Conrad, 2020). Per the U.S. Department of Education (USDoE) website Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA),

individuals with disabilities often lived in state institutions, specifically for persons with intellectual disabilities or mental illness. Many of these restrictive settings provided only minimal food, clothing, and shelter. Institutional residents with disabilities were often merely tolerated rather than assessed, educated and rehabilitated. Further, most families were not afforded the opportunity to take part in planning or placement decisions regarding their child, and resources were not available to enable children with significant disabilities to live at home and receive an education at neighborhood schools in their community. (USDoE, 2023, conditions before EHA and IDEA section)

Social and emotional learning (SEL) can be traced back to 380 B.C. through Plato's work (Beaty, 2018, p. 68, para one). In 1998, Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak and Hawkins stated that

this group of school-based prevention and youth development experts announced an outline for incorporating SEL in schools. The outline listed such skills as being able to assess the intensity of feelings, controlling impulses, delay gratification, express, identify, label, and manage emotions, along with reducing stress are needed for students. (as cited in Beaty, 2018, p. 68, para two).

The term Social Emotional Learning was coined by the Fetzer Institute in 1994 (Weissberg et al, 2015, p. 5 and Beaty, 2018, p. 68, para three). The Fetzer Institute also assisted in the creation of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, also known as CASEL. The purpose of CASEL was to provide SEL backed by evidence based research (Beaty, 2018, p. 69, para one). The CASEL website (CASEL, What is the CASEL Framework section, para The CASEL 5), delineates five domains revolving around students' capacity to effectively navigate their daily challenges and tasks. The five CASEL domains are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Weissberg, et al, 2015; Faria et al., 2017; Beaty, 2018, & CASEL, 2023). CASEL has increased the focus on the rights of students to an education including social and emotional learning instruction. This includes students with disabilities. Students with high-incidence disabilities are often overlooked when conducting SEL research, development and instruction design.

High-incidence disabilities include specific learning disability (SLD), speech language impairments (SLI), other health impairments (OHI), which includes Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and other medical conditions, emotional disorder (ED), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as well as intellectual disability (ID) and developmental delay (DD) (National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), 2023). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2023), the following disability qualification categories account for 95 percent of all students with disabilities. They are; SLD- 37 percent, SLI- 17 percent, OHI- 16 percent, ASD- ten percent, ID- seven percent, EBD- five percent, and DD- three percent.

Considering the strides the United States has achieved as well as the 50th anniversary of IDEA approaching, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) stated that in 2021 of the 240 million children in the world with disabilities, 49 percent are more like to have never been to

school (UNICEF, 2021, p. 152, para 4). In 2021, UNICEF also noted that when considering the above mentioned 240 million children worldwide, this is equivalent to one in ten children with disabilities (UNICEF, 2021, p.18, figure 1.1). In 2016, Adebisi, Rasaki and Liman stated that the prevalence of intellectual disabilities cuts across races, colors, socioeconomic status, and conditions in different countries (as cited by Jacob et al., 2022, p. 2).

While educators in the United States are making a difference in the lives of children with disabilities, academically as well as personally, we must not forget that our nation may be the leader that other, less inclusionary nations and peoples, strive to emulate.

Research Question

What Social Emotional Learning resources are available, for students identified with intellectual disabilities, in an elementary school center-based setting and are they effective?

Focus of the Review

The focus of my review is on SEL, specifically curriculum, materials, resources available and evidence based research, specifically in relation to educating special education students identified as Developmental Cognitive Delay (DCD). I have identified 13 articles, eight websites, two handbooks, one encyclopedia, and two other works, i.e. Master's Thesis. The Chapter II literature review represents six research articles. Academic Search Premier, APA PsycInfo, Eric.ed.gov, EBSCO Megafire, Google Scholar, JSTOR, SAGE Reference Online, are the databases used to locate studies and articles using the keywords and keyword combinations: *social-emotional learning (SEL), SEL special education, SEL students with disabilities, history of SEL, intellectual disabilities (ID) and SEL and ID.*

Historical Insight

During the last quarter of the 20th century, the United States government enacted and mandated protection for students with special needs, including but not exclusively, licensed teachers to create specialized, individualized educational plans, as well as promising a free and appropriate education, in the least restrictive environment, called Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) of 1975 (USDoE, 2023, conditions before EHA and IDEA section). The EHA has also been referred to by its governmental law sequencing, Public Law 94-142. In 1990, the EHA was reauthorized and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and also added two new disability categories, Autism and Traumatic Brain Injuries (USDoE, 2023, history section). Children with disabilities had a low to no chance of receiving an education before the EHA was enacted in 1975.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2023),

the EHA was a response to Congressional concern for two groups of children: the more than one million children with disabilities excluded entirely from the education system and the children with disabilities who had only limited access to the education system and were therefore denied an appropriate education. This latter group comprised more than half of all children with disabilities who were living in the U.S. at that time (USDoE, 2023, IDEA History, & 1975: Public Law 94-142 section).

From 1987-1992, a group of educators and researchers, led by Timothy Shriver and Dr. Roger P. Weissberg, began the New Haven Social Development program that pioneered Social Emotional Learning strategies across K-12 classrooms (Beaty, 2018, p. 68). Over five decades ago, Dr. James Comer, who is acknowledged as the father of SEL, identified a lack of education focusing on the “whole child”. Since Dr. James Comer piloted the Comer School Development Program (CSDP) in the 1960’s focusing on the development of children and their interactions

with adults, non-teaching community members became involved in the education of youth (CASEL, 2023, Our History section, para Our Founding Story).

Subsequent to Dr. Comer's pilot CSPD, a group of various field scholars, educators, authors and a philanthropist joined together and created the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning in 1994 (Weissberg et al, 2015; Beaty, 2018; CASEL, 2023). CASEL SEL skills consist of five core competencies identified; Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making (Weissberg et al, 2015; Faria et al, 2017; Beaty, 2018, Faria et al., 2019 & CASEL, 2023).

CASEL also expands on the five competency areas with a definition of each area; self-awareness, which includes skills related to identifying one's own feelings, understanding how emotions relate to thoughts and behaviors, as well as aspects of self-knowledge and acceptance. Self-management which includes skills related to coping, setting and researching goals, and focusing on one's attention; social awareness, which includes skills related to identifying others' emotions, perspective taking and empathy, and embracing diversity; relationship skills, which encompass social skills broadly, including assertiveness; and responsible decision-making, which primarily reflects problem solving skills (Cipriano et al, 2023, p.14).

Generally speaking, SEL refers to the social, emotional, and related skills, attitudes, behaviors, and values that help direct students, including the action plan, containing benchmarks and specific goals, delineated by student grade level (Beaty, 2018).

The focus of my research is not on learning theory; however, it is important to consider Bandura's theory of learning in the general context of instructional methods.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory suggests that observation and modeling play a primary role in how and why people learn. Bandura's theory goes beyond the perception of

learning being the result of direct experience with the environment and instead needs to be explicitly taught. Bandura proposed that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling and is influenced by factors such as attention, motivation, attitudes, and emotions. Also, according to Bandura, people observe behavior either directly through social interactions with others or indirectly by observing behaviors through media. Actions that are rewarded are more likely to be imitated, while those that are punished are avoided. The majority of SEL programs utilize explicit teaching, including modeling, when teaching SEL aspects and nuances (Cherry, 2022, para1).

In 2015 Weissberg et al noted effective approaches to promote social-emotional competencies often incorporate four important elements represented by the acronym SAFE: Sequenced, Active, Focused and Explicit. When considering Bandura's learning theory along with the CASEL SAFE acronym, SAFE encompasses many of his proposed factors. Bandura's learning theory is observable with the teaching and modeling of emotional and social skills in the classroom (p. 7).

The U.S. has moved from excluding almost two million children with disabilities, from public educational institutions, to legally guaranteeing special education and any related services, as deemed necessary, to 7.5 million children with disabilities, as reported during the 2020-2021 school year (USDoe, 2023, A History of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, para 3).

Historically, students in the United States, who were not able to keep up with the academic rigor of a neurotypical classroom, were labeled and sent away from the public education system. The same student may have been labeled as a retard.

Merriam Webster's definition of the word retard depends on the function of the word.

When the word is functioning as a transitive verb, its definition is; to delay or impede the development or progress of: to slow up especially by preventing or hindering advance or accomplishment. When the word functions as a noun, its definition is; (1) to delay or impede the development or progress of : to slow up especially by preventing or hindering advance or accomplishment, (2) a person affected with intellectual disability, (3) a foolish or stupid person. The third definition of the noun has been considered offensive for many decades now (merriam-webster/dictionary/retard, 2023).

It was not until a 2017 IDEA revision, a result of Rosa's Law, replaced references to "mental retardation" in Federal law with "intellectual disability" (ID) or "intellectual disabilities", which has become the preferred term (USDoE/IDEA-History, 2023, 2000's and 2010's section, para 10).

Merriam Webster defines intellectual disability as; mild to severe impairment in intellectual ability equivalent to an IQ of 70 to 75 or below that is accompanied by significant limitations in social, practical, and conceptual skills (as in interpersonal communication, reasoning, or self-care) necessary for independent daily functioning and that has an onset before age 18 (merriam-webster/dictionary/intellectual, 2023).

Students who have been identified as having an intellectual disability, qualify for Special Education services provided within the school district, under the category of DCD. DCD encompasses ID as well. Merriam Webster's definition of intellectual disability includes several skills with significant limitations. The first significant limitation example noted is social skills (merriam-webster/dictionary/intellectual,2023). The challenge is to provide appropriate, comprehensive and practical social skills to our students qualifying as DCD.

A brief look at data from the U.S. Department of Education (USDoE, 2023, IDEA History, 1975 Public Law 94-142, facts and figures) shows the following dramatic increases: in the 1976-77 school year, 3,694,000 students aged three through 21 were served under the EHA. In the 1980-81 school year, 4,144,000 students aged three through 21 were served under EHA. By the 1990-91 school year, 4,710,000 infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities from birth through age 21 were served under IDEA. In the 2018-19 school year, 7,130,238 students with disabilities from three through 21 were served under IDEA, Part B (USDoE, 2023, IDEA History 2000's and 2010's, facts and figures).

This 42-year time span covers an overall 93 percent increase of students with disabilities, covered first under EHA, then under IDEA, with refinement provided in age range, which is noted as Part B, as birth to three years of age is now covered by Part C.

Rationale

SEL learning programs focus on school-based learning for all students. There is no differentiation of students according to academic challenges or intellectual disabilities. While these programs have been created with a focus on the “average general education student”, there are many students who do not fit into that mold. Those students will have distinct disadvantages compared to his/her classroom and/or grade level peers. Therefore, when considering SEL curriculum, those student with disabilities should have been at least noted as being addressed. Moreover, the CASEL website has created a list of 85 SEL available programs (CASEL, 2023, Program Guide section, View all programs). The website filtering terms do not contain any mention of students with disabilities.

In 2023 Cipriano et al., completed a robust meta-analysis of over 400 scholarly research papers with the main focus being Social Emotional Learning. They found that 15 percent of the

studies included students with general identifiers, i.e. students with disabilities, special education needs and IEP. They also found an even smaller percentage, less than two percent, included students with specific diagnoses, including students with intellectual disabilities.

The National Center for Education Statistics compiled data representing the fall of 2021 timeframe. This data showed:

the percentage of students served under IDEA who spent 80 percent or more of the school day in general classes was highest for students with speech or language impairments (88 percent). Approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of students with specific learning disabilities (75 percent), developmental delays (69 percent), other health impairments (69 percent), and visual impairments (69 percent) spent 80 percent or more of the school day in general education classrooms. Less than one-third of students with deaf-blindness (28 percent), intellectual disabilities (19 percent), and multiple disabilities (15 percent) spent 80 percent or more of the school day in general education classrooms (NCES, 2023, para 3 & 4).

Currently as a licensed Academic and Behavioral Strategist teacher, I am working with students who are qualified for Special Education services primarily under the Developmental Cognitive Delay (DCD) category, mild to moderate and severe to profound. These students are away from their general education peers from 61 to 100 percent of the day. While I am working towards personalized learning for all my students, I am finding it difficult to locate appropriate research, evidence-based learning curricula, programs or educational information, specifically, evidence-based research, for the students identified with moderate to profound DCD, in Social and Emotional Learning.

Definition of Terms

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)- a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects how an individual processes information and interprets the world (Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), 2023, autism spectrum disorders).

Developmental Cognitive Delay, (DCD)- condition that results in intellectual functioning significantly below average and is associated with concurrent deficits in adaptive behavior that require special education and related service (Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), 2023, developmental cognitive disability). Also referred to as intellectual disability.

Developmental Delay (DD)- a child up to age 7, who is experiencing a measurable delay in development according to diagnostic instruments and procedure (Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), 2023, developmental delay).

Emotional or Behavioral Disorder (EBD)- students must demonstrate behavioral consistency by having an established pattern of one or more of the following emotional or behavioral responses:

- A. withdrawal or anxiety, depression, problems with mood, or feelings of self-worth;
- B. disordered thought processes with unusual behavior patterns and atypical communication styles; or
- C. aggression, hyperactivity, or impulsivity.

The established pattern of emotional or behavioral responses must adversely affect educational or developmental performance, including intrapersonal, academic, vocational or social skills; be significantly different from appropriate age, cultural or ethnic norms; and be more than temporary, expected responses to stressful events in the environment. The emotional or behavioral responses must be consistently exhibited in at least three different settings, two of

which must be educational settings, and one other setting in either the home, child care or community. The responses must not be primarily the result of intellectual, sensory, or acute or chronic physical health conditions (Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), 2023, emotional or behavioral disorder).

Intellectual Disability (ID)- Significant limitations in both a. intellectual functioning and b. adaptive behavior, before the age of 22. Significance is identified as 2 or more SD below the mean.

A. Intellectual functioning, also used as intellect, is measured by an IQ test, with a score of 70-75, showing significant limitations.

B. Adaptive Behavior: conceptual skills and practical skills. Standardized tests can also determine limitations in adaptive behavior.

-conceptual skills, including: language, literacy, money, time, number concepts, self-direction, social skills, interpersonal skills, social responsibility, self-esteem, gullibility, naivete, social problem solving, ability to follow rules and obey laws and avoid being victimized.

-practical skills, including: activities of daily living or personal care, healthcare, occupational skills, travel and transportation, schedules and routines, safety, use of money and use of telephone (American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities [AAIDD], 2023, intellectual disability).

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)- the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2023).

Chapter II: Review of Selected Literature

The purpose of this review of literature is to examine the included studies, specifically isolating the inclusion or exclusion of students with disabilities, by general category i.e. special needs or by specific special education qualification area, i.e. developmental cognitive delay (DCD). The question is not whether or not SEL or USB SEL is advantageous to all students. The question is whether or not there are any specific SEL or USB SEL interventions available, specifically researched and targeting students who are developmentally, intellectually and/or cognitively delayed. The studies are presented chronologically. The individual studies are presented. The principal findings of each study are summarized.

Faria et al., (2017)

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a SEL program, specifically “Smile, Cry, Scream and Blush”.

The authors utilized the Test of Emotion Comprehension (TEC) in both pre and post-test of the program. The study involved 50 students diagnosed with mild intellectual disability (ID), ranging in age from 8 to 15 years old. During the 2 cycles of this study, 29 subjects were in the control group and 21 of the subjects were in the experimental group. Overall, the gender demographic was divided at 23 girls and 27 boys participated. This study was completed in Portugal.

Both groups were administered the TEC before the implementation of the SEL program. The experimental group then participated in the SEL program, “Smile, Cry, Scream and Blush” over a total of 8 sessions, lasting between 40 and 45 minutes each.

The control group maintained a null hypothesis, there were no statistical differences between pre and post-test TEC. In the experimental group, the null hypothesis was rejected since there were statistical differences between the pre and post-test TEC.

The results obtained suggested that the program is effective in developing social emotional competence in students with intellectual disabilities. Also, the results of this program align with the results of other studies that have specifically looked at two other SEL programs, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) and Zippy's friends.

It is explicitly stated that it is important to note that these programs, as noted above, were not specifically designed to be implemented with children with intellectual disabilities, being only considered suitable for such use. There are studies that showed their analysis points out weaknesses in evaluating the program and their effectiveness. This claim is supported by the lack of scientific research on the design, development and evaluation of SEL programs for students with ID. The positive impact of this type of program on students with ID is clearly evident, however, as of the writing of this article, 2018, there are still no studies investigating the results post implementation of an SEL program for those students identified with ID.

Rowe and Trickett (2018)

The focus of this study was focusing on the between student diversity and SEL program outcomes.

The meta-analysis synthesized from 213 SEL program intervention evaluations, involving 270,034 students from kindergarten through high school. Studies targeting students with preexisting conditions were excluded as well as programs primarily focusing on promotion of academic achievement. Upon evaluation, 117 primary articles were included in the final coding and analysis.

Social emotional learning practices have promising evidence based approaches to affect change in a wide range of student outcomes. When considering an entire school, there are a great number of variables to consider when looking at data, i.e. demographics, race, gender and cultural diversity. This meta-analysis promotes the value of acknowledging differential effects of similar programs on diverse groups of children and adolescents.

This study limited their scope of diversity to the following five characteristics; gender, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), disability status and sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTQ status).

When considering characteristics, specifically the reporting of disability status, only 15 percent of the 117 articles reported disability status, while disturbingly 35 percent of which excluded students in special education classes from the sample.

A clear disadvantage when analyzing SEL programs is the lack of clarity when using a broad label of disability status. The conclusion noted that the findings suggest that there is little clarity about when, how, around what issues and how larger school and community contexts affect diverse groups of program students. The larger issue of generalizing from an overall conclusion about the effectiveness of a wide variety of programs to its impact in any specific context or population is clearly highlighted.

Cipriano et al. (2021)

The purpose of this study was investigating USB SEL, specifically considering students of color and students with disabilities, generalizability.

The initial search generated 11,082 studies, with 395 studies being advanced for full test screening. The remaining 242 studies were a combination of 146 peer reviewed manuscripts and

96 dissertations, theses, conference abstracts and commissioned reports. The team systematically reviewed the articles for inclusion of race and/or students with disabilities.

The authors noted that when they specifically focused on students with disabilities, since 2008 more than 3 in 4 studies did not report on students with disabilities, and fewer than 1 in 10 studies reflected students with disabilities in their results. Only 64 (26.4 percent) included studies reported student disability status. Also, 11 studies (4.5 percent) explicitly excluded students with disabilities. However, the authors noted that most studies since 2008 did not outwardly exclude students with disabilities. This showed that progress was made in the inclusion of all learners.

Student race was investigated in conjunction with the above category, students with disabilities. Since 2008, one in five studies neglected discussion regarding student race. Only 13 percent of the studies accounted for student race in their analytic models of intervention effects. Appallingly, students of color, who are typically over-identified as needing special education, appear to continually be omitted from important research studies.

The authors concluded that as of 2021, the publication year of the article, very little is known regarding elementary USB SEL interventions on students with disabilities.

Ramirez et al. (2021)

The purpose of this study was to investigate which SEL programs were designed to promote equity.

The authors started the study by discussing the idea of educational equality, specifically focused on the United States. Equity was defined as the attempt to identify specific needs and focusing on what is fair for the individual student. Ramirez et al. created their own definition of

educational equity. They stated that “educational equality for the United States context as the intentional counter to systemic and institutionalized inequality, privilege, and prejudice in the education system and the simultaneous promotion of conditions that support the wellbeing of students who most experience inequity and injustice.

The authors then discussed and identified what is equitable social emotional learning. Then they defined equitable SEL as an approach that incorporated the cultural knowledge, experiences, and assets of students from diverse families and communities, and acknowledged and addressed the social injustices, inequalities, prejudices and exclusions that students faced.

The authors completed a content analysis of 33 widely used PreK-5 SEL programs. Their intention was to have a better understanding of the design of SEL programs, specifically in relation to how equality was promoted. Ramirez et al. created an equity coding system identified 12 equity codes and rated the SEL programs against the efficacy of the SEL materials.

The authors found that, overall, less than four percent of the lessons in the sample of 33 programs included at least one of the team created equity codes. The lack of equity among the identified 33 SEL programs made a powerful statement that, students of color, students with low familial income, students who are not native English speaking and specifically students with disabilities, are further away from equitable opportunities and outcomes.

Jacob et al. (2022)

This article was a large-scale review of 1124 academic papers. Over the course of inclusion, the most important inclusion factor was that study participants must have been identified as individuals with intellectual disability or related conditions, and with exclusion factors, only 10 research papers met the criteria to be included in this review. Additionally, the review included studies which include participants with intellectual disabilities with co-morbidities.

Per the authors, the most significant characteristic of intellectual disability on an individual is a lack of social skills. They also note that individuals with intellectual disability usually encounter difficulties in making and maintaining friendships. Additionally, it is common for their friendships to be characterized by a lack of warmth, closeness, and reciprocity in comparison to their peers, who are typically developing.

The age range included in the review was from seven to 25 years of age. The small number of qualified research papers adds to the complexity of comparison to other studies. The total number of participants was 496 across the ten articles. Also, the review showed a great variation on the measures that were coded for inclusion, specifically; type or description of intervention, number of participants, gender of participants, type/design of the intervention, duration of the studies and the results of the outcome, measured by pre and posttests.

The authors note important limitations with this review, including: limited number of participants, overall number as well as individual study, low number of participants studied (three), skewed study participant gender, only 60 percent included both female and male, inclusion of two studies that included more than one intervention.

The most challenging limitations were the lack of a standard definition of social skills, as well as the very limited number of studies that were included when following the author specific selection criteria. The overall opinion from the authors upon reviewing the ten academic papers indicated that the effectiveness of intervention for individuals with intellectual disabilities showed that intervention is adequate. However, generalizing social skills to school settings may be challenging.

Cipriano et al. (2023)

The purpose of this study was to provide an update to a 2011 meta-analysis, completed by Durlak and associates, focusing on available school based social (USB) social emotional learning (SEL) interventions until December 31, 2007. Cipriano et al., (2023) completed a comprehensive meta-analysis of looking at USB SEL programs that were available from January 1, 2008 through December 31, 2020.

The authors also included an area for recent and relevant reviews of USB SEL. In this section, they identified other studies and gave a brief conclusion for each study. Cipriano et al. discussed the what, specific SEL content, the how, structure and implementation of USB SEL, and finished the section discussion by looking at the whom, specifically students that have been marginalized and have been disadvantaged by the educational system.

The authors addressed the outcome of which specific SEL content or content combinations yielded the best outcomes. Upon initial searching and removal of duplicates, 31, 257 studies advanced for further criteria screening. The next step completed a full text review yielding 1,223 eligible articles. Along each step in the identification process, any conflicts had been resolved through discussion with near perfect interrater reliability, which resulted in 382 studies identified for inclusion. Additional research conducted by the authors revealed an additional 42 studies that were included, bringing the included studies final total to 424, which represented 575,361 students aged five to 17.

The authors created a coding team, which created a screening code, again for specific criteria and applied the code to the 424 articles. The authors reported statistics of great importance regarding USB SEL interventions. The statistics included and identified three studies (0.7 percent) that specifically excluded students based on special education status. 70 studies (16.5

percent) mentioned students with disabilities, using mostly general identifiers, i.e., special education needs, IEP, and students with disabilities (15 percent). The overall study group showed limited mention of disability classifications including, learning, emotional or behavioral, physical or developmental disability. Of note, even fewer studies (less than two percent), included specific diagnoses.

The authors found a significant overall effect of USB SEL interventions on student outcomes (pg. 31). However, the authors supported significant work that was still needed for USB SEL and subgroups of students, notably students' disability status.

Table 1

Summary of Chapter II Findings

Author and Year	Methodology	Participants	Procedures/ Information	Findings
Faria, S.M., Esgalhado, G., Pereira, C. M.G. (2017)	Quantitative	50 individuals diagnosed with mild intellectual disabilities	Split into control and experimental groups, separated into two cycles, minimum age 8, maximum age 15. 8 total sessions, each between 40 and 45 minutes.	Control group, null hypothesis is retained, $p=837$, no statistically significant differences between the mean pre-test and post-test scores. Experimental group, null hypothesis was rejected, $p<0.001$, there are statistically significant differences between the mean pre-test and post-test scores.

<p>Rowe, H.L. & Trickett, E.J. (2018)</p>	<p>Meta-analysis of 213 experimental and quasi-experimental program evaluations</p>	<p>270,034 students from Kindergarten through high school</p>	<p>Synthesized findings that included: -written in English -published or unpublished before December 31, 2007 -emphasized the development of one or more SEL skills -targeted students between age five and 18 -included a control or comparison group -reported sufficient information to calculate effect size</p>	<p>117 articles met following inclusion criteria: published peer-reviewed articles with US samples and immediate posttest analyses. Reported Characteristics and percentage: Gender- 69 percent Race/Ethnicity- 64 percent Socio-economic status- 45 percent and Disability status- 15 percent (35 percent of which excluded students in special education classes</p>
<p>Cipriano, C., Naples, L.H., Eveleigh, A., Rappolt-Schlichtmann, G., and Cook, A. (2021)</p>	<p>Meta-analysis</p>	<p>11,082 studies narrowed down to 242</p>	<p>Reported statistics on students with disabilities as well as statistics on student race</p>	<p>-11 studies (4.5 percent) explicitly excluded students with disabilities -64 studies (26.4 percent) reported on student disability status -of those 64 noted above, only 53 (21.5 percent) provided the proportion of students with disabilities at the sample level -only 19 studies (7.9 percent) analyzed student outcome by disability status</p>

<p>Ramirez, T., Brush, K., Raisch, N., Bailey, R., & Jones, S.M. (2021)</p>	<p>Program Evaluation Comparative Study</p>	<p>33 widely used PreK-5 SEL programs</p>	<p>Developed an equity coding system, reviewing literature in asset- based pedagogies, critical theory and aligned with the developmental and prevention science literatures on social and emotional development. Quantitative method used to analyze the lesson level data.</p>	<p>Equitable SEL practices and skills appear in less than four percent of the lessons in the 33 programs investigated. In those four percent, three equitable skills and practices incorporated most frequently include: equitable critical thinking/problem solving, equitable emotional knowledge and expression, and equitable story telling.</p>
<p>Jacob, U.S., Edozie, I.S., Pillay, J. (2022)</p>	<p>Meta-analysis</p>	<p>1124 studies narrowed down to ten studies, 496 participants</p>	<p>Author created coding methods. Specifically included intellectual disability as a requirement. Reviewed articles for number or participants, study design, type and duration of intervention, pre and post testing results</p>	<p>Social skills intervention is generally adequate but may be difficult to generalize in the school setting</p>

<p>Cipriano, C., Strambler, M.J., Naples, L.H., Ha, C., Kirk, M., Wood, M., Sehgal, K., Zieher, A.K., Eveleigh, A., McCarthy, M., Funaro, M., Ponnock, A., Chow, J.C., and Durlak, J. (2023)</p>	<p>Meta-analysis</p>	<p>41,002 studies narrowed to 424 studies from 53 counties, involving 575,361 students in kindergarten through 12th grade, ages five- 17 and from 2008 to 2020.</p>	<p>Only 16 percent of studies mentioned students with disabilities, with varied representation and most using non- specific factors such as special education needs, students with disabilities or IEP.</p>	<p>Significant work remains to understand if and how universal school based SEL intervention effect differed for subgroups of students, specifically students based on disability status.</p>
--	----------------------	---	---	---

Chapter III: Summary of Findings

Social and emotional learning (SEL) can be traced back to 380 B.C. through Plato's work (Beaty, 2018, p. 68, para one). Since Dr. James Comer piloted the Comer School Development Program (CSDP) in the 1960's focusing on the development of children and their interactions with adults (Beaty, 2018, p. 68), non-teaching community members became involved in the education of youth. The term Social Emotional Learning was coined by the Fetzer Institute in 1994 (Weissberg et al, 2015, p. 5, & Beaty, 2018, p. 68, para three). Per Beaty, 2018, the Fetzer Institute also assisted in the creation of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, also known as CASEL. The purpose of CASEL was to provide SEL backed by evidence-based research (p.69). CASEL SEL skills consist of 5 core competencies identified; Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making (Weissberg et al, 2015, Faria et al, 2017, Beaty, 2018 & CASEL, 2023). CASEL has increased the focus on the rights of students to an education including social and emotional learning instruction. This includes students with disabilities. Students with high-incidence disabilities are often overlooked when conducting SEL research, development and instruction design.

In total I investigated 13 scholarly articles, eight websites, two handbooks, one encyclopedia and two other works, i.e., Master's Thesis.

Several research papers which span, greater than two decades, have touted an almost identical claim, that there was no agreed upon taxonomy of social skills at the time (Sukhodolsky & Butter, 2007 & Ramirez et al., 2021). In 2007 Sukhodolsky and Butter reviewed social skills training for youth with ID. Sukhodolsky and Butter (p. 606) stated that the development of specific social skills to be taught vary depending upon the student with ID's age, severity of

cognitive impairment and their specific social skill deficits. The authors along with Jacob et al., 2022, both similarly endorsed that social skills impairments are usually reflected in at least one of three areas: level of social interaction skills i.e., lack of closeness and reciprocity, making and maintaining friendships and peer relationships, and the ability to process social information. Sukhodolsky and Butter, 2007 acknowledge that there are vast amounts of commercially available social skills training activity kits and training materials for the “normally developing” children (p.611). It is important to note that the commercially available kits and materials have not been evaluated with students with ID. Improvements can be shown in the social skills of students with ID. However, the generalization and improvement of social skills showed mixed results (p. 612).

In 2017 Rowe and Trickett found in their meta-analysis of 213 studies that only 15 percent of 270,000 students had a reported characteristic of a disability status. Of the 40,500 participants with a reported disability characteristic, 35 percent or 14, 175 of those potential participants were excluded specifically because of being in a special education classroom (p.567). The authors also noted the research that stated placement in a special education classroom was identified as an exclusion criterion (p. 573). However, Rowe and Trickett (2018), stressed that placement in a special education classroom does not include almost 60 percent of students with disabilities. They also surmised that there is a larger issue of generalization of overall effectiveness and the impact in any specific student population (p. 576).

Moderation based on disability status may vary on how status is defined and available school resources, school experiences may vary widely based on the severity of their disability (Rowe & Trickett, 2018, p. 561). According to NCES, almost 60 percent of students receiving services under IDEA during the 2009-2010 school year spent at least 80 percent of their school day in

mainstream classrooms, which varies from students who are exclusively in either general education or special education classrooms. The students are likely to experience differences when considering which of the three above classrooms they are assigned to (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023).

In 2017, Faria et al, proposed that SEL programs provide minimal evidence of their use with students with ID, showing some success. The authors proposed a brand new SEL program be designed, specifically keeping the needs of students with ID in the forefront of research, design, development. Specifically noted design considerations were: use clear and simple language, simple activities and clear language, as other general SEL programs seem to be complex. Students with ID exhibit deficits in social and emotional adjustment, and interpersonal relationships (Sabornie et al., 2006, p. 99, behavior domain comparisons section, para 1). They can also manifest impairment in social functioning, including social initiation and social response skills (Radley & Eaves, 2018, p.3 para 2). These students may have a much more difficult time accessing, learning, retaining and generalizing skills (Faria, 2017, p. 90).

Cipriano et al, in 2021 noted that within their meta-analysis of 242 research studies, that 4.5 percent of reviewed research papers specifically excluded students with disabilities (p. 4). The largest meta-analysis to date conducted by Cipriano et al, in early 2023, also noted the lack of inclusion, only 16 percent, of 575, 361 students with disabilities (p. 37). Further, this meta-analysis observed that the students' disabilities were represented by varied and non-specific terms, i.e., students with an IEP (p. 37). The authors additionally endorse that to date of article modification, February 2023, no meta-analysis had sought to determine which specific content or content contributions yield the best outcomes (p. 9).

Conclusion

My research question asked, what social emotional learning resources are available, for students identified with intellectual disabilities, in an elementary school center-based setting and are they effective? At this time my answer to this question, unfortunately, is that there is a grievous lack of specifically created educational materials for students with disabilities, who also have been academically identified as having an intellectual disability. Amongst all the information that I have gathered and synthesized there is a profoundly disturbing scarcity of evidence-based research, evidence-based practices, universal school-based learning and instructional materials, teacher training and curriculum available for professional educators in regards to social and emotional learning. Intellectual disability is considered a high incidence disability, as such, this disability category deserves to benefit from dialogue, specific research studies and creation of curriculum, teaching guidance and learning materials.

My practical experience during the 2022-2023 school year, in a center-based program for students with DCD, was fraught with frustration. Collaboration with my peers and mentors led me to minimal materials or programs that were geared towards and therefore accessible by my students with ID. There are several programs available that initially appeared appropriate. However, upon planning and trialing of the materials, it was evident that the skills being taught were either; presented for advanced readers or the concept was beyond cognitive comprehension levels. It was time consuming to modify materials to a more appropriate level pertinent to my students with intellectual disabilities.

The CASEL website identified 85 SEL programs that are commercially available within the United States. The website included a convenient filtering option as well. Grievously, there is not an option to filter to include or specify only special education students.

I concur with the research that shows difficulty, for students identified as special needs, in generalization of social skills. While my students have shown success with modified social skills learning material in the center-based classroom, they have shown great difficulty in being able to utilize their knowledge base. Although it is unknown if the student is limited by their disability, or by the inability to generalize outside of the center-based classroom. Additionally, the statement that is echoed by several of the research articles included in this paper, students with special needs may show some success with SEL programs, however, the program has not investigated outcomes, specifically in students with ID.

The second portion of my research question, are they effective (programs), the answer is no, they are not effective. While some programs may have some success, generally, the overall results document that the SEL programs, since they are not intentionally researched and created for students with special needs, with ID, are not adequate at this time.

Recommendations for Future Research

All SEL research has shown that SEL in education of youth is essential. Multitudes of research has been completed and recommendations have been considered by parents, researchers, scholars and program developers. Granted, the number of special education students within the United States accounts for roughly 7 million students or an average of 15 percent nationwide, (NCES, 2023, students with disabilities, para 1). However, the shocking lack of acknowledgment of a highly protected, and historically marginalized sector of students in the year 2023 shows short sightedness on behalf of academia and those professionals and researches, who unwittingly lumped all students who are identified with a disability together and did not delineate more specifically based on eligibility determination characteristics, i.e., DCD, ASD, etc. (Cipriano et al., 2023).

Cipriano et al., 2021 and Cipriano et al., 2023 provided damning and concrete evidence that students with special needs, who educationally qualify for special education services, are markedly excluded, misrepresented or marginalized. There is distinct cohesion from research authors published in 2007 all the way up to 2023, calling for greater focus on the topic of SEL, precisely with special education students (Lichtenstein, 2016; Faria et al., 2017, 2019; Shihadih, 2019; Stichter et al., 2019; Rivera & McKeithan, 2021). I found a scant number of SEL programs designed with students with special needs in mind, unfortunately they predominantly are geared towards students identified with EBD and ASD. Although there is some research on students with special needs and SEL, there are minimal to none that focus on students with intellectual disabilities. As general educators and special educators, it is our obligation to our students, regardless of status of qualification for special services, to provide the best research based and evidence-based learning materials and curriculum.

Implications for Practice

The implications for practice are far reaching. While students with special needs and intellectual disabilities may be out of the general education classroom for greater than 61 percent of their day, these students are being excluded from the general education peers when learning about social emotional skills. All students, regardless of qualification for special services, need to be with their general education peers for greater learning and more understanding. The understanding is from both students predominantly in center based classrooms and their general education peers. What more effective method to learn about social skills than with all of your peers? Special education students can participate during instruction and also watch their peers model skills. By including all students during social emotional learning in the general education classroom, each student may gain insight from their peers, no matter the “educational level”.

The inclusion of special needs students' needs to be addressed and supported by all teachers. General and special education teachers need to have ongoing dialogue regarding daily schedules that need to be considered for en masse instruction in each classroom. Ultimately, flexibility between general and special educators can create an optimal social emotional learning experience for all students.

Summary

It has become clear that social emotional learning programs and instructional materials, designed and focusing on the special needs of students identified as intellectually disabled, are grossly inadequate. The strides that have happened in the United States, just since 1975, are tremendous. Considering that millions of students are taught yearly, the public school system is constantly adjusting to ensure educational equity for all students, especially those students who have special educational needs. Granted, with Public Laws passed to protect those students with special needs, there still needs to be a lens focused on maintaining progress, correcting inadequacies and ensuring appropriate education while attempting educational equity as well.

Through my research, I have identified a gap in social emotional learning equity. The most recent SEL study from Cipriano et al, in 2023, provided the most data, exclusions and limitations of study participants ever published. The reiterates what previous authors from past decades have also stated, there needs to be comprehensive research studies specifically focusing on social emotional learning in students identified with ID. This needs to drive future dialogue about design and formation of SEL programs, instructional and learning materials explicitly created for students with special needs and ID (Lichtenstein, 2016; Faria et al., 2017, 2019; Stichter et al., 2019; Cipriano et al., 2021; Cipriano et al., 2023). Upon completion and availability for teachers and scholars educating future teachers, greater learning becomes possible.

References

- American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD). (2023, February 16) *Intellectual disabilities*. <https://www.aidd.org/intellectual-disability>
- Beaty, J. (2018). History of social and emotional learning. *International Arab Journal of English for Specific Purposes*, 1(2), 67–72.
- Cherry, K. (2022, October 14). *How social learning theory works?* Verywell Mind. Retrieved May 13, 2023 from <https://www.verywellmind.com/social-learning-theory-2795074#a-few-applications-for-social-learning-theory>
- Cipriano, C., Naples, L. H., Eveleigh, A., Rappolt-Schlichtmann, G., & Cook, A. (2021). *Whose emotions matter: Student disability and race representation in universal school based social and emotional learning by the numbers*. National Center for Learning Disabilities.
- Cipriano, C., Strambler, M. J., Naples, L. H., Ha, C., Kirk, M., Wood, M., Sehgal, A., Zieher, A.K., Eveleigh, A., McCarthy, M., Funaro, M., Ponnock, A., Chow, J.C., & Durlak, J., (2023). The state of evidence for social and emotional learning: a contemporary meta-analysis of universal school-based SEL interventions. *Child Development*. <https://osf.io/r246m>
- Collaborative for Advancing Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (2023, January 23). *Our history*. <https://casel.org/about-us/our-history/>
- Collaborative for Advancing Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (2023, January 23). *Program Guide, View all programs*. <https://casel.org/review-programs>

- Collaborative for Advancing Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (2023). *What is the CASEL Framework? What is the CASEL 5?* Retrieved on January 23, 2023 from <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>
- Conrad, J. A. (2020). On intellectual and developmental disabilities in the United States: A historical perspective. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities: JOID*, 24(1), 85–101. doi:10.1177/1744629518767001
- Faria, S. M. M., Esgalhado, G., & Pereira, C. M. G. (2019). Efficacy of a socioemotional learning programme in a sample of children with intellectual disability. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities: JARID*, 32(2), 457–470. doi:10.1111/jar.12547
- Faria, S. M. M., Esgalhado, G., & Pereira, C. M. G. (2017). Measurements to assess and programmes to promote socio-emotional competences in children with intellectual disability. *The European Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences: EJSBS*, 18(1), 79–96. doi:10.15405/ejsbs.207
- Jacob, U. S., Edozie, I. S., & Pillay, J. (2022). Strategies for enhancing social skills of individuals with intellectual disability: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Rehabilitation Sciences*, 3, 968314. doi:10.3389/fresc.2022.968314
- Lichtenstein, D. (2016, August). *How to bring SEL to students with disabilities*. Greater Good. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_bring_sel_to_students_with_disabilities
- Merriam-Webster. (2023, April 2). *Definition of the word Intellectual*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intellectual>

- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.) (2023 April 2). *Definition of the word Retard*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/retard>.
- Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). (2023, February 16) *Autism spectrum disorders*. <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/sped/cat/aut/>
- Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). (2023, February 16). *Developmental cognitive delay*. <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/sped/cat/dcd/>
- Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). (2023, February 16). *Developmental delay*. <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/sped/cat/dd/>
- Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). (2023, February 16) *Emotional or behavioral disorders*. <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/sped/cat/ebd/>
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2023, April 2). *Students with Disabilities, "Condition of Education."* [www://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgg](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgg).
- National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD). (2023, May 13). *Significant disproportionality in special education: current trends and actions for impact*. www.nclld.org
- Radley, K., & Eaves, A. E. (2018). Social skills deficits. In Braaten, E. (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Intellectual and Developmental Disorders*. SAGE Publications. doi:10.4135-9871483392271
- Ramirez, T., Brush, K., Raisch, N., Bailey, R., & Jones, S. M. (2021). Equity in social emotional learning programs: A content analysis of equitable practices in PreK-5 SEL programs. *Frontiers in Education*, 6. doi:10.3389/feduc.2021.679467

- Rivera, M. O., & McKeithan, G. K. (2021). High-leverage social, emotional and behavioural practices for students with disabilities in inclusive settings. *Educational Review*, 73(4), 436–450. doi:10.1080/00131911.2019.1632800
- Rowe, H. L., & Trickett, E. J. (2018). Student Diversity Representation and Reporting in Universal-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs: Implications for Generalizability. *Educational Psychology Review*, 30, 559–583. doi:10.1007/s10648-017-9425-3
- Sabornie, E. J., Evans, C., & Cullinan, D. (2006). Comparing characteristics of high-incidence disability groups. *Remedial and Special Education: RASE*, 27(2), 95–104. doi:10.1177/07419325060270020701
- Shihadih, D. (2019). *Harmonizing social emotional learning for students with special needs*. [Master of Science in Education/Master's Theses.5. Dominican University of California]. doi:10.33015/dominican.edu/2019.EDU.04
- Stichter, J. P., Malugen, E. C., & Davenport, M. A. (2019). A six-step decision-making process to guide social skills instruction. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 54(3), 149–159. doi:10.1177/1053451218767901
- Sukhodolsky, D. G., & Butler, E. M. (2007). Social Skills training for children with intellectual disabilities. In J. W. Jacobson, J. A. Mulick, & J. Rojahn (Eds.), *Handbook of intellectual and developmental disabilities* (pp. 601–618). Springer.
- United Nations Children's Fund, (2021). Seen, Counted, Included; Using Data to Shed Light on the Well-Being of Children with Disabilities. *United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF*. New York.

United States Department of Education (USDoE). (2023, March 22) “A History of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.” *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, sites.ed.gov/idea/IDEA-History.

Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Domitrovich, C. E., & Gullotta, T. P. (2015). Social and emotional learning: Past, present and future. In *Handbook of social and emotional learning: Research and practice* (pp. 3–19). Guilford Publications.