STUDENTS' SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCIES' EFFECT ON TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL CLIMATE AT A TEXAS SECONDARY CAMPUS

A Record of Study

by

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ABSTRACT

This study will seek to investigate learned levels of student social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies, improvements made to overall school climate as measured through teacher behavior responses and ensuring that the students are provided the opportunity to grow their personal competencies to add to our overall school community. These study takes place on a secondary campus served 9th-12th grade students, this school is located in the Southeast portion of Texas, a suburb of the Houston metro area. In this two-group pretest-posttest study of students and teachers over the course of the 2017-2018 school year, quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple paired sample *t*-tests. The research will present all quantitative results and the data was analyzed using a pared samples *t*-test to investigate the results. These results will inform the campus, administrative team, teachers and local school community regarding the impact of the SEL curriculum on students and teachers.

DEDICATION

The entirety of this Record of Study and terminal degree is dedicated to the love of my life, my wife, Stephanie Evans. She has supported me for our entire marriage, over the course of ten years to see this degree through to completion. She is my constant and my biggest cheerleader, she knows my capabilities and all that I can accomplish in life.

I want to dedicate this work my amazing children, Zachary, Victoria and Logan who have supported me in so many ways through this process and are the light of my life. I love you all so, very much.

I also want to dedicate this study to my parents, Raymond (Bruce) and Linda Evans, who instilled the value of education in me and encouraged me to return to Texas A&M University to begin this degree. Finally, I dedicate this study to my wife's parents, Douglas and Linda Rogers, all of whom supported me in so many ways through the entirety of my doctoral studies.

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Contributors

This study was supervised by a doctoral committee including Dr. Robin Rackley serving as the chair and Dr. Janet Hammer serving as Co-Chair, both members from the Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture. Additional committee members are Dr. Radhika Viruru from the Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture and Dr. Mario Torres from the Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development.

Funding Sources

NOMENCLATURE

CASEL   Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

FERPA   Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

PPRA   Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment

SEL   Social-Emotional Learning

TEA   Texas Education Agency

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

LEADERSHIP CONTEXT AND THE PURPOSE OF ACTION: AN INTRODUCTION

The Context

Students' well-being and success can be directly supported through social-emotional learning competencies (SEL), which are fundamentally important to consider in an age of student achievement, test scores, high expectations and unyielding pressure. With all of these factors bearing down on students, there is little room for anything else during the course of a normal school day on a secondary campus (Cohen, 2006; Weissberg, 2007; Collie, 2011; 2012). Both students and teachers feel the pressure of these factors and face an uphill battle to accomplish all of these things in the course of the calendar year. While these items are important and essential to accomplish, it is important to consider the entire learner and the educator in order to work towards meeting campus goals while also ensuring the educator does not face burnout in the process. Building time into the day that includes time for students to reflect on their learning, meet with their teachers or learn new character-building elements would allow them to work harder during their regular class time (Weissberg, 2007; Collie, 2011; 2012). Likewise, teachers also need to ensure that campus administration assists with student management, while also providing curricular support and feedback in the classroom (Cohen, 2006; Collie, 2011; 2012; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). The aim of cultivating students' social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies is to ensure that the needs of the whole student are being met. By elevating the needs of the whole student and ensuring that their basic needs (e.g. health, safe, engaged, supported, challenged) are being met through facets such as SEL programming, there can be strides made toward improving school culture and overall school improvement. In doing so, it is

the hope of this program evaluation that an impact will be made among teachers' perception of school climate as well.

National Context

The pursuit of teaching social-emotional competencies to nurture, build and support social and emotional well-being in students, include students setting positive goals, managing their emotional state, showcasing their concern for others, cultivating positive relationships, among other identifiers, is the mark of a supportive school environment (Payton et al., 2008). Across the nation, more schools are teaching these social-emotional learning competencies in order to achieve greater positive student outcomes that go beyond the classroom (Durlak et al., 2011). Along with a greater push for teaching SEL competencies, comes a need for standardization and formalization of these standards in order to integrate them within curriculum across the nation (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), 2003; Durlak et al., 2011).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was formed in 1994 in order to establish, "high-quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) as an essential part of preschool through high school education" (CASEL, 2003). Around 1997, CASEL partnered with the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) in order to promote strategies educators could use to build SEL programs and competencies from preschool to 12th grade. CASEL continues to promote, partner with and encourage states to set their own standards for evidence-based programs in all 50 states (CASEL, 2003). As of September 2018, 14 states have articulated SEL competencies in Pre-K through 12th grade, 11 states have articulated SEL competencies in Pre-K through early elementary grade levels, and the

remaining 25 states have all articulated Pre-K competencies but these states have not extended standards beyond preschool (CASEL, 2003).

Situational Context

As far as the State of Texas' teaching standards are concerned, Social-Emotional Learning Competencies, Standards and Expectations are written at length in Chapter 149 of the Commissioner's Rules Concerning Educator Standards. Educators are responsible for not only high levels of student learning and academic achievement but they are also responsible for delivering social-emotional development instruction (Zins et al., 2004b). State standards for social-emotional learning beyond pre-kindergarten have not been established for students, however, there are explicit standards for teachers and what is expected of them as they facilitate social-emotional experiences in their classroom instruction. While the expectation is there for teachers to teach these social-emotional learning competencies, there is little to enforce or regard in terms of measuring social-emotional learning from the students' perspective. These provisions were adopted as of June 30, 2014 (TEA, 2014). While Texas hasn't mandated the development or integration of SEL standards, they have implemented aspects of SEL competencies through teachers and the lessons they develop.

The focus of this study will center on a secondary campus, this school is located in the Southeast portion of Texas, a suburb of the Houston metro area. This campus was working through a variety of transitions between the 2016-2017 school year to the 2017-2018 school year. The 2016-2017 school year was marked by the rise in disciplinary infractions, revolving around students harassing or intimidating other students, as well as their teachers. There were numerous occasions in which this campus made the local news regarding these negative disciplinary

infractions. Students were referred to alternative education placement in larger numbers than previous years due to the increase in these severe campus infractions. There were informal attempts to identify and remedy the problems through Google Form surveys issued to students and teachers. In the end, both teachers and students, were looking forward to the end of the year and resetting many of the negative aspects of the school year.

At the end of the 2016-2017 school year, the campus principal was replaced with our current campus principal. The administrative team and the campus improvement team knew something had to be done in order to remedy the problems from the 2016-2017 year going into the 2017-2018 school year. These parties began to seek out a program which would build relationships with students through social-emotional lessons designed to fit into real-world scenarios. These scenarios revolve around aiming to improve students' social-emotional skill-set by implementing SEL curriculum and working students through a variety of situations to show them how to incorporate it into their daily lives. By teaching these scenarios on a weekly basis, they hoped students would internalize the information but also find time during the following week to practice what they have learned. After learning the new information each week and experimenting with it socially, they can return to the group they have been working with to celebrate, debrief and strategize. This solution makes a meaningful change to our regular school day, with the intent of creating a paradigm shift to make a positive impact on our building for years to come.

The goal of implementing this program and working with students to improve their SEL competencies will allow teachers to dedicate time focusing to help students learn these skills each week while also building strong relationships with their students. Since all secondary students at this campus are participating in this program it hopes to build greater community at

the campus since it allows teachers to connect with students at a personal level. By investing the time in students each week through these scenarios, teachers will be able to make quality use of their instructional time and also coach students to work more efficiently on their classwork implementing competencies they picked up through their SEL curriculum.

Problem

The study campus has over 2000 students in the 9th-12th grade and over 125 teaching staff at our campus. During the 2016-2017 school year, there were a number of specific situations which led many campus stakeholders and community members to believe there was a lack of order at our campus. There was a noted rise in the number of upper-level disciplinary infractions, ranging from an escalated fight (where physical injury was caused), assault, threats and documented cases of bullying (on and off campus). This perceived lack of order led to assumptions being made regarding administrators and teachers who did not do their part to ensure student success on a daily basis. Students and teachers also felt similar negative attitudes regarding each other and the rise of systemic issues with no solution. The entire model for stakeholders and the perception they had of each other was to indicate something drastic needed to be done in order to begin to remedy these issues.

When the administrative team and campus improvement team dug into the problems plaguing the campus, notable information emerged. Information regarding campus issues were shared from students and teachers, through informal surveys, conversations with stakeholders, through campus improvement team and department chair meetings. These stakeholder groups all echoed specific items that helped to frame the problem. 1) Administrators were not visible around campus, 2) Student consequences were not consistent, 3) Rising levels of discipline

concerns, 4) No recognition for exemplary students/staff members and 5) No opportunities for student or professional growth.

The most telling source of data was from a spring 2017 informal Google form which went out to all of our teachers and students in February to determine some of the areas that most needed support immediately to remedy some of these identified issues. The 20 question Likert-scale and short response survey was sent out to all students and teachers via an email link in students 2nd period classes. The data was compiled and shared with teachers in a large group setting at a professional development day immediately following the spring break holiday in March 2017.

The survey results were mixed with some overwhelmingly positive responses and some overwhelmingly negative. Questions regarding the campus appearance and pride had 32.4% of students saying they were neutral (3) about the appearance of the school. Regarding equitability and sustainability, Teachers and students both strongly disagreed (2) with the enforcement of the dress code, 36.9% of teachers and 31.2% of students felt this way. Regarding connecting students with teachers, teachers felt neutral (3) toward students' level of concern for their learning 36.9% and level of student respect for their teachers 39.3%. On the same questions, students were also neutral, with 40.5% of students not caring about their learning and 46.1% of students were neutral on respect for their teachers. Regarding questions on community and involvement, 45.2% of teachers were neutral (3) on students' level of respect for differences in other students (e.g. gender, racial, religious, etc.). On the same question, students answered 72.8% from Strongly Disagree-Neutral (1-3), indicating they thought a majority of students disrespected these differences. Regarding questions on campus environment and expectations, teachers agreed (4) 34.5% of the time the community has a high expectation of students while

30.8% of students were neutral (3) on this question. Regarding job tools, discipline, respect and relationships, teachers felt 55.9% of the time from neutral (3) to strongly agree (5) they spent too much of their time disciplining students.

The survey indicated both teachers and students had varying levels of concern regarding the image of our campus within our building as well as the one portrayed externally in our community (e.g. news media). This image problem of our school highlighted some of the glaring contributing factors surrounding these issues. Students lack of respect for other students' differences (e.g. gender, racial, religious, etc.) was one of the most noticeable indicators on the survey. Even if students did respect other students, both teachers and students had the perception students lacked the respect necessary to consider other individuals through their actions. Therefore, the perception of lacking respect among students was enough to make it impactful throughout campus.

Teachers also communicated through the survey link that this lack of respect among students caused them to have to write an increased number of referrals. These increased number of disciplinary referrals sent to principals, they felt, were handled inconsistently, infrequently and unfairly in most cases, even seeing students returning to their classroom without meeting with their principal. In the end, teachers felt not only did the students not care enough to respect them or value their learning while on campus, they also felt like the administrative team did little to support them in their role in the classroom.

Relevant History of the Problem

After meeting during the spring 2017 semester, teachers, administrators and community members came together through the campus improvement team to discuss possible remedies for

7

the issues on campus faced and how to begin addressing the issues. One of the most immediate ways in which they felt they could address the problem was by studying other campuses in the surrounding area. The administrative team, campus improvement team, and department heads took field trips to two nearby secondary campuses which had success utilizing time during the school day devoted to students. The team recognized many study campuses had advisory time during the school day, each day to meet with teachers, attend club meetings or work on assignments. The feedback our touring teams received about this time during the day was overwhelmingly positive. The time frame for this advisory period was typically 30-45 minutes. Teachers at the campuses they visited felt this was time well spent, especially for those students who were bus riders or had after school activities to attend. This afforded students and teachers time to complete assignments or prepare lessons while they were still at school, with certain days of the week having them do specific things (e.g. clubs, tutorials, etc.).

The administrative team took this feedback from the campus improvement team and department heads to create an advisory period to our schedule for the 2017-2018 school year. They found time at the end of the second period that would turn into this advisory time in the daily schedule. This advisory time was 40 minutes dedicated to students and their needs as individuals. Many of the days the campus decided on devoting to students to meet with their teacher, get homework help, have time to review their assignments from the day, etc. However, once a week, they wanted to build in time for them to work on Social-Emotional Learning competencies with their teachers. These SEL lessons were thought-provoking lessons that aligned with students' daily lives. The lessons were meant to allow students time to reflect while also challenge them to insert themselves into social situations, reflecting on how they might act

different after learning the SEL lesson. The students would then be better equipped with strategies to use in future social situations both in the school and also within their own lives.

Significance of the Problem

Cultivating positive campus culture should be a central focus for all campuses. A positive campus culture can offer staff and students, "a shared sense of purpose...underlying norms...of collegiality, improvement and hard work...student rituals and traditions [that] celebrate student accomplishment, teacher innovation and parental commitment...success, joy and humor (Peterson & Deal, 1998, 29). The campus improvement team chose to focus on the development of campus culture around the growth of the social and emotional learning of their students. Research shows a focus on the growth in this area will increase student achievement (Elias, 2009). The campus improvement team also realizes students developing themselves in the areas of relationship building, kindness, respect, selflessness, forgiveness, humility, commitment, self-awareness, growth mindset, honesty, goal setting, self-regulation, empathy, and civil discourse makes for better citizens (Elias, 2009). The campus improvement team, teachers and administrative staff have a central core belief in developing the entire student at this campus.

Additionally, the campus improvement team want to see decreases in areas they believe distract students from learning such as lateness to class and behaviors warranting office referrals. The campus wants to develop a culture where students show up on time and are ready to focus on their learning. In conjunction with developing student SEL competencies, the campus wants to make sure they are giving teachers the correct feedback as well as supporting those teachers in working with students through this transitional time period. This feedback is essential to ensure

all teachers are staying on message with students as they are delivering these SEL lessons during the advisory time.

Research Questions

The following two questions guide this study. What impact, if any did the SEL program have on student SEL competencies (Grit, Growth Mindset, Self-Efficacy, Self-Management, and Social Awareness)? What impact, if any did the SEL program have on measures of teacher behavior (School Climate, Professional Learning, Feedback and Coaching, and Evaluation)? Based upon this preliminary research study, I have identified the school has decided to implement this SEL curricular program for all students in 9th-12th grade at this secondary campus. I have recommended an evaluation of this program by measuring the student competency impact over the course of the implementation school year. I have also recommended this impact be compared alongside impact in teacher behaviors over the course of the school year. This research study has been put together with the goals of building student SEL competencies, improving overall school climate as measured through teacher behavior responses and ensuring our 9th-12th grade students are provided the opportunity to grow their personal competencies to add to our overall school community.

Personal Context

Researcher's Role and Background

I have been an educator for over 10 years. During the time in this field, I became passionate about teacher education, school climate and student character education. I completed my bachelor's degree (2007) in Geography/Political Science and a Master's degree (2008) in

Curriculum and Instruction. My time from that point on was spent in the classroom and beginning work on my doctorate of education. I spent time taking classes in Social Studies teacher education, with a focus on technology implementation in the classroom. The researcher's goal was to complete this degree but through field supervising teachers at the university level, a return to working in the secondary classroom and working with my mentors, the researcher began to develop an interest in school administration.

The researcher moved from the Central Texas area, back to the Southeast Texas area during the summer of 2015. The researcher taught for one additional year during the 2015-2016 school year before they became a school administrator. The campus in this study, was labeled as 'met standard' during the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years. Standards were met in student achievement, student progress, closing performance gaps and postsecondary readiness. While our campus was meeting the standard, there was a rise in disciplinary infractions as well as alternative student placements during the 2016-2017 school year.

The researcher is primarily a secondary and post-secondary educator, teaching at the Junior High School, High School and University-level. The researcher's University experience included teaching Social Studies senior methods courses and field supervising a number of student teachers who were a semester away from entering the field as employable teachers. The current principal has made social-emotional competencies a large part of their agenda and placed the researcher over the responsibilities of implementing those programs which are set to drive change. The researcher's familiarity with the problem involves them seeing the problem define the majority of the time during their first year on this campus. Students needed an outlet building their social-emotional capacities but there was no program or curriculum in place to help them. Thus, the problems on our campus grew to such an extent, administrators time was consumed

with the fallout (e.g. discipline). The principal who the researcher works alongside, noticed the skill set of the researcher and their capacity to positively affect campus culture among both students and teachers. The researcher was tasked with exploring a way to remedy the identified primary problem on our campus.

The researcher strongly affirms positive change on campuses is made when both teachers and students are factored in when considering overall campus climate and culture. Students who have no outlet to opportunities to building positive behaviors or growing their social emotional competencies are likely to create adverse conditions on a campus which would negatively affect teachers' overall perception of school climate/culture.

The role of the researcher will be solely to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of this program, in addition to monitoring teachers' feedback on school climate. The teachers will be responsible for implementing the SEL curriculum with our students weekly. Each week the teachers were sent the curriculum, lesson plan, instructional materials as well as expectations for what the teachers were to be doing alongside what was expected of the students.

Journey to the Problem

The researcher's initial understanding of the problem associated with the chosen context was during the first year as an administrator on the campus. The 2016-2017 school year, the researcher was informed by numerous administrators, teachers and students that the campus was much different, in a more positive way, in previous years. Stakeholders informed the researcher about the way the school used to run and positive elements that were presently missing from the composition of the campus. For example, the researcher continued to deal with a large number of referrals each week, likewise, other administrators were also battling the same problem. The administrators had little time to visit classrooms to work with teachers because they were dealing

with so many discipline issues. Due to the novice administrator status of the researcher, I wasn't able to decipher the anomaly of increased level of discipline referrals that we were facing on our campus. Due to the researcher's inexperience, the researcher had to rely on others' perspectives. The researcher narrowed down their initial understanding of the problem to rising student behavior issues and low morale/negative climate among teaching staff.

The researcher's initial view of the dilemma determined that the campus nested the problem under the "Cultural Perspective", being that the campus faced a problem they originally determined it went back to the norms, beliefs and expectations (solely) made these unwanted behaviors present on the campus (Cuban, 2001). The researcher reviewed this dilemma from this angle thinking the campus would have to introduce this new SEL program and then be solely responsible for keeping it up and enforcing it in order to make the campus culture positive and successful in their eyes. The researcher was also looking at the dominant formal and informal norms and beliefs as being negative and lacking these SEL competencies. The researcher and the administrative team determined culture could perhaps be changed primarily through teaching new skills and new competencies through dedicated time in the classroom.

As the researcher further dove into the problem and thought about alternate viewpoints to reframe their dilemma, the researcher began to utilize the organizational perspective moving away from the cultural lens to gain a deeper understanding of how to proceed with addressing the dilemma (Cuban, 2001). The organizational perspective pushed the researcher into thinking about how to create lasting change on the campus by changing the setting or parts of the setting. The researcher and administrative team started looking at parts of the problem from beyond just the SEL competency curriculum, they also thought about how they could reshape the entire school day to better serve the SEL needs of our students and positively change the experience for

our teachers as well. By coming together as a campus leadership team (to include department chairs) they were able to explore ways to logistically change parts of the entire setting of the campus.

The researcher sees teachers as primarily responsible for handling the day-to-day teaching of the SEL curriculum with the students, as well as authentically building the relationships with those students. The goals and values the stakeholders consider important and relevant to remedying the problem are a decrease in discipline referrals and campus climate improvements. However, in order for the plan to work, teachers must be fully invested in the process as well as hold each other accountable for teaching the SEL curriculum and being involved in the planning process for a possible schedule change (to afford students and teachers more time during the school day).

The researcher's current understanding of the problem is based around conversations with stakeholders, talking to the campus improvement team, looking at discipline data as well as informal Google Form data with the campus students and staff. Currently, the problems center around 1) Students inability to deal with negative issues on our campus and 2) Teachers' consistently negative viewpoint of our campus climate (which includes both their perceived attitudes of students as well as support from the administrative staff).

As the researcher was learning more about the problem situation, the researcher spoke with informally with a number of different stakeholders to gain further insight into the problem. From the very beginning, the researcher and administrative team considered students when trying to find a solution to the problem that seemed to be plaguing the campus. The researcher considered the negative attitudes and lack of coping skills for students to deal with negative influences in their lives. The administration spoke to our student class officers as well as the

members of our campus improvement team (department chairs, counselors, teachers, administrators) about the problems the student body was dealing with, the stakeholders determined students faced a number of issues which contributed to a negative climate on the campus. 1) Students felt like they were having trouble connecting or relating to other students/teachers on campus. 2) Students discussed issues surrounding a small number of students who seemed to cause major disruptions across campus. 3) Students and teachers both felt if there was a day a situation happened on campus; we couldn't recover from the disruption as a campus for a number of days. 4) Students felt they lacked ways to connect to other students as well as identifying positive role models. 5) Students, teachers and administrators all felt something must change on the campus in question in order to bring about positive change and foster a positive climate.

Significant Stakeholders

The first stakeholders to directly benefit from the implementation of the SEL competency program are students. These stakeholders aren't necessarily a part of the selection of the curriculum but would receive the direct benefit. These stakeholders are essential as they are the 'customers' of our campus and we want them to be fully satisfied. We are here to serve them. We believe through the implementation of this curriculum, not only will they receive a direct personal benefit but they will also be able to indirectly affect the overall climate of our campus through practicing what they have learned.

The second stakeholders are teachers. Teachers are responsible for teaching the curriculum (both district-based education and SEL competency curriculum), building relationships with their students, overseeing their learning progression through the program,

evaluating its success as well as relaying feedback back to administration. The teachers are essential to note both the challenges, successes and concerns of these programs. This study is also interested in this stakeholders' perception of the overall climate of the school by students being taught these competencies.

The third stakeholder is the administration. This stakeholder group is directly responsible for ensuring teachers are teaching this curriculum during specified times to students as well as engaging students in the correct way as they rollout these lessons. Administrators are there to preview the lessons, adjust them as needed to fit our campus, support teachers as they have questions or issues and periodically review progress with individual teachers/departments. The administration is also responsible for the data collection from both students and teachers.

The fourth stakeholder includes the parents/community. This stakeholder is one who acts as the backbone to everything we do on our campus. We want to make sure this stakeholder is informed and kept abreast of the progress this SEL competency program is making on our campus as well as relay to them feedback we have received as it relates to any changes regarding this program. We also welcome and work to gather their input to make programs like this a success. Parents and the community are vital with regard to determining a new program's viability on a school campus.

The stakeholders on the campus must be willing to take a chance on a new process in order to see the ideal as something which is attainable. Stakeholders must be willing to take a stake and get involved with attempting to make possible solutions work in an effort to remedy the problems. Without mandating teachers teach this SEL curriculum during specific, set aside time each week, it would be difficult for teachers to reasonably fit in to their normal class schedule. Teachers would cite issues arising from not having enough time to pointing to

16

curricular data markers they are trying to reach with their students. While those curricular achievements are important the emotional/mental health of our students along with the relationship piece for our campus as a whole is also important in remedying at this time. Successful implementation of the solution will require some sacrifice from all stakeholders but in the end the benefits will hopefully outweigh any perceived negatives. This set aside time would also ensure teachers would continue to meet accountability for state mandated testing.

Important Terms

Advisory - An advisory is a regularly scheduled period of time, typically during the school day, when teachers meet with small groups of students for the purpose of advising them on academic, social, or future-planning issues.

CharacterStrong - A character education & social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and professional development program which creates positive habits through idea-based practice. It focuses mainly on high school and middle school campuses to help them practice character traits such as kindness, respect, humility, honesty, compassion, and more.

Social Emotional Learning - Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

School Climate - The quality and character of school life. It includes students', parents' and school personnel's norms, beliefs, relationships, teaching and learning practices, as well as organizational and structural features of the school.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter 1

Selecting and implementing a SEL program which would support students in grades 9th through 12th grade at this campus would act as an example that could support other secondary campuses in finding a way to not only support students but improve overall campus culture. Many schools find it difficult to equip students with adequate skills that allow them to deal with peer to peer or peer to teacher situations throughout a typical school day in a positive manner. This study seeks to not only evaluate a program that was selected to build up the SEL competencies of their students at a secondary campus but also to evaluate the impact of this program on teachers as well.

This additional programming added to this campus is both teacher-led and peer-led during this set aside advisory time each week. The investment in building and reinforcing SEL competencies with students has been cited in the literature as a positive investment in both students and building positive school culture (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). These programmatic designs work to apply, "knowledge, attitudes, and skills to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013, 4).

My role as a researcher in this study is to evaluate the SEL program data and the results that were provided at the end of the program. I want to explore the impact these SEL programs not only have on students but also from the lens of teachers' perception of school climate and community stakeholders' perception of the campus both before and after the programing was complete. Despite my connection to this campus, I want to ensure my role in this study independently creates a snapshot of this program, which is why I am conducting this study as a

program evaluation. I did not play a role in the rollout or implementation of the program; I only evaluated the data. My position represents a limitation to this study but I am not aiming to generalize the results to other contexts. I want to see our campus succeed in teaching students SEL competencies by building in time during the school day while also improving our campus climate and standing in the community.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIP

Students' success and academic achievement in school is a key target for education stakeholders (e.g. parents, teachers, administrators, students, etc.) and community members. Educators play an important role as the primary determinant of student success and achievement (Schaps et al., 2004). Educators rest at the center of a students' educational experience, their ability to motivate and push students to reach higher levels of success cannot be discounted (Durlak et al., 2011; Collie et al., 2012). Simultaneously, educators already face increasing demands from accountability and assessment measures, along with living up to an informal role as builders of positive societal change (Schaps et al., 2004; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2011). In order for educators to be this positive force for students, these teachers must be supported and encouraged in this capacity.

Looking at the current educational landscape, there are numerous challenges students and teachers encounter. While these challenges are arduous and important, nothing is as important as those highly effective schools who enable students to be ready to tackle any challenge they might face in the future (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Zins & Elias, 2006). These effective schools can only be successful if they build up positive campus culture, building capacity in educators while simultaneously nurturing social-emotional skills of their students (Cohen, 2006; Weissberg, 2007). Teachers who are recognized, appreciated, grown and encouraged to be a part of the campus plan are more likely to foster building positive school climate. Likewise, students who receive supplementary instruction in social-emotional skills have the potential to succeed both academically and emotionally in their lifetime (Zins & Elias, 2006).

Action Research Framework

Action research is dependent on transforming the role of the researcher from someone removed to someone connected to the practice within the study (Herr & Anderson, 2015). This type of research calls for stakeholders connected to the practice to begin to discover and explore the context of their study focus. This type of research also works to foster collaboration among researchers and stakeholders to not only better understand how to approach the issues at hand but also how to apply the solution to best fit the needs of the environment (Ponte et al., 2004). Those participating in the study and the researchers work to gain insight and gather results which allow them to reflect and examine the context of the study. These types of studies can also work to inform the refinement or creation of theory which aims to correct issues within the environment (Mitchell et al., 2009).

As mentioned before, issues surrounding action research stem from the proximity of the researcher to the study could potentially hurt the ramifications of the research validity (Herr & Anderson, 2015). However, as this study aims to proceed as a program evaluation, it strives to ensure impartiality by only reporting the facts and the results of the data. By maintaining this focus, the mantle of my position will not interfere with my role as an action researcher. As I interpret the results, I must acknowledge both my role as a researcher but also in a position which might have opinions formed by the involvement in this study.

This record of study is driven to better understand the effects of the implementation of this SEL program on a specific campus. In an effort to promote impartiality and remove opinions from this study, program evaluation was selected as guiding the focus of the study (Wholey et al., 2004; Fitzpatrick et al., 2010). Program evaluation can take on many roles, for the purposes

of this study, the researcher is interested in studying the impact of these programs on different aspects of the campus, including students and teachers.

Within the tradition of action research, this program evaluation approach aligns within the frame of program theory (Suchman, 1967). Program theory permits a theory-based approach to evaluation studies and is an important component in fully realizing how programs are designed, implemented and effectively assessed (Lipsey & Pollard, 1989; Chen, 1990; Rogers et al., 2000). The goals of program theory revolve around the program goals, treatments and the environment in which the treatment is implemented (Chen, 1990). Program theory and action science work off each other provide an academic foundation to problem solving in many different contexts (Argyis, Putnam & Smith, 1985). These traditions of research work to aid interested parties in evaluating their work toward remedying problems grounded in theory and academic research.

The current study includes the evaluation of the SEL program which was implemented by teachers to all 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade students in order to determine if students felt like their SEL competencies were grown through the teachings of the program. This program was set to make an impact on SEL competencies of students throughout the school year who received this program. Additionally, this current study seeks to understand the impact made to teachers' perception of school climate and their feedback of the programing both before and after the implementation of this program. Organizationally, this campus seeks to use this program evaluation to review the state of our campus after this program was implemented as well as to help explain phenomenon on the campus in years following the initial rollout of this program. This program evaluation approach also allows for a more data driven exploration of a specific

problem on campus, the information will likely be able to inform future decisions made regarding SEL competency teaching on this campus.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

This study fits into the framework of Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) as the context in which to frame my study. The Social Learning Theory fits my study as the teachers were primarily responsible for teaching the SEL competencies, through modeling the desired skills and behaviors while the students will then be tasked with experimenting with these skills between specified lessons. The function of the SEL competencies is intertwined with this model as the competencies are learned behaviors, learned symbolically through central processing and interpreted before the action modeled is performed. Thus, by seeing the model of desired behavior, a person develops the idea of response components which must be put together and refined to engrain the desired behavior (Bandura, 1977).

Most Significant Research and Practice Studies

Relevant Historical Background

Numerous studies have documented factors which significantly impact learning, specifically noting the positive impact of teaching social-emotional factors in the learning process (Pekrun, 1992; Wang et al., 1993; Zins et al., 2004a; Zins et al., 2004b; Cohen, 2006; Schonfeld et al., 2015). In addition to student outcomes, including teaching social-emotional competencies, school climate is a secondary driving force in predicting positive outcomes for both students and teachers (Collie et al., 2012). These two factors are interrelated, campuses

dedicated to providing opportunities for students to learn social-emotional competencies and teachers' perception of school climate (Caprara et al., 2006; Newell & Ryzin, 2007).

Teachers are required to assume many roles and fulfill many needs on a campus beyond their primary role in delivering quality instruction. Teachers are now being asked to serve on campus cadres, continue their learning through professional development, offer advisory time to students as well as mentor students in developing social-emotional competencies and practice those skills. There have been numerous research studies noting positive gains of social-emotional learning (SEL) competency programs on student outcomes (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Weissberg, 2007; Durlak et al., 2011; Schonfeld et al., 2015). The takeaway from these studies is that proper implementation is the most important component rather than the programs themselves being ineffective/weak. There have also been numerous studies which have noted the importance of building positive campus culture and school climate alongside the implementation of these SEL programs (Caprara et al., 2006; Weissberg, 2007; Collie et al., 2012).

Social-Emotional Learning Competencies and School Climate

Students growing their social-emotional learning competencies is in direct tandem to overall school climate. Numerous scientific research studies (Charney, 2002; Zins et al., 2004a; Zins et al., 2004b, Elias, 2006; Carlson, 2007; Stern, 2007; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013) have shown effective and purposefully implemented SEL competencies improve and promote students' self-management, along with developing, "their attitudes and beliefs about self, others, and school" with a multitude of cascading effects on both students and campuses (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013, 5). If teachers are involved in the direct teaching of these SEL competencies through meaningful lessons along with, "establishing safe, caring and highly engaging learning environments involving peer and family initiatives and whole-school community-building

24

activities", these students will be able to use these norms to ensure all of their interactions promote SEL well-being within themselves and through others (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013, 5).

SEL education has proven over the years through academic research that teachings in SEL will develop both social and emotional skills within students, result in decreased behavior issues, aggression and bullying are decreased and reduced occurrences of emotional issues such as depression or withdrawal (socially) (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Significant studies (Hoffman, 2009; Sklad et al., 2012) have found after looking at more than 75 SEL studies, there were benefits found in areas such as social skills, mental health, academic achievement, school climate and other related topics. Constructing a school climate which all students, teachers and stakeholders can latch onto and support requires strong relationships between all stakeholders that are refined through schoolwide programming (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013).

Bryk et al. (2010) summarized 15 years of school reform research and singled out factors on supporting school improvement, among those were leadership, community involvement, refining and developing a professional capacity within educators, providing educators with materials to support instruction, and a collegial school climate instills SEL competencies (e.g. safe, supportive, caring, nurturing, etc.) to all students. There was also a noted positive effect of student achievement markers, specifically in mathematics and English classes (Bryk et al., 2010). All of these effects and supports traced back to those schools keeping the focus on teaching SEL competencies, monitoring academic achievement, high secondary completion rate and college and career readiness standards (Bryk et al., 2010; Dymnicki et al., 2013).

Closing Thoughts on Chapter 2

Studies such as this, aim to evaluate social emotional learning programing and competency teaching, as well as seek to inform the impact of SEL teachings along with its resounding effects on students, teachers, schools and communities. It is the hope of this researcher, that this study will function broadly to assist in better implementing SEL opportunities for students but also to note the perceived impact learning SEL competencies mean for creating a positive school climate as a whole.

It is also the hope of this researcher that educators, educational leaders and administrators will utilize the findings of this research study in order to better support collaboration among teachers in order to find the most effective means to advance and enhance students' social emotional learning competencies.

CHAPTER 3

SOLUTION AND METHOD

Proposed Solution

Solution 1

(1) The Problem: Students lack SEL competencies to deal with problems they face on campus/in their life daily, (2) The Solution: Implement SEL curriculum (CharacterStrong) in the classroom during specific time of the school day each week, (3) Favorable Outcomes: Selected/Target SEL competence will increase among students, and (4) Data Collection Methods to Support a Favorable/Not so Favorable Outcome: Panorama Surveys - Pre (Fall 2017) and Post (Spring 2018) surveys will be used to mark change measures and will be used as secondary data sources.

Solution 2

(1) The Problem - Teachers feel like they are unsupported, lacking feedback, student issues are not addressed and there is a perceived negative climate on our campus, (2) The Solution - Implement the SEL curriculum (CharacterStrong), work to build a schedule for the 2018-2019 school year which builds in advisory time for students/teachers, greater administrator support for teachers through walkthroughs, visibility and PLC/cadre attendance, (3) Favorable Outcomes - Teachers have a better perception of students, administrators, themselves and our overall campus climate, and (4) Data Collection Methods to Support a Favorable/Not so Favorable Outcome: Panorama Teacher Climate Surveys - Pre (Fall 2017) and Post (Spring 2018) surveys will be used to mark change measures and will be used as secondary data sources.

Justification of Proposed Solution

 Coordinating with the administrative team, campus improvement team, teachers and students the researcher will work to implement the entire campus, 9th-12th grade students with SEL curriculum (CharacterStrong) during their advisory time once a week on Wednesdays. The SEL curriculum programing will be led by teachers in their individual classrooms and all teachers who have a 5th period class will be participating. This SEL programing led by the teachers will operate within the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which supports teacher-led and peer-led modeling of SEL scenarios in the classroom. This goal of this modeling is to support positive change in student SEL responses and/or behaviors that will have a positive impact on teacher climate responses. The goal of this research study is to address a specific problem on the specific study campus and not to overgeneralize the findings to other contexts. Survey data collected both before and after (pretest/posttest) the implementation of the treatment design works to showcase the results of the study. The researcher also serving on this study campus also allows for a deeper understanding of the problem itself but it could serve to restrict the generalized contextual validity of the study.

Study Context and Participants

Participants and Sample

 This study did not focus on a single-group pretest-posttest design, therefore the randomization of the control group did not occur in this study. All 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade students were included when receiving the SEL survey link for both pretest and posttest. Likewise, all teachers were included when offered the survey link on school climate for both pretest and posttest. This study did not aim to make the results relatable to any other situation but

instead to demonstrate the effectiveness of the SEL curriculum program, CharacterStrong to the school administration. The study faced contextual limitations which restricted dividing up the class or teachers in such a way to create a true random sample. The SEL curriculum treatment could possibly benefit all students and teachers, therefore the researcher and administrative team included all groups studied in the teacher-led/peer-led curriculum. There were also limitations along the lines of the number of student responses by each grade level

Context

The setting context of the problem is on a suburban secondary campus in northwest Houston. The campus is broken up into the following grade-levels, ethnic groups and other demographic data groups in Table 1. Table 1 showcases both 2016-2017 demographic data, from when the problem was first identified as well as the 2017-2018 demographic data pertaining to the study addressed in this manuscript (TAPR, 2017; TEA, 2017; TAPR, 2018).

Table 1

Demographic Data School Year 2016-2017 and 2017-2018

	School Year 2016-2017		School Year 2017-2018	
	n	Percentage of Population	*n*	Percentage of Population
Students	1875		1930	
Teaching Staff	109		114	
Grade				
9th	553	29.5%	534	27.7%
10th	462	24.6%	432	27.6%
11th	421	22.5%	442	22.9%
12th	439	23.4%	422	21.9%
Ethnicity				
African American	46	4.1%	82	4.2%
Hispanic	609	32.5	626	32.4%
White	1089	58.1%	1124	58.2%
American Indian	6	0.3%	3	0.2%
Asian	38	2.0%	39	2.0%
Pacific Islander	1	0.1%	0	0.0%
Two or More Races	57	3.0%	56	2.9%
Other Demographic Data				
Economically Disadvantaged	470	25.1%	478	24.8%
English Language Learners	72	3.8%	72	3.7%
Mobility Rate	177	9.9%	186	9.5%
Special Education Services	163	8.7%	171	8.8%

Note. (TAPR, 2017; TEA, 2017; TAPR, 2018).

Stakeholder Groups and Values

The stakeholder groups surrounding the researcher's problem include, Students,

Teachers, Administrators and Parents/Community. The Students, Teachers and Administrators

are all on a campus and have come to know this problem intimately as they are around it every

day. These stakeholders are aware of problem areas and would like to work towards a solution

but are unsure of where to begin in terms of remedying the underlying issues. Students were

concerned about the rise in discipline infractions of their peers. Teachers thought student

discipline and campus climate was so out of control during the 2016-2017 school year, they

imagined nothing would fix the issues, instead they counted down the days until the end of the

school year and questioned their future with the district and even the profession. Administrators

have a stake in making the school run more efficiently, creating avenues for both student and

teacher growth by introducing processes that begin to run themselves once they are outlined and

implemented (e.g. campus cadres, teacher mentors, etc.). The value for students, teachers and

administrators in finding solutions to these issues is to improve the quality of the classroom

experience and enhance the satisfaction of all parties. The last stakeholder group,

parents/community are external stakeholders (outside the campus) but they are deeply rooted and

invested in the success of the campus as a whole. Parents are experiencing what is happening at

the campus each day through their students, they are hearing the positive things happening as

well as anything interrupting the educational experience of their student each day. The value for

parents and their community is for students to not only have a positive and productive

educational experience each day but also for the campus to be a success in the community.

Proposed Research Paradigm

The proposed research paradigm of the current study is quantitative, using survey data and statistical analyses to draw a conclusion. This study will primarily be a *t*-test driven program evaluation on pretest posttest data collected during the study program.

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using a third-party survey software suite through Panorama. Data was collected through a survey link sent out to all student school accounts. Students then took both their pretest and posttest surveys in their second period classes once before the curriculum began at the beginning of the fall 2017 semester and once after it was complete in spring 2018. Teachers took a feedback survey twice, once during the fall 2017 semester just after the social emotional programming began and once during the spring 2018 semester after the social emotional programming was complete. The Panorama survey company was responsible for administering the survey and emailing the link, acting as a school official. With regard to collecting minor assent or parent permission for the survey parts involving students, under FERPA and PPRA, it is not necessary to obtain prior written permission from parents for survey taking if the subject matter does not pertain to any of several areas:

- Political affiliations;
- Mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student and his/her family;
- Sex behavior and attitudes;
- Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating and demeaning behavior;
- Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
- Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parent;

- Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program.)

Data Points Included in the Data Set

In this study, Gehlbach's (2016a) Panorama Social-Emotional Learning Survey was used to answer Research Question #1 and Gehlbach's (2016b) Panorama Teacher and Staff Survey was used to answer Research Question #2.

Research Question #1

- Student Grade Level
- Student Gender
- Student Race
- Student SES (determined by qualification for free or reduced lunch)
- Student Gifted/talented status

Grit

- How often do you stay focused on the same goal for several months at a time?
- If you fail to reach an important goal, how likely are you to try again?
- When you are working on a project that matters a lot to you, how focused can you stay when there are lots of distractions?
- If you have a problem while working towards an important goal, how well can you keep working?
- Some people pursue some of their goals for a long time, and others change their goals frequently.
- Over the next several years, how likely are you to continue to pursue one of your current goals?

Self-Efficacy

- How confident are you that you can complete all the work that is assigned in your classes?
- When complicated ideas are presented in class, how confident are you that you can understand them?
- How confident are you that you can learn all the material presented in your classes?
- How confident are you that you can do the hardest work that is assigned in your classes?
- How confident are you that you will remember what you learned in your current classes, next year?

Growth Mindset

- Being talented
- Putting forth a lot of effort
- Behaving well in class
- Liking the subject
- How easily you give up
- Your level of intelligence

Social Awareness

- How carefully did you listen to other people's points of view?
- How much did you care about other people's feelings?
- How well did you get along with students who are different from you?
- How often did you compliment others' accomplishments?
- How clearly were you able to describe your feelings?
- When others disagreed with you, how respectful were you of their views?
- To what extent were you able to stand up for yourself without putting others down?
- To what extent were you able to disagree with others without starting an argument?

Self-Management

- How often did you come to class prepared?
- How often did you follow directions in class?
- How often did you get your work done right away, instead of waiting until the last minute?
- How often were you polite to adults?
- How often did you pay attention and resist distractions?
- When you were working independently, how often did you stay focused?
- How often did you remain calm, even when someone was bothering you or saying bad things?
- How often did you allow others to speak without interruption?
- How often were you polite to other students?
- How often did you keep your temper in check?

Research Question #2

- Teacher Gender

School Climate

- On most days, how enthusiastic are the students about being at school?
- When new initiatives to improve teaching are presented at your school, how supportive are your colleagues?
- How optimistic are you that your school will improve in the future?
- How supportive are students in their interactions with each other?
- To what extent are teachers trusted to teach in the way they think is best?

- How positive are the attitudes of your colleagues?
- How respectful are the relationships between teachers and students?
- How often do you see students helping each other without being prompted?
- Overall, how positive is the working environment at your school?

Professional Learning

- At your school, how valuable are the available professional development opportunities?
- How helpful are your colleagues' ideas for improving your teaching?
- How much input do you have into individualizing your own professional development opportunities?
- Through working at your school, how many new teaching strategies have you learned?
- Overall, how much do you learn about teaching from the leaders at your school?
- How often do your professional development opportunities help you explore new ideas?
- How relevant have your professional development opportunities been to the content that you teach?
- Overall, how supportive has the school been of your growth as a teacher?

Feedback and Coaching

- How often do you receive feedback on your teaching?
- At your school, how thorough is the feedback you receive in covering all aspects of your role as a teacher?
- How useful do you find the feedback you receive on your teaching?
- How much feedback do you receive on your teaching?
- How much do you learn from the teacher evaluation processes at your school?

Evaluation
- How often is your teaching evaluated?
- How accurate is your school's evaluation system at recognizing good teachers?
- At your school, how objectively is your teaching performance assessed?
- How effective is your school's evaluation system at helping you improve?
- How accurate is your school's evaluation system at identifying bad teachers?
- How fair is the way teachers are assessed at your school?

Justification of use of Instruments in Context

The instruments in this study were developed, tested and used by Panorama Education in order to not only measure but also to work to implement and address students social emotional learning (SEL). Panorama works directly with campuses to assess items such as SEL, school climate, teacher efficacy, etc. in order to develop reports in order to decide which approaches to

take in order to improve or develop such programing. The teacher behaviors identified in the teacher instrument was developed through similar methods to identify key teacher behavioral competencies.

The instruments were developed around a range of SEL competencies and programing. The theories and data the instrument was designed around included three domains tied to significant impacts on results for students: self-regulation (Duckworth et al., 2011), social relationships (Gehlbach, 2016a; Walton & Cohen, 2011) and motivation (Hulleman & Harackiewicz, 2009). This instrument was laid out within these three outlined domains.

Some of the items in the instrument fit completely within one of the three domains, others are blended in order to satisfy the constraints. For example, the instrument categories, self-efficacy and growth mindset nests into the theory of motivation, connecting the idea of student confidence to the feasibility of a task. Other instrument categories such as, grit and self-management combine motivation and self-regulation together. The category of social awareness brings the domain of social relationships into the picture (Panorama, 2016).

Data Analysis Strategy

The data analysis plan for this project is to analyze both the pretest/posttest of student SEL data and teacher feedback data is to conduct a paired-comparisons *t*-test to analyze for change. I would be converting the items from each survey set into identical sets of scales for both periods of time. In order to create those scales, I would then utilize Cronbach's alpha and Exploratory Factor Analysis.

Timeline

The project took place from the beginning of the fall 2017 semester and carried through the end of the spring 2018 semester at this Texas Secondary Campus. The data was collected from students in the early fall 2017 (September) and again in the late spring 2018 (May). Data from teachers was collected mid fall 2017 (October) and again in late spring 2018 (May).

Reliability and Validity Concerns or Equivalents

In order to take care of any reliability and validity concerns, Panorama (2016) analyzed the result data from three different studies that used the five measures featured in the present study. The studies contained self-report items and were only used for formative purposes, much like the present study, not using the results to evaluate students or teachers. The SEL measures were found to reliable, with an average Cronbach alpha coefficient of .78 and factor analyses showcased a single-factor model that was verified, fit the data well for each measure across the three studies (Panorama, 2016). The model also showed a number of SEL measures that correlated well with each other, self-efficacy and grit (.50), self-efficacy and social awareness (.46), self-efficacy and self-management (.52), self-management and social awareness (.69), growth mindset and social awareness (.36), social awareness and grit (.43), and social awareness and self-efficacy (.46) (Panorama, 2016). The higher the Spearman correlations the more related were the constructs and the lower the correlations the less related the SEL factors. From these results, the SEL measures of this instrument, psychometrically prove the properties of a good instrument.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter 3

This program evaluation of the student SEL data at a Texas Secondary Campus will inform the administration at the school about the effectiveness of SEL programming in addition to the corresponding effects it has on teacher perception of school policies and climate, during the fall and spring semester (2017-2018) for students in grades 9th-12th and all teachers. Using the data from the pretest-posttest surveys for both students and teachers as the primary data source, the researcher seeks to understand these results and use them to support the advance of school-wide SEL programming. This study made use of existing data and literature to support programs such as this as well as identify program shortcomings to speak to additional support.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this two-group pretest-posttest study of students and teachers, quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple paired sample t-tests. Each of the two specific surveys were administered randomly to both students and teachers. The student version had specific questions related to their perception of learned social emotional learning (SEL) competencies. Social emotional learning (SEL) can be defined as, "the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (CASEL, 2003). The teacher version had specific questions related to teacher behavior and perceptions of the campus. These surveys were administered once at the beginning of the fall 2017 semester in September as a pretest and a posttest was administered during the spring 2018 semester in the first week of May. The pretest and posttest were offered to students and teachers through a QR code and Tinyurl link to access the survey, students and teachers were both required to login with their email address in order to access the survey. By logging in to take the survey, the researcher ensured no one could take the survey twice. Survey results were kept completely confidential as the survey was administered and managed through the Panorama survey company's secure servers. The surveys were offered to be taken during the students' normal advisory time, which is when the SEL curriculum was taught, teachers were also able to take their survey during this time. All of the statistics in this study (e.g. descriptive statistics, t-test analysis) were calculated within SPSS statistics software suite.

The study had a central goal of studying the basic impact, if any, the SEL program had on student SEL competencies and teacher behavior over the course of the single school year during

the rollout of this curriculum. The SEL curricular programming was implemented across 25 weeks and was evaluated using the third-party survey company, Panorama. The instruments in this study were developed, tested and used by Panorama Education in order to measure feedback but also to work to implement and address students SEL competency levels. Panorama works directly with campuses to assess items such as SEL, school climate, teacher efficacy, etc. in an effort to determine which approaches would be most beneficial in improving or developing programing (Panorama, 2016). The teacher behaviors identified in the teacher instrument were developed through similar methods to identify key teacher behavioral competencies.

Research Question 1

What impact, if any did the SEL program have on student SEL competencies (Grit, Growth Mindset, Self-Efficacy, Self-Management, and Social Awareness)?

Participants

Participants were 9th grade ($n = 366$), 10th grade ($n = 329$), 11th grade ($n = 269$) and 12th grade ($n = 222$) in fall 2017 and were 9th grade ($n = 353$), 10th grade ($n = 331$), 11th grade ($n = 255$) and 12th grade ($n = 247$) in spring 2018. All of the students surveyed were from the same mid-sized suburban secondary campus in Southeast Texas. As of the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, the campus has a total enrollment in the high school, of 1,930 students. There was an almost equal distribution of students by grade level and gender for both survey administrations. The participants were surveyed twice during the 2017-2018 school year, once during the fall semester before the social-emotional curriculum was delivered and once during the spring semester after the social-emotional curriculum had been delivered ($n = 1186$).

Breaking down the descriptive variables of the sample involved with this current study showcases the types of participants involved in the study. The study included students from the 9th grade, 10th grade, 11th grade and 12th grade. The gender of students involved in the present study is male ($n = 581$) and female ($n = 605$) in the fall administration and male ($n = 600$) and female ($n = 586$) in the spring administration.

Instruments

The instrument used in this self-report study was a survey administered in both fall 2017 and spring 2018 to secondary school students at the secondary campus being studied within this one school district. There were items on the survey seeking to gain insight into students' social emotional learning competencies (e.g. Grit, Growth Mindset, Self-Efficacy, Social Awareness, and Self-Management). Questions were asked relating to how frequently students exhibited specific behaviors and skills related to the social emotional learning competencies taught during the school year. All items were coded on a five-point Likert-type measure: Not at all (1), Slightly (2), Somewhat (3), Quite (4), and Extremely (5). The Likert values were merged and summarized for each social emotional learning competency to a single median value for each question response.

The survey contained a number of questions for each social emotional learning competency descriptor. Students could choose a descriptive answer based on their own personal preference regarding activities within each of the descriptors. The activities included ranged from goal focus, talent level, effort level, intelligence level, confidence, preparation, behavior, attitude, viewpoint, perspective, etc. These identical questions were present on both survey

41

administrations. The instrument was tested by the Panorama survey company and was found to be reliable across numerous national survey administrations.

Data Analyses

The reliability and validity of the self-report surveys was measured with statistical analysis software (SPSS). The variables were then input and manipulated with the statistical analysis software by initial descriptive statistics, followed by multiple paired sample t-tests. These tests were used in order to determine significant differences between the SEL competency measures students believed they possessed between the fall administration (before the SEL curriculum was taught) and the spring administration (after the SEL curriculum was taught).

Significance of the Study

This study examines high school student social emotional learning competencies in a moderately sized suburban school district. In our technology driven world, teachers have a challenging responsibility of educating students within the scope of social emotional learning competencies alongside the content area teachers are responsible for covering in their classroom. This study answers questions related to this idea of students' social emotional learning across a typical school year and the resulting effects on school climate from the perspective of teachers. The self-report data presented in the current study gathers necessary information from the student perspective related to their experience learning these social emotional learning competencies over the course of the school year.

Presentation of Data

Table 2 summarizes the demographics for the 9th-12th grade students who responded to the survey during the 2017-2018 academic year. The greatest percentage of students who responded were in 9th grade (28.9%) followed by 10th grade (26.0%) in Fall 2017 and 9th grade (30.4%) followed by 10th grade (26.9%) in Spring 2018. Reviewing gender, there was an almost equal percentage of males and females in the study in Fall 2017 (49.0% and 51.0%, respectively) and in Spring 2018 (50.6% and 49.4%, respectively).

Table 2

9th-12th Grade Student Demographics

	Fall 2017 ($n = 1186$)	Spring 2018 ($n = 1186$)
Grade		
9th	28.9%	30.4%
10th	26.0%	26.9%
11th	21.2%	22.4%
12th	17.5%	20.3%
Gender		
Male	49.0%	50.6%
Female	51.0%	49.4%

Table 2 summarizes the combined results from several paired-sample *t*-tests across the fall and spring administrations of the SEL competency student survey.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results for SEL Pairs: Grit, Growth Mindset, Self-Efficacy, Social Awareness and Self-Management

	Fall 2017		Spring 2018			95% CI for Mean Difference			
SEL Pairs	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*n*		*p*	*t*	df
Grit	3.67	0.79	3.65	0.75	1186	-0.51, 0.73	.730	.345	1185
Growth Mindset	3.45	0.99	3.58	0.98	1186	-0.21, -0.05	.001	-3.26**	1185
Self-Efficacy	3.25	0.95	3.36	0.93	1186	-0.19, -0.03	.005	-2.79**	1185
Social Awareness	3.61	0.79	3.66	0.77	1186	-0.11, 0.02	.143	.016	1185
Self-Mgmt.	3.95	0.73	4.06	0.76	1186	-0.18, -0.05	.000	-3.75***	1185

Note. *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation. *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$, ***$p<.001$.
Not at all (1), *Slightly* (2), *Somewhat* (3), *Quite* (4), and *Extremely* (5)

As displayed in Table 3, there are statistically significant differences, at the .01 significance level, in the fall and spring for Growth Mindset and Self-Efficacy. There are statistically significant differences, at the .001 significance level, in the fall and spring administrations for Self-Management. Grit and Social Awareness were not found to be statistically significant at the .05, .01, or .0001 level. Results show competencies of Growth Mindset, Self-Efficacy, Social Awareness and Self-Management increased and Grit decreased after students were taught the SEL curriculum throughout the school year.

Results of the paired-samples *t*-test show mean scores increased between the two administrations on all competencies with the exception of Grit. In the fall administration, Grit (*M* = 3.67, *SD* = 0.79) had a higher mean on average and compared to the spring administration (*M* = 3.65, *SD* = 0.75) was not significant at any level (*t* = .345, df = 1185, *n* = 1186, CI for mean difference -0.51 to 0.73, *p* = .730). On average, Grit decreased .02 across the 2 administrations.

In the fall administration, Growth Mindset ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.99$) had a lower mean on average and compared to the spring administration ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.98$) was statistically significant at the $p<.01$ level ($t = -3.26$, df $= 1183$, $n = 1184$, CI for mean difference -0.21 to -0.05, $p = .001$). On average, Growth Mindset increased .13 across the 2 administrations.

In the fall administration, Self-Efficacy ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.95$) had a lower mean on average and compared to the spring administration ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.93$) was statistically significant at the $p<.01$ level ($t = -2.79$, df $= 1183$, $n = 1184$, CI for mean difference -0.19 to -0.03, $p = .005$). On average, Self-Efficacy decreased .11 across the 2 administrations.

In the fall administration, Social Awareness ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.79$) had a lower mean on average and compared to the and the spring administration ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.77$) was not significant at any level ($t = .016$, df $= 1183$, $n = 1184$, CI for mean difference -0.11 to -0.05, $p = .000$). On average, Social Awareness decreased .05 across the 2 administrations.

In the fall administration, Self-Management ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.73$) had a lower mean on average and compared to the spring administration ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.76$) was statistically significant at the $p<.001$ level ($t = -3.75$, df $= 1185$, $n = 1184$, CI for mean difference -0.18 to 0.73, $p = .730$). On average, Self-Management increased .11 across the 2 administrations.

Research Question 2

What impact, if any did the SEL program have on measures of teacher behavior (School Climate, Professional Learning, Feedback and Coaching, and Evaluation)?

Participants

Participants were 52 teachers from the same high school studied in Research Question #1 in fall 2017 and in spring 2018. All of the teachers surveyed were from the same mid-sized suburban secondary campus in Southeast Texas. As of the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, the campus has a total number of high school teachers at this campus was 109. There was slight distribution of teachers by gender for both survey administrations. Both administrations had more females than males participate with an average of about 9 additional female teachers participating in each administration. The participants were surveyed twice during the 2017-2018 school year, once during the fall semester before the social-emotional curriculum was delivered and once during the spring semester after the social-emotional curriculum had been delivered (n = 52).

Breaking down the descriptive variables of the sample involved with this current study showcases the types of participants involved in the study. The gender of teachers involved in the present study is male (n = 22) and female (n = 30) in the fall administration and male (n = 21) and female (n = 31) in the spring administration.

Instruments

The instrument which was used in this self-report study was a survey administered in both fall 2017 and spring 2018 to teachers at the secondary campus being studied within this one school district. There were items on the survey seeking to gain insight into teachers' overall perception of the campus environment. Questions were asked relating to how teachers felt about specific aspects of their job assigned into certain categories. The categories studied in this report were those categories featured in both the fall and spring administration of this survey. These

categories include, School Climate, Professional Learning, Feedback and Coaching, and Evaluation. All items were coded on a five-point Likert-type measure: Not at all (1), Slightly (2), Somewhat (3), Quite (4), and Extremely (5). The Likert values were merged and summarized for each of the studied categories into a single median value for each question response.

The survey contained a number of questions for each topic descriptor category on the survey. Teachers could choose a descriptive answer based on their own personal preference regarding activities within each of the descriptors. The activities included ranged from perception of students' behaviors, personal attitude at work, relationships with colleagues, feedback, teacher evaluation, effort level, intelligence level, confidence, preparation, behavior, attitude, viewpoint, professional development, personal growth, perspective, fairness, remediation, etc. These identical questions were present on both survey administrations. The instrument was tested by the Panorama survey company and was found to be reliable across numerous national survey administrations.

Data Analyses

The reliability and validity of the self-report surveys was measured with statistical analysis software (SPSS). The variables were then input and manipulated with the statistical analysis software by initial descriptive statistics, followed by multiple paired sample *t*-tests. These tests were used in order to determine significant differences between the teachers' responses across those topic descriptors associated between the fall administration (before the SEL curriculum was taught) and the spring administration (after the SEL curriculum was taught).

Significance of the Study

This study examines high school student social emotional learning competencies in a moderately sized suburban school district. In our technology driven world, teachers have a challenging responsibility of educating students within the scope of social emotional learning competencies alongside the content area teachers are responsible for covering in their classroom. This study answers questions related to this idea of students' social emotional learning across a typical school year and the resulting effects on school climate from the perspective of teachers. The self-report data presented in the current study gathers necessary information from the student perspective related to their experience learning these social emotional learning competencies over the course of the school year. This specific research question focuses on the attitude of teachers and how they are feeling before and after this curriculum is taught, along with the effects they perceive on their campus as a whole.

Presentation of Data

Table 4 summarizes the demographics for the teachers who responded to the survey during the 2017-2018 academic year. The greatest percentage of teachers who responded were female in both survey administrations. Further reviewing gender, there was an almost equal percentage of males and females in the study in fall 2017 (49.0% and 51.0%, respectively) and in spring 2018 (50.6% and 49.4%, respectively).

Table 4

Teacher Demographics

	Fall 2017 (*n* = 52)	Spring 2018 (*n* = 52)
Gender		
Male	42.3%	40.4%
Female	57.7%	59.6%

Table 5 summarizes the combined results from several paired-sample *t*-tests across the

fall and spring administrations of the teacher perception survey.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results for Teacher Perception Pairs: School Climate, Professional Learning, Feedback and Coaching, and Evaluation

	Fall 2017		Spring 2018			95% CI for Mean Difference			
Pairs	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	n		p	t	df
School Climate	3.46	0.64	3.73	0.49	52	-0.50, -0.03	.025	-2.30*	51
Professional Learning	3.23	0.81	3.38	0.81	52	-0.45, 0.16	.347	-0.95	51
Feedback and Coaching	3.19	0.93	3.23	0.94	52	-0.40, 0.32	.832	-0.21	51
Evaluation	3.40	0.78	3.24	0.77	52	-0.14, 0.47	.282	1.09	51

Note. M = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation. *p<.05
Not at all (1), *Slightly* (2), *Somewhat* (3), *Quite* (4), and *Extremely* (5)

As displayed in Table 5, there are statistically significant differences at the .05

significance level, between the fall and spring administrations of the survey around teacher

perception factors for School Climate. There are no further items with statistically significant

results to report. Results show School Climate, Professional Learning, and Feedback and

Coaching increased, while Evaluation decreased after students were taught the SEL curriculum

throughout the school year.

Results of the paired-samples *t*-test show mean scores increased between the two administrations on all teacher perception factors with the exception of Evaluation. In the fall administration, School Climate (*M* = 3.46, *SD* = 0.64) had a lower mean on average and compared to the spring administration (*M* = 3.73, *SD* = 0.49) showed a significant difference at the .05 level (*t* = -2.30, df = 51, *n* = 52, CI for mean difference -0.50 to -0.03, *p* = .025). On average, School Climate increased .27 across the 2 administrations.

In the fall administration, Professional Learning (*M* = 3.23, *SD* = 0.81) had a lower mean on average and compared to the spring administration (*M* = 3.38, *SD* = 0..81) was not statistically significant at any level (*t* = -.950, df = 51, *n* = 52, CI for mean difference -0.45 to 0.16, *p* = .347). On average, Professional Learning increased .15 across the 2 administrations.

In the fall administration, Feedback and Coaching (*M* = 3.19, *SD* = 0.93) had a lower mean on average and compared to the spring administration (*M* = 3.23, *SD* = 0.94) was not statistically significant at any level (*t* = -.214, df = 51, *n* = 52, CI for mean difference -0.40 to 0.32, *p* = .832). On average, Feedback and Coaching increased .04 across the 2 administrations.

In the fall administration, Evaluation (*M* = 3.40, *SD* = 0.78) had a lower mean on average and compared to the spring administration (*M* = 3.24, *SD* = 0.77) was not significant at any level (*t* = 1.09, df = 51, *n* = 52, CI for mean difference -0.14 to -0.47, *p* = .282). On average, Evaluation decreased .16 across the 2 administrations.

Results of Research

After the initial evaluation of the statistical results of this study, it is clear the SEL curricular programming was impactful in working to remedy the identified problems at this

campus among students and teachers. The rollout of this SEL curriculum made an impact with both groups measured in this study.

Interaction with Context of the Study

The campus in the study chose to continue with the CharacterStrong (SEL) curriculum programming beyond the initial rollout year, even before the completion of this study. The future iterations of the programming were attuned for individual grade levels with specific lessons targeted for each grade. 9th graders would continue to receive the rollout programming, similar to the initial year, as this introduced all the curriculum introduced in the rollout year to all incoming 9th graders. The goal of the study was to investigate the impact of this programming not only along the lines of expanding student SEL competencies but also to see if there was a significant change with teacher behaviors over the course of the rollout year.

The CharacterStrong (SEL) program was taught during the advisory time and was taught by a teacher in each advisory class. By the teachers participating in the rollout of this curriculum they were also active participants in the process. Students and their teacher participated in both individual activities and whole group activities along with numerous opportunities for reflection in the 30-minute advisory over the course of the 25 weeks. All competencies evaluated in the student survey were covered in the curriculum rollout. The teacher behaviors evaluated were items identified as important to moving the campus in a positive direction as far as teacher attitudes were concerned.

The SEL programming covered topics with students in a wide context. The programming began with students introducing themselves to each other and figuring out a little bit more about each other each week through games and activities in the first 3-4 weeks. Students went on to

51

review the basics of the program and covered the eight core elements defining the program (e.g. Patience, Kindness, Honesty, Respect, Selflessness, Forgiveness, Humility, Commitment). All of these elements are covered each year of the four years of the secondary programming, with some concepts being emphasized more than others. The remaining weeks of the program for the first year, encourage students to develop their own personal brand, be mindful of others, refine their emotional intelligence and reflect on who they really want to be. The last four weeks of program in the rollout allows the class to develop deeper personal class reflections and finish the year with a closure activity feeding into the next year of the programming.

The extent and development of the program were implemented in an effort to improve student SEL competencies. As noted in Table 3, there was a significant difference that occurred as a result of the treatment for Growth Mindset, Self-Efficacy and Self-Management. There was no significant difference for Grit and Social Awareness. A notable result between Table 3 and Table 5 was that there was also a significant difference that occurred as a result of the treatment for School Climate among teachers on the posttest survey. There was no significant difference among teachers in Professional Learning, Feedback and Coaching and Evaluation. With the quantitative support to continue this SEL program through the significant results in both the student results and among teachers, especially School Climate, it is great the school chose to continue using this curriculum in future years with its students. The school truly believes this program will continue to foster growth among students' SEL competencies as well as repair the climate within the school as well as the perception of the school within the community. It is the hope of this researcher that the school continues to evaluate this program yearly, using the same methods utilized in this study to continue to measure effectiveness.

Summary

The current research program worked to uncover two primary goals with relation to this SEL programming. The first goal was to determine if this program made an impact in growing student SEL competencies in the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade. The second goal was to determine if this program made an impact among teachers with regard to specific teacher behaviors (e.g. School Climate, Professional Learning, Feedback and Coaching, Evaluation). Numerous topical directed questions were asked with regard to each competency for students and each behavior for teachers to uncover how their perceptions changed between the pre-test and the post-test survey.

Numerous research studies notated the importance of growing student SEL competencies and the potential impact on overall school climate. The results indicate student SEL competencies grew in four of the five areas, with three of the five having statistically significant gains. Among the results for the teachers, three of the four behaviors noted growth with one of them being school climate showing statistically significant gains. Furthermore, these results show quantitative progress made in a single school year with the implementation of this programming. Future studies will be needed to be implemented each year to determine the effectiveness in each grade level along with the overall impact with teachers' perceptions of the overall school environment. With significant differences being noted in this study within the quantitative data, all stakeholders involved in completing this research study felt all of these activities possess value. The stakeholders felt this rollout offered a remarkable opportunity for us to help our school and community develop and refine these SEL competencies for our students along with improving the overall school climate.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

The teaching of social-emotional competencies has been shown to significantly impact learning in a positive way for students (Pekrun, 1992; Wang et al., 1993; Zins et al., 2004a; Zins et al., 2004b). By being exposed to these social-emotional competencies in school through a guided curriculum, students are more likely to engage with peers, teachers and others in the community in a positive way. It was found in this study students specifically have a statistically significant difference in growth mindset, self-efficacy and self-management. Students surveyed between the pretest and the post-test felt these specific competencies grew over the course of the year as they were being exposed to the CharacterStrong curriculum. Though other competencies were not found to be statistically significant, the overall personal perception of the impact of the study among students proved to be positive. Despite the lack of statistical significance, growth in humans may be impactful on its own as we are dealing with human growth.

Additionally, beyond the teaching of the social-emotional competencies for students, overall school climate drives the conversation in terms of predicting positive outcomes for a campus, especially among students and teachers (Collie et al., 2012). Teachers were exposed to the curriculum alongside students as they rolled out teaching these competencies throughout the year. Teachers surveyed felt there was a statistically significant difference in school climate between the pretest and posttest in this study. Other perceptions among teachers were not found to be statistically significant but the overall personal perception of teachers in terms of the impact of this study was found to be positive.

54

From the original informal survey sent out to teachers who led to the selection of the CharacterStrong curriculum for students, teachers and students both echoed the need for a change to the overall climate of the school. It was interesting to note the statistically significant difference in school climate from the perception of the teachers. As the school explores additional opportunities in future years to continue teaching this social-emotional learning curriculum, it would be interesting to survey students to better understand their perception of the change in school climate over the course of the year. The more the school can tap into the perceptions of all stakeholders in and around the campus, the increased connectedness would allow for more opportunities for exponential, positive growth.

Discussion of Results in Relation to the Literature

Exposing students and teachers to a social-emotional learning curriculum has been noted as a core strategy to improve school climate (Newell & Ryzin, 2007; Durlak et al., 2011; Collie et al., 2012; Schonfeld et al., 2015). Many of these studies have noted that proper implementation of the selected program is key, versus a specific program. Schools in need of exposing students to these competencies, developing these competencies on a larger scale or working to improve overall perception of a campus are encouraged to find a program that fits their needs and implement it well. When the selected curriculum is taught in an effort to improve the overall campus, it can be the programming has ripple effects from students, to teachers and outwards to the community.

The current study provided insight into a social-emotional learning program aiming to impact both students and teachers, while providing support to impact the overall perception of school climate among teachers. The goal of the research was centered around the impact of

students developing their social-emotional learning competencies and teachers' perceptions of that impact along the lines of how they viewed campus, specifically school climate. The quantitative results are present both among students and teachers in certain social-emotional competencies and in teachers' perceptions of school climate. The literature also supports both developing students' social-emotional learning competencies as well as using this tactic as a means to improve overall school climate.

The results of the present study show the social-emotional curriculum had a demonstrable effect on teachers' perceptions of school climate over the course of the 2017-2018 school year within the context of the school focused on in this study. The results further support extending this curriculum based around the evidence found in this student and the existing available literature.

Further evaluation is recommended to determine future impacts of continuing with this curriculum at the study school. It is also recommended to continue to observe the programs effects on school climate as well as potentially expanding the program to the feeder middle school campus. In doing so, this could potentially help to support students in transitioning to a secondary campus as well as potentially benefit the overall climate of both campuses.

Personal Reflection

This entire process of implementing a program campus-wide is an incredible challenge in and of itself. From the moment the administrative team worked to pull in teachers to gain insight into some of the biggest challenges facing the study campus, it was clear there would be no single program or solution which would remedy all problems faced by this campus. I acknowledge while discoveries made in the course of my study, more study is needed and more

questions need to be asked in order to grow any perceived benefit of a social-emotional learning program. I would continue to utilize the survey company we worked with as data security is vital to maintaining the integrity of the study. I am fortunate the school and the district decided to take this route in collecting the data for this study.

My focus in this study was to better understand exactly what teachers were hoping to gain out of their perceived issues they saw with the campus. The conversation around making this specific campus better always went back to creating something which would benefit students; however, I feel most teachers didn't consider teaching this social-emotional curriculum also had an effect on them in the process of rolling it out with their students. Time was spent on the teachers part, preparing to teach this material on a weekly basis, doing research on the side to reflect on personal stories they might share with the students to convey the idea being taught during the specific week, and developing a personal bond with a group of students they might not have otherwise cultivated in the course of a school year. Teachers overall perception of school climate is inextricably linked to both students growing their social-emotional competencies but also teachers growing their own skillset over the course of the school year.

In the course of the research process I was able to foster and grow relationships and I am proud to have played a role in making this specific campus a better place. The piece of the quantitative results show a significant difference among certain student social emotional competencies and teachers' perceptions of school climate indicate there is a need to continue to teach the social-emotional curriculum and evaluate this treatment with future groups of students at this campus. Limitations of the current study design are limited demographic information for both students and teachers (e.g. years of experience) were not asked in either the pretest or posttest, could be vital in being asked in future iterations of this study. Introducing the action

57

research process to colleagues through this study will hope to be an impetus for other individuals to want to study the current research questions further or extend this current study into developing different topics on this campus.

Implications for Practice

Literature studies support the use of introducing a social-emotional learning program for students to obtain insight into the competencies will not only help them in school but also in life at any age level. The literature also notes the positive effect this could potentially have on school climate if it is implemented the correct way at a campus (Newell & Ryzin, 2007; Durlak et al., 2011; Collie et al., 2012; Schonfeld et al., 2015). Due to schools feeling they are being negatively impacted by students lacking coping mechanisms, affected by trauma or other adverse influences, programing such as the one introduced in this study context or exploring other options are important steps to supporting students and teachers. A demand for further knowledge on other ways to support students and teachers will hopefully lead to further needs assessments within the study context to identify other lacking support for students and teachers.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates and reinforces the fact teachers are being required to fill so many roles at a campus level. It is now part of their assumed responsibilities to ensure they are developing productive citizens who have built in social-emotional competencies/coping mechanisms which may not be taught at home. While there are support for programs to help both students receive the skills they need and teachers to secure/develop the support they need, it is up to the specific campus to determine the program which would best fit to find solutions to identified needs.

Implications for Context

I feel the action research model itself in this study along with my spoken goals for myself were great elements to share with staff. The conversations I had with everyone in my building, from the administration, to the teaching staff, to the custodial staff, etc. were all positive in terms of inspiring others to complete similar work to study the impacts of programming. The context of this study, shows future practitioner researchers the answers are truly in the building, they just have to know how to be flexible in designing the most versatile research study.

I would enjoy supporting work to dive into specifics for transitioning middle school students into the secondary setting with the introduction of a similar program. The literature showcases these social-emotional programs contribute to positive changes at all levels but I would like to study this first hand in the district this study was performed in over the course of a school year. The earlier we can begin aligned curriculum for our students and teachers, these skills would be developed sooner and would be continually refined through secondary school.

Implications for Field of Study

This specific record of study adds to the body of work focusing on action research, led by practitioner researchers, many of which are studying their own classroom or school. This study displayed to so many individuals around and within the campus in question, to the action research fundamental framework and how to go about working through to its completion. The results of this study are not set up as being generalizable, the study could serve as an exemplar of future colleague led programming which may conclude additional significant results in other contexts.

Continuing to explore and continuing to ask questions is key to what it means to be human. It is part of our build as researchers to add to the body of work that currently exists in order to provide insight into a specific scenario within the context of a study while also providing results to support other studies in their infancy. This particular study demonstrated a significant impact among students in three areas and among teachers in one of the study areas focused on for this study. Further work needs to be completed to better understand the role teachers can play in rolling out a curriculum such as this and also raise awareness as to the potential impact social-emotional resources can have on the overall school climate.

Lessons Learned

This study proved to myself, my administrative team and the stakeholders who were involved in the creation of the data for this study, schools are resilient places. There was a length of time before I started working at this campus and in my first year as an administrator that administrators, teachers, students and other stakeholders saw glaring issues with the campus which were lingering and unresolved. While the treatment elements implemented in this study did not completely wipe away every issue, it has been interesting to see the overall impact to the campus through the quantitative data collected and informally visiting with different stakeholders over the course of the school year.

Furthermore, additional opportunities for students, teachers and administrators to participate, engage and create opportunities for action research and evaluation on the campus, the more opportunities the campus has to grow as a whole. The building blocks create a collegial atmosphere focused on improving together are present at all campuses, the greater the fire of

knowledge is stoked, the increased engagement in future studies will be apparent, engaging more faculty and students in the research continuum.

Recommendations

The results of the present study display a need to continue to evaluate social-emotional learning competencies in students and how to go about selecting those competencies a campus would want to implement. Future studies would want to detail how they went about selecting specific competencies to address their individual campuses overall cultural needs. Campuses would also want to outline how they went about developing these competencies directly with students who want to stand behind them, then create focused questions with a survey company (e.g. Panorama) which would be targeted to assess how students are measuring their growth across those competencies throughout the year. Then the administrative staff and teachers could collaborate on how to remedy any potential deficiencies during the school year.

Additionally, future studies would also want to continue to look at school climate and other perceptions from teachers, possibly engaging administrators in hosting targeted professional development for teachers who are responsible for rolling out this curriculum. It would also be interesting to connect the teaching of this curriculum to the teachers' overall evaluation. This strategy would not be done as a punitive measure but to assist in continuing the conversation on how to better engage students who are hard to reach through a social-emotional competency program, like the one taught in this study.

In future iterations of this study or studies similar to the present study, I would suggest continuing with the quantitative data collection piece along with collecting qualitative data through focus groups or random samples of study participants. The qualitative piece would offer

the research team an authentic picture on why the data results came back the way they did or identify any potential flaws, issues or concerns with the study itself.

Closing Thoughts

This record of study was developed and conducted in order to measure the impact of this social-emotional learning program on students' perception of their own competency growth over the course of the school year as well as the potential impact this program had on teachers' perceptions of certain elements of campus (e.g. School Climate). Curricular programming such as this wasn't implemented lightly and it required a huge time commitment from many stakeholders to research the best possible program to fill the needs for the specific students of this campus. There are significant research studies which have documented the positive effects of teaching students social-emotional competencies and the positive effect those competencies could potentially have on a campus. This study found there is a significant connection between the growth of those competencies and school climate.

This particular campus in question decided to continue using the same social-emotional curriculum, CharacterStrong in the next school year and into the present school year. I could see in the year beyond the initial rollout of this programming the changes in our students, teachers and stakeholders surrounding our entire campus as a whole. There were also noticeable decreases in student absenteeism, referrals, and other measures would be valuable to be assessed in future studies. The CharacterStrong programming led to the creation of an hour advisory block period that happened each day around lunch time and continued on into a CharacterEd Club which meets twice a week. Students who participated in this programming for all of the years they are enrolled at this school will be eligible for a Character Cord at graduation.

It is essential to continue to explore different avenues to best implement programming like this in a setting that would be in need of changes to impact school climate. Programming such as social-emotional curricular supports, have the potential to have resounding effects on the entire school as well as connect to deepening ties to local school community. The present study school utilized the literature in the best possible way in order to secure options to give them the greatest social capital benefit in the shortest amount of time. Continuing to support student social-emotional needs as well as continuing the attentive conversation to ensure teacher needs are being met will positively promote overall campus success.

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