

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING  
ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR

A Record of Study

by

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Submitted to the Graduate and Professional School of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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August 2021

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

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## ABSTRACT

This Record of Study evaluated teachers' perceptions of the impact Social Emotional Learning (SEL) can have on student behaviors and how teachers' belief systems relate to their implementation of SEL within their classrooms. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used to develop a comprehensive picture of teachers' perceptions. SEL is a process through which individuals can acquire and manage personal and interpersonal skills to help them be successful in life. Utilizing CASEL's Framework for SEL, teacher's perceptions about the impact Social Emotional Learning has had on specific student behaviors as they relate to the five components within the Framework were analyzed. This study also explored the way in which a teacher's belief system relates to their implementation of SEL practices. Their level of implementation and implementation practices were analyzed. This study began with initial quantitative data in the form of a questionnaire provided to all face-to-face teachers on campus. Responses were analyzed using a Likert scale based on participants' responses. From the twenty-three participants, five were selected for qualitative research in the form of interviews, observations, and artifacts to further explain the quantitative data. This data was transcribed and coded for trends and themes as it relates to teachers' perceptions of student behavior and their implementation of SEL. Analyzing the data found that students' behaviors within each of the five components were observed more positively by teachers overall and there was an overall growth in student behavior after implementing SEL practices within the classrooms. Additionally, it was found that a teacher's level of belief did not relate to their frequency of implementation, but it related to the method of implementation. This study will be used to provide improvements to SEL implementation in the future.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this Record of Study to my family, who have supported me throughout this journey.

To my three amazing daughters who inspire me every day with their unconditional love and support. I hope that completing this journey makes you as proud of me as I am of you. I wanted to complete this journey for you, with you, and because of you. Thank you Heather, Rachel, and Ally for being the most amazing daughters and for your inspiration in my life.

To my amazing husband, David, my best friend, who not only supports me in all my adventures but keeps me grounded. Without your patience, support, and encouragement, I could not have achieved any of this. Thank you for seeing the potential in me and helping me find my way.

Thank you to my amazing parents and in-laws who went out of their way to help me throughout this journey and supported me every step of the way. You have been there for me in so many different ways and have helped shaped into the person I am today.

To my awesomely amazing work family who pushed me through the hurdles and for eagerly helping me with any obstacles I encountered. Your sound advice, encouragement, and support was just what I needed. Will and Amanda, a special thanks for listening day in and day out about SEL and A&M.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give special recognition to my partner and friend throughout this journey, Leah. I really could not have done this without you. You made me more confident and supported me through any doubts I might have had. Your wisdom, support, and friendship will last beyond this journey as I have made a lifelong friend in you. This Record of Study also deserves acknowledgement for the guidance and support I received from the professors at A&M. They provided an excellent education that truly laid the foundation to success on my journey. I would also like to acknowledge the amazing staff at my campus who were willing and eager to help with the research behind this study as well as provide support and encouragement when needed. In addition, the members within Cohort XIII provided a layer of support that was necessary to complete the journey. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my aunt Anji who inspired me to take the first steps toward my Doctoral journey.

## CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

### **Contributors**

This Record of Study was guided and supervised by a committee consisting of a Chair, Dr. James Laub, a co-chair, Dr. Michelle Kwok, and committee members, Dr. Joyce Juntune and Dr. Radhika Viruru as part of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M.

### **Funding Sources**

There are no outside funding contributions to acknowledge related to the research and compilation of this document.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
CHAPTER I CONTEXT OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING.....	1
1.1 National Context.....	1
1.2 Personal Context.....	4
1.3 Situational Context and the Problem.....	10
1.4 Relevant History of the Problem.....	15
1.5 Significance of the Problem.....	19
1.6 Research Questions.....	21
1.7 Important Terms.....	21
1.8 Significant Stakeholders.....	22
1.9 Concluding Thoughts.....	24
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	27
2.1 SEL Foundations.....	28
2.2 Benefits of SEL.....	32
2.2.1 Preventing and Protecting.....	32
2.2.2 Academic Achievement.....	34
2.2.3 Development of 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Skills.....	35
2.2.4 Increased Well-Being.....	36
2.2.5 Prosocial Behaviors.....	37
2.2.6 At-Risk Students.....	37
2.3 Components of SEL.....	38
2.3.1 The Role of the Educator.....	44
2.3.2 Teacher’s Perceptions Anchor Their Practices.....	45
2.4 Conclusion.....	48

CHAPTER III SOLUTION AND METHODOLOGY.....	50
3.1 Proposed Solution.....	50
3.2 Study Context and Participants.....	53
3.3 Proposed Research Paradigm.....	55
3.4 Data Collection Methods.....	58
3.5 Data Analysis.....	61
3.6 Research Timeline.....	62
3.7 Reliability, Validity, and Trustworthiness.....	63
3.8 Closing Thoughts.....	65
CHAPTER IV DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS .....	67
4.1 Introducing the Analysis.....	67
4.2 Presentation of Data.....	70
4.2.1 Sample of Participants.....	70
4.2.2 Teachers’ Perceptions of Students’ Behaviors.....	74
4.2.3 Teachers’ Belief System and their SEL Implementation.....	91
4.3 Results of Research.....	100
4.3.1 Teachers’ Perceptions of Students’ Behaviors.....	100
4.3.2 Teachers’ Belief System and their SEL Implementation.....	103
4.3.3 Noteworthy Findings.....	105
4.3.4 Secondary Checks.....	106
4.4 Interaction between the Research and the Context.....	108
4.4.1 How did the Context Impact the Results .....	109
4.4.2 How did the Research Impact the Context .....	109
4.5 Summary .....	110
CHAPTER V CONCLUDING THOUGHTS .....	111
5.1 Summary of Findings .....	111
5.2 Discussion of Results in Relation to the Extant Literature .....	113
5.3 Discussion of Personal Lessons Learned .....	116
5.4 Implications for Practice .....	117
5.4.1 Connect to context .....	117
5.4.2 Connect to field of study.....	119
5.5 Lessons Learned.....	119
5.6 Recommendations.....	120
5.7 Closing Thoughts.....	121
REFERENCES.....	122
APPENDIX A.....	131
APPENDIX B.....	132

APPENDIX C.....	133
APPENDIX D.....	138
APPENDIX E.....	142
APPENDIX F.....	143
APPENDIX G.....	145
APPENDIX H.....	146
APPENDIX I.....	147



LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	Self-Awareness.....	76
2	Relationship Skills.....	78
3	Social Awareness.....	80
4	Self-Management.....	82
5	Responsible Decision-Making.....	84
6	CASEL’s Framework Comparison.....	87
7	Themes of Teachers’ Perceptions of Student Behaviors Related to SEL.....	88
8	Level of Implementation in Relation to Belief of Student Behavior.....	92
9	Level of Belief of Student Behaviors in Relation to Implementation.....	94
10	Qualitative Data on Teachers’ Implementation of SEL in their Classrooms.....	95
11	Level of Implementation in Relation to Improved Student Behavior.....	99
12	Years of Experience.....	107
13	Grade Level Breakdown.....	107

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		Page
1	Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design.....	67
2	Years of Experience.....	71
3	Primary or Secondary Teacher.....	72
4	Content.....	72

## CHAPTER I

### CONTEXT OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Though the need for social and emotional development has existed for decades, focus on the implementation of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) within the school setting has gained traction and emphasis as generations of children show the need for social and emotional development. This effort has created opportunities to infuse SEL within the school setting. It is evident that the social and emotional needs of students must be met before academic learning can occur, so this is a crucial component of consideration to be made in today's classroom. These needs may vary from state to state, school to school, and even classroom to classroom, but the need for social and emotional development remains constant.

Therefore, it is important that the national, personal, and situational contexts surrounding SEL be considered before implementation. In addition, effective implementation of SEL lies in the hands of the educators whom work with students to foster the development of social and emotional skills. Understanding factors that may enhance or hinder the implementation of SEL within classrooms is an important consideration. The potential for the development of social and emotional skills can have both short-term and long-term effects that have the prospective to allow our current students to find success in current and future endeavors in academics and life.

#### **1.1 National Context**

Students' success post-graduation is the goal of the education system. Educators strive to ensure that students can be successful in life and work to equip them with various tools to safeguard this success. According to Strauss (2015), "Education should prepare young people for life, work, and citizenship" (p. 2). Though it varies in verbiage, this is a common philosophy among scholars in education (Segal, 2013). Legislation often sheds light on this focus as well. Through acts, passed as early as 1965, such as The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, No Child Left Behind, and the Every Student Succeeds Act, legislation has dedicated efforts to enhance students' success in life beyond school. It is evident that student success is a crucial component to the education system.

Even amidst these efforts, recent reports and statistics indicate that children across the nation are struggling with the transition from high school (EdTrust, 2014; Friedman, 2019; Strauss, 2015). Therefore, one is left to wonder: are we truly preparing students for success after school? Almost half of students who enter college will fail to graduate. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of students who move back in with their parents post-graduation from college (Friedman, 2019). Furthermore, there has been an indication that students are not ready for the workforce after leaving high school either. According to EdTrust (2014), only one in ten public school parents felt that high school graduates were ready for the workforce. Although there are legislative actions that support success of students and the philosophical viewpoint of education promoting career and postsecondary readiness goals for students, statistics

indicate that this success is not being met and many struggle to find both postsecondary and vocational accomplishment after leaving high school.

So, what is missing? Recent studies would suggest that students leaving high school lack the social-emotional skills that are relevant for achieving success, despite having the academic preparedness to achieve success (Borba, 2016; Felton, 2016). This would indicate that schools are equipping students with knowledge of content without the tools to utilize those skills. According to Borba (2016), teens today are forty percent less empathetic than they were twenty years ago. In addition, Felton (2016) found students who were provided opportunities to grow soft skills, those related to SEL, were more equipped to find success after graduation than the national average. Legislation, school leaders, and agencies often focus on standardized tests and student achievement as the measure of success. However, by placing our sole focus on pure academics, “research shows we are giving students 30-50% of what they need to be successful in today’s world” (Character Strong, 2018, p. 1). If schools are only preparing our students with academic-based skills, then schools are not properly equipping students with the tools necessary for success in life. This is indicative that the focus should be on the whole child which supports academic, social, and emotional success for life post-graduation.

Over the last two decades, research has indicated that Social Emotional Learning (SEL) can impact students’ short term and long term success in the area of academics, behavior, reduction of risky behavior, and emotional regulation (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning CASEL, 2019). Each of these could

counterbalance the reasons that many students find themselves dropping out and giving up. “SEL programs immediately improve mental health, social skills, and academic achievement...school-based SEL interventions continue to benefit students for months and even years to come” (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017, p. 2). With these improvements, it is likely that schools are able to properly prepare students for the success that is missing in today’s world.

## **1.2 Personal Context**

It is my personal belief that children’s success is measured by more than test scores. In fact, I believe if focus remains purely on academics, then our students have the potential to fall short of success. Attention should be paid to educating the whole child in order to properly prepare them for success in life. For instance, if a student masters all of the TEKS necessary for graduation and is successful academically, but he/she doesn’t have the capacity to socially interact with peers or teachers or lacks the emotional stability to endure difficult tasks, it is less likely that these students will find success outside of the conformed walls of high school. Through my experience as an educator and now as a counselor, I believe we must focus on educating children academically, socially, and emotionally so that our students, current and future, can be successful for life.

This philosophy was developed through my experience in education. I served as an elementary teacher in grades first through fourth for ten years. My first eight years as a classroom teacher were spent in a Title 1 school, where the needs of students were great and varied. I quickly learned that the art of teaching requires more than the lesson

and more than the content we teach. If students' social and emotional needs were not met, they could not master new learning and I could not maintain best teaching practices. Recently, I heard Houston Kraft speak at a conference and his message resonated with me. He stated that Bloom's cannot happen until Maslow's has been met (Kraft, 2019). This means we cannot advance knowledge without first meeting the basic needs of students. This was evident not only in my first years of teaching, but throughout my educational career on the various campuses I have worked. From my experience, students in first through fourth grade, though varying in specific needs, benefitted from a focus on the whole child. Without it, I would essentially be filling a vessel with a hole in it.

This first became evident to me in my second year of teaching. I was administering a reading assessment to one of my student when I realized her focus was far from that test. When I took the time to invest in understanding what was happening with this student, why her focus wasn't on the success of the assessment, I discovered she needed more than I could give her at that time. Hearing the student in that moment, the emotional strife that she was encountering, stopped me in my tracks. Beneath the surface, the student was struggling with the need for safety and security. This student had been sitting in my classroom for four weeks, and I had no idea the struggles she had been through and her current threshold for anything, let alone learning. It was in this moment and many more that I discovered my desire for meeting the social, emotional, and academic needs of all learners. Once I was able to grasp her needs, I was able to

support new learning and she saw more gains in reading that year than she had in her previous years of instruction.

After teaching in a Title 1 school, I moved to a teaching position in a more affluent school. I knew the demographics between the schools would be markedly different, but what I discovered was that the commonalities between the schools in regards to students' social and emotional needs was remarkable. I naively expected the students at the more affluent school would not have the needs that the students at the Title 1 School did. However, I discovered the needs for SEL at both schools was equally warranted. All children need to be able to regulate their emotions, manage relationships, self-reflect, and set goals. These are essential components to SEL as well as a critical aspects for future success. From Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, all students have the potential for growth in all areas of life, academic, social, and emotional, though these change dramatically over the course of a lifetime. It is ever important we are providing opportunities to build these skills throughout a student's journey in education in order to ensure their success.

Conversations with colleagues provided insight into the dynamics of SEL within classrooms. Teachers have expressed the desire to implement SEL into their daily practices with students in order to build social and emotional competencies. While teachers see a need for SEL, they are not always equipped with the "how" to reach their students socially and emotionally. Therefore, providing professional development opportunities is crucial to ensure teachers are equipped with this knowledge. There is also the issue of time. As a classroom teacher, I always struggled with time within my



classroom. The amount of content to cover in the amount of time available with students always seems to be a struggle for teachers. However, I have witnessed the benefits SEL can have on time management within a classroom. If students are balanced in SEL, it gives teachers time back in the classroom. This buy-in from teachers is essential for successful implementation. As an educator, I also found ways of infusing SEL within the content of the classroom which allowed for seamless implementation within the curriculum. A strong read-aloud followed by thought provoking questions that not only teach the standards, but build on the social and emotional skills of students can increase the teaching of the whole child. Activities in which SEL is infused within the content allows for educators to blend content standards with social and emotional tools which allows for educating the whole child. Eliminating barriers such as time limitations or curriculum limitations allows for teacher buy-in and a shift in a teacher's beliefs about SEL implementation within the classroom.

Based on collaborations with colleagues, it appeared as though the level of implementation of various instructional practices, including those associated with SEL, have wide variances among educators and within classrooms. The level of implementation varies from school to school and from teacher to teacher. While there are many factors that influence the infusion of SEL practices within the classroom, it is often a teacher's belief system that guides implementation within the classroom. These belief systems are often grounded in experiences and influenced by environment. Based on my experience and observation, the teacher is the central force of SEL implementation within classrooms. Therefore, understanding the role that a teacher's

beliefs have on students and SEL implementation was crucial to ensure implementation fidelity and success.

Recent professional development opened my eyes to the possibilities of infusing SEL into classrooms in an effort to build a capacity for children. As educators, we are essentially preparing our students for future careers that may have not exist yet, for a future that we cannot fully fathom. This ideal makes SEL more relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than ever before. Therefore, we have to prepare our students to be successful in all situations as well as with content knowledge and understanding. However, we must teach beyond this content. Our current content may not be something students will need at a future interview or in a future career. A recent professional development I attended with Character Strong presented the fact that eight of the ten skills employers are looking for in their next hire are soft skills, skills gained through SEL experiences (Kraft, 2019). This only furthers the need for SEL in our current system. In addition, recent professional development highlighted the fact that students are plagued with more anxiety than they have had in previous years. In fact, Michelle Borba recently spoke at a conference indicating today's generation is more depressed, isolated, anxious, and stressed than ever before (Borba, 2020). Children are experiencing anxiety at high levels without the emotional responsiveness to cope with and alleviate it. This can lead to a multitude of problems and impede success for students.

As a school counselor, I have experienced circumstances in which the crippling effect of unmet social and emotional needs has negatively impact the academic success of students. I have seen test anxiety impede a student from success. I have also witnessed

students give up on a difficult problem due to a lack of perseverance. Through conversations with current college professors, it became evident that students often struggle with organization, time management, and advocating for themselves. They also noted a struggle with perseverance as the transition to college can prove to be a daunting task as students adapt to new environments, study habits, and challenges. With the focus solely on academics versus teaching the whole child, educators miss out on the opportunity to truly equip students for success.

My time as a school counselor allowed me to pave the way for SEL implementation within classrooms. Designated time at the beginning of each day for relationship building activities and SEL discussions with students has proven to be important in connecting students with the school environment as well as integrating SEL into content. The designated time was used for Community Circle, which is a structured tool used to facilitate discussions and guiding questions to build a safe and caring community within classrooms. The Community Circle structure, with embedded SEL curriculum, allowed for opportunities to intentionally build character and soft skills in our students. As a school teacher, I utilized Community Circle time with my students. However, I was only able to implement it within my homeroom class. The difference I noticed in the familial style of my homeroom class versus my switch class was astounding. This time allowed for a foundation of care, concern, and commonalities between students. By infusing this small piece of SEL into my classroom, I was able to understand the impact it can have on students. This was a stepping stone to reaching the social and emotional needs of our students while building their academic growth as well.

However, as a classroom teacher, implementing these SEL practices wasn't always followed with fidelity. As we neared the state assessment, I found less time for the integration of these practices as I put more focus on content and the standards that needed to be taught. SEL became secondary to the pressures to achieve on the state assessment. This is a trend I have noticed in staff as well. As progress reports or report cards are approaching or a state assessment looms closer, there becomes less time for the integration of SEL and more of a focus on teaching to the test. This is also a time for heightened stress for both educators and students, a time in which social and emotional skills are needed the most but utilized the least.

Understanding the impact SEL can have on students was an important part of the process. This Record of Study (ROS) allowed me to grasp the teachers' perceptions of the impact SEL can have on student behavior. This was rooted in teachers' perceptions which are comprised of a teacher's belief system. Therefore, this ROS allowed me to explore how a teacher's beliefs about their students relates to the implementation of SEL practices within their classroom. My experiences with students, families, and staff throughout my education career at various campuses have fostered my search for optimal SEL implementation within classrooms to ensure all students can have the tools they need to be successful in life.

### **1.3 Situational Context and the Problem**

The school selected for this ROS is part of a district that is considered a top rated school district serving over 84,000 students at 72 campuses. The district was rated A+ by Niche in the "2019 Best Districts in the Houston Area" as well as earning an overall "A"

rating through the Texas Accountability System. With a 94.5% graduation rate, the district works diligently to ensure students are equipped with the tools to be successful post-graduation. The district was built on Instructional Cornerstones that were infused within the curriculum and meant to enhance skills for students. These Cornerstones included: Collaboration, Communication, Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Information Literacy, Problem Solving, and Social Contribution. These were focused on in stages, each building upon the others based on age appropriateness and continued throughout students' educational journey. In addition, one of the goals for the district was to support the emotional well-being of all learners. Much of what the district infused has become more than pure academics, putting more focus on the child, the whole child. This was evident in the goals set by the district.

The district, as well as the state, have placed much more emphasis on the mental health and well-being of its students. The 86<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session led to many changes in regards to mental health and college and career readiness of the students within Texas public education. Several bills were passed during the legislation that called for the implementation of measures focusing on the mental health of its students. Senate Bill 11 focused on Mental Health and School Safety with specific regards to applying specific curriculum related to mental health as well as providing trauma-informed care practices within the classrooms. In addition, House Bill 18 focused on Mental Health in Public Schools. It called for specific practices in regards to continuing education and implementing trauma-informed care. Finally, House Bill 1026 specified that schools should integrate a character education program to build positive character traits within

students. Each of these bills were indicative of the importance of enhancing the SEL skills for our students to ensure their success. It shifted focus to the need for increased supports for the mental health for our students. They provided movements of change for the betterment of the whole child. As a district, the Counseling Department, as well as the Curriculum Department, worked diligently to implement trainings for both educators and parents, programs to support SEL, and practices that met the requirements set by state legislation. Implementation of these new components put much more focus on SEL within the school system to allow for the development of the whole child.

The selected campus for this ROS was a newer school within the district, opening its doors in 2017. For the 2020-2021 school year, it served 1,149 students and was projected for over 1,300 next year. Within its first four years, the campus grew from 620 students to over 1,100. With this rapid and continued growth, teachers must be well equipped to meet the needs of their students. According to the school's Campus Improvement Plan, at the start of the school year, the following demographics were noted about the student population: 38% of students were identified as at-risk, 13.4% were identified as economically disadvantaged, 9.3% were identified as English Language Learners, 15.6% receive Special Education services, and 2.7% were identified as Gifted and Talented students. The school was considered a minority majority school and serves a diverse set of students. In addition, it is considered a suburban school with a mid- to high-level socioeconomic status. The campus has had limited data for state assessments given its establishment date and reduced exposure to state assessments due to the cancellation of state assessments from COVID-19 in the 2019-2020 school year.

However, two years of data indicated it as a high performing school, receiving an unofficial “B” rating in the 2017-2018 school year, its first year open, and an “A” rating for the 2018-2019 school year. Due to dynamics surrounding COVID-19, students were supported both through in-person instruction and through virtual settings. The campus ended the school year with roughly 80% of students receiving in-person instruction. There were elements of SEL implementation within classrooms throughout the school year. It had become more apparent that this was a necessary component to alleviate the behavioral and academic, as well as social and emotional, needs of our students.

The campus had designated the first fifteen minutes of each day for Community Circle time within every classroom, a time in which students were guided through meaningful discussions focused on relevant topics meant to develop a commonality and understanding among students to build a community within their classes. This was meant to make students feel comfortable among their classmates and safe within their classroom in order to allow for their learning to be more meaningful. In addition, an SEL curriculum, PurposeFull People, was integrated into the Community Circle structure as well as within content taught within the classroom. This SEL curriculum was directly aligned with CASEL’s SEL framework and was utilized to build relevant soft skills within students in meaningful and intentional ways. Without the integration of SEL, students were lacking in essential skills to navigate stress, regulate emotions, and traverse social interactions necessary for successfully managing their lives. With these barriers, academic success became more difficult to obtain for students and their peers.

A majority of office referrals at this campus indicated students were lacking in social and emotional skills that would equip them in self-management. In addition, children experiencing anxiety and uncontrollable stress was heightened, not only on this campus, but in various campuses throughout the district. Parent referrals to the counselor often centered on social and emotional skills that impeded children's abilities to be successful. All of these elements indicated students on this campus were in need of additional SEL support and skills to achieve academic and behavioral success.

### **The Problem**

SEL has become a driving factor in school systems today. Many educators, leaders, and legislatures agree that SEL should be a focus in our schools to ensure students are provided with the opportunity to achieve success and become productive members of society. If students are lacking in social and emotional competencies, this success is not likely to be reached. However, this philosophy is not always an evident practice within classrooms today. If SEL practices are known to bring positive results to students academically and personally, why is it not an everyday practice within our schools? The problem comes from the various barriers that often exist within our school structure that can impede successful implementation. Some barriers include the stress and demand due to standardized testing, limitations within the school structure including time and curriculum, and the impact that a teacher's attitude, viewpoints, and beliefs can have on SEL implementation. However, without these practices, trends are indicating that students are leaving our school systems without social and emotional competency development which leave them ill prepared for success in life.



#### **1.4 Relevant History of the Problem**

SEL has often taken a backseat to the rigorous demand of academics and state assessments. However, without social and emotional skills, students often lack the necessary tools to find success in academics. Social, emotional, and academic needs are intertwined in a student's everyday interaction of their school life. Though the district has implemented character education programs, it often lacks the fidelity and the necessary parts of SEL to build social and emotional skills for students. SEL components that are deeply rooted in CASEL's Framework can target SEL needs and enhance these skills within students. Students are in need of practices that would foster their social and emotional development. This year, the district has adopted an SEL curriculum rooted in CASEL's SEL framework and equipped with varied opportunities for growth in social, emotional, and academic skills. However, this is not always the circumstances in schools across the country.

There is a lack of SEL practices within classrooms. SEL is often viewed as something additional that teachers or schools should not be taxed with. However, when this is absent, students are missing out on 50-70% of what they need to be successful in life (Character Strong, 2018). As schools put more focus on achieving in state assessment testing and on pure academic success, they are improperly preparing students as well as heightening stress levels and anxiety. McCarthy (2019) further develops this sentiment finding that one in three children ages thirteen to eighteen experience some form of anxiety disorder. Thirty-three percent of students within our classrooms are experiencing some form of anxiety according to this finding. Anxiety threatens not only

a student's social and emotional capabilities, but can inhibit academic success as well. Anxiety has risen by 20% in the past ten years (Nutt, 2018). This is a growing concern for today's youth. Children are lacking in social and emotional skills such as self-awareness, self-management, decision making, relationship skills, and social awareness that are known preventative measures to high risk behavior and mental health. They are also skills that increase academics. Focusing on the whole child through SEL infused within curriculum is essential for fostering the needs of children so that they can be successful and thrive in today's society.

Given that there is a known and relevant need for social and emotional skills for our students, there are some limitations that prevent it from reaching its full potential within the education system. As mentioned previously, one limitation comes from the pressure of performance on state testing and focus on solely academics. This limitation is furthered when an educator's stress level is raised. The more stress a teacher has, the less emphasis is placed on SEL practices. Teacher buy-in is crucial for successful implementation of SEL, so that implementation can continue seamlessly even when stress enters the equation. Additionally, a lack of teacher preparedness exists. Character Strong, an SEL program that builds its foundation on CASEL's framework, finds that when implementation has no logical structure, or "no how, no why, and no when," it will not produce its intended results (Character Strong, 2018). If teachers know how to infuse SEL, why they are focusing on SEL, and when to use SEL, they can provide competence, clarity, and consistency with SEL implementation. This is logical in building teacher confidence, knowledgebase, and understanding of SEL in order to

achieve implementation with fidelity leading to success. This is where many previous SEL programs have fallen short.

Educators are the strongest force, or the “engine” as Schonert-Reichi (2017) calls them, to SEL practices and successes within classrooms and for students. This engine is often guided by a teacher’s belief system. A teacher’s beliefs become the lens through which they see, feel, and act. These lenses are developed through a teacher’s belief system and guide the manner in which they view their students, their attitudes about SEL instruction, and their level of SEL implementation. Without the full support of an educator or through a clouded lens, SEL instruction is likely to subside. Teachers who believe SEL is someone else’s responsibility, or an educator who doesn’t believe their students can ascertain social and emotional competencies, will often mislead or diminish SEL practices within their classroom and with their students. An educator’s belief system can become the biggest advocate or barrier to a student’s social and emotional development.

All stakeholders play a crucial part in the SEL implementation. Without involvement from parents, staff members, and administration, the vision of SEL could lose effectiveness. Staff members can provide integrated practices within the classroom to guide SEL and to provide meaningful practice to build social and emotional skills that will enhance student academic success. Administrators can provide leadership that will pave the way for SEL implementation and provide support and professional development which could improve student and staff success. In addition, gaining parental involvement is a necessity as they can extend learning and practices at home to

transfer this new knowledge and skills for practice outside of the school. With all stakeholders' active participation, SEL can often achieve optimal success.

The need for SEL is growing. Increasing students' social and emotional skills through SEL can lead to a decline in risky behavior, an increase attendance rates, a decline in student behavioral outbursts, and an increase in the soft skills that students need to overcome adversaries they may face both now and in the future (Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Weissberg, & Schellinger, 2017). Educators often advocate for growth in these areas in order to increase student success. Within school, poor social emotional skills can lead to office referrals and student misbehavior, which can be a deterrent to student and classmate success within the classroom. In addition, a lack of these fundamental skills can lead to poor adjustment in life. Risky behaviors, those which can be avoided through development of social and emotional competencies, can lead to unhealthy lifestyles. These can often be averted through successful SEL implementation which helps foster and build these social and emotional skills within students. Therefore, it is imperative that all necessary measures and considerations be taken into account for successful SEL implementation on a campus.

Programs require various elements to ensure implementation fidelity. When implementation lies in the hands of the educators on campus, they must be equipped with the knowledge, abilities, and time for successful implementation. However, staff buy-in, self-competence, and teacher stress levels have the potential to impact SEL implementation. Without staff buy-in or confidence in SEL, educators are less likely to implement SEL effectively. In addition, as stress level rises, people tend to remove items

such as SEL from their “plate” and focus on standards directly linked to assessments. However, without ensuring students are strong in social and emotional skills, they will lack the foundation to fill that “plate” with content standards. There is a history of need for SEL within classrooms and focus on the whole child as we shift away from the thinking that students need just academics to be successful in life.

### **1.5 Significance of the Problem**

As educators enter the classroom each year, they quickly discover that teaching is more than the mini-lesson and more than the content standards that must be taught. In order for optimal learning to occur, student behavior must be managed, students must feel safe to allow vulnerability to accept new learning, and students’ basic needs must be met before they can master content. Without a focused effort on SEL, students lack the fundamental skills necessary to thrive in school and in life. Students could lack the perseverance to push through difficult tasks, lack the emotional regulation to tackle uncertainty, or lack the self-management to understand their strengths and needs as a learner.

When students feel disconnected to their school, they are less likely to engage in meaningful contributions and more likely to drop out or engage in disruptive, unhealthy behaviors. This connectedness can be built within a teacher’s classroom. The idea of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is not new, but is often forgotten when the demands of content and curriculum become daunting. When a student’s basic needs are not met and their well-being is not taken into consideration, a teacher’s instruction, no matter how

good, will not have the impact it is intended to. Educators must consider Maslow's before Bloom's in order for students to thrive.

With growing concerns surrounding the well-being of students and the need to provide trauma-informed care within classrooms, providing social and emotional tools for children has become more relevant and necessary for students in today's classrooms. Increasing numbers of behavioral outbursts, decline in attendance, and an increase in college dropouts has put the need for SEL at the forefront. Students are entering classrooms with higher rates of anxiety and depression, and we must equip them with the tools that will allow them to enhance their emotional well-being as well as their cognitive abilities.

Misbehaviors within classrooms are often due to a student's lack of social and emotional skills. Students without emotional regulation are likely to have a behavioral outburst when a situation arises that is difficult or disconcerted. As these misbehaviors occur, it is likely that other students, as well as the student with the misbehavior, lose instruction time. Building students' social and emotional skills has the potential to alleviate conduct problems by promoting the positive development of students (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013). Therefore, it is a preventative tactic to increase the well-being and academic success of students and capitalize on instruction time within the classroom.

Those that understand the value of SEL within classrooms might experience the struggle with effective implementation. In order to obtain adequate results of the full effect of SEL on students, staff members must be fully trained and equipped with

resources to implement SEL with fidelity. They need to understand how, why, and when they will implement. In addition, the support of all stakeholders is more likely to allow for successful application and transfer of skills beyond the school walls (Durlak et. al, 2011). Therefore, it is imperative that all stakeholders are provided with the necessary components for successful implementation.

### **1.6 Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact implementation of SEL within the classrooms can have on student behavior at an elementary school. To evaluate the effectiveness of the SEL implementation, I sought to answer two central research questions:

- How do teachers perceive the impact of SEL on student behaviors within their classrooms?
- How does a teacher's beliefs about their students relate to their implementation of SEL within his/her classroom?

### **1.7 Important Terms**

Noncognitive skills – Traits and skills such as critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, persistence, and self-control (Garcia & Weiss, 2016).

Relationship skills – the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013).

Responsible decision-making – the ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical

standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013).

Self-awareness – the ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013).

Self-management – the ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013).

Social awareness – the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013).

Social Emotional Learning – 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 (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013).

Whole Child Approach – focuses attention on the social, emotional, mental, physical as well as cognitive development of students (Griffith & Slade, 2018).

## **1.8 Significant Stakeholders**



Research has indicated that the more stakeholders involved in the implementation of SEL, the more effective it becomes with application and transfer of social and emotional skills at school and in life (Durlak et al., 2011; McCloskey, 2011; Weissberg, 2016). This is the goal of SEL instruction: for students to not only gain skills for social, emotional, and academic success, but to be able to apply and transfer these skills to all avenues of life. Therefore, having multiple stakeholders is essential to determine the effects of SEL implementation on students.

Stakeholders' involvement will provide invaluable insight into different aspects of SEL implementation and its impact on student behavior. Teachers from every grade level (Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>) on campus will provide their perspectives of the effects of SEL implementation initially through a survey. This insight will provide a glimpse into teachers' perspectives of how their students are faring with regard to the CASEL categories (i.e. self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making). The teacher's role in implementation is a vital component to SEL. Understanding their perspective on SEL implementation and observed behavioral changes is an important aspect to SEL implementation and practices.

In addition, identifying barriers that might impede implementation with fidelity is a crucial consideration to make. Without teacher support and effective implementation, gains in students' social and emotional skills could fall short. SEL practices, to reach the fullest potential, hinge on the fidelity of implementation within the classrooms (The Pennsylvania State University, 2017). Therefore, it is essential for teachers to be

provided with professional development, tools for success, and ongoing support to implement with fidelity. In addition, it is imperative to understand how their beliefs about their students may relate to their level of implementation.

Indirect stakeholders would include administrators, district leaders, counselors within the district, and the students themselves. Administrators at the school help set parameters and priority for SEL implementation on campus. Administrators help guide the program and set standards for expectations of implementation. In addition, their support is crucial for implementation fidelity as well. District leaders also provide additional resources, information, and professional development opportunities rooted in research-based SEL practices. There have been multiple offerings for district training with an embedded SEL framework. Counselors within the district provide expertise in the field of SEL practices. Collaboration with counselors provides multiple opportunities for SEL discussions and observations. This discourse can guide current and future decisions about SEL programs and practices within the field. Finally, students are a significant stakeholder. They are the reason behind SEL implementation. By understanding the impact that SEL can have on student behavior, one can have greater insight into best practices surrounding SEL implementation.

### **1.9 Concluding Thoughts**

In order to truly prepare and ensure students are successful in school and life, one must consider the impact of a student's social and emotional well-being. Teaching the whole-child through SEL will allow for students to be equipped with the tools to tackle academic stressors, social competencies, and so much more that is incumbent upon their

success in life. Academics are important to instill in our children, but students must also be equipped with social and emotional skills to be primed for life endeavors in the future.

In this action research study, I investigated the teachers' perceptions of the impact SEL can have on student behavior as well as the manner in which a teacher's belief system relates to their implementation of SEL. SEL practices were implemented within classrooms on campus, and all teachers were provided with the tools for successful implementation and provided ongoing support from the counselor and administrators. These are essential tools for SEL implementation (The Pennsylvania State University, 2017).

I utilized a mixed-methods design which helped to provide insight into teachers' perceptions of SEL implementation and the impact on student behavior, in addition to the role of the educator's beliefs about their students and how it relates to implementation. A mixed methods design was used in order to create a refined, comprehensive analysis of the impact of SEL. Initially, quantitative data was gathered utilizing a questionnaire (see Appendix C) provided to all Pre-K through fifth grade teachers. This questionnaire was adapted from Panorama Education to meet the needs of the ROS and capture teachers' perceptions using a research-based and valid instruments rooted in CASEL's Framework. Data gathered from the questionnaire provided insights into the behavior changes observed in students based on teacher's perceptions after implementation of SEL practices. This also helped determine if a teacher's beliefs about their students' behaviors related to their level of implementation of SEL practices. The

quantitative data helped determine participants for the qualitative data. Qualitative data was used to deepen the understanding of the teachers' perspectives of SEL and student behavior. Interviews with teachers were conducted to better explain the dynamics of the behavior changes and what guided a teacher's belief system as it related to SEL implementation. In addition, observations were made to pinpoint observed SEL qualities and components utilized within classrooms as they related to each of the five domain within CASEL's Framework. This qualitative data took a deeper look into the observed behavior changes and a teacher's belief system.

In Chapter 2, a literature review was conducted to gain a comprehensive picture of the foundation, benefits, and components of SEL in order to implement with fidelity. Solutions and methods were discussed in Chapter 3 followed by analysis and results in Chapter 4, and concluding thoughts in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

With roughly 40% of students dropping out of college (Strauss, 2019) and approximately one-fourth of American students dropping out of high school before graduation (Duckworth & Carlson, 2013), it is evident that something is missing to allow these students to be successful. This is only furthered by the findings on the General Education Development (GED) test in which students had the intelligence (in comparison to graduating peers) to graduate, but lacked in areas aside from academics which contributed to their dropout (Duckworth & Carlson, 2013). Given that many of these drop-outs had the potential for graduation, it is indicative that the missing component is more likely related to a lack of social and emotional skills pertinent to the drive to success.

SEL, though not a new concept, has gained recent attention and is a driving force in fostering skills that has the potential to close the graduation gap. In fact, a meta-analysis conducted on SEL programs indicated that students receiving SEL practices showed an 11% gain in areas related to academic achievement and an increase in prosocial behaviors (Durlak et al., 2017; The Pennsylvania State University, 2017). SEL allows students to build skills such as self-awareness, grit, and self-management that are crucial to persevering through the threshold of graduation as well as academic and life success. SEL is a proven contributor to student well-being, academic achievement, and increased prosocial behavior. However, understanding the dynamic nature of SEL within

today's classroom continues to be a topic of interest. This ROS investigated teachers' perceptions of their students SEL skills, and determine if that may influence their implementation of SEL instruction.

Within this chapter, relevant research related to SEL within the school setting were examined in order to understand the full realm of SEL implementation and its potential impact on student behavior. I examined the history behind SEL and its known components, the benefits of SEL, and its implications within classrooms for successful implementation. The dynamics of SEL within classrooms are varied and complex as found within the research surrounding SEL, making it necessary to determine known components and how those are utilized within the educational system. In addition, SEL is a very broad concept that requires careful consideration and refinement. The research surrounding SEL leads to common trends and widely accepted tenants. Research suggests that there are many benefits to the implementation of SEL, but these can vary based on the implementation methods, and specific teacher characteristics have the potential to hinder implementation fidelity. Finally, those specific implementation variations are analyzed in order to determine best practices and methods for consideration within schools. Further research needed was included within this section in order to address gaps within current research studies.

## **2.1 SEL Foundations**

The push for SEL is becoming more prevalent in today's classrooms. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provided more flexibility with federal funding, opening the door of possibility to utilizing SEL within classrooms (Collaborative for Academic,

Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013). While the idea of SEL within classrooms is not a new notion, it is gaining much more emphasis in the past decade, most likely due to the flexibility offered through ESSA. In fact, its interest has increased within the past 20 years among all stakeholders in education (Princeton University & The Brookings Institution, 2017). The Collaborative for Social Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been a leading advocate for SEL, among the first to coin a definition for SEL and support continued efforts surrounding SEL. CASEL's definition for 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" (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013). Others define SEL around CASEL's core competencies that are crucial for self-awareness, relationship building, interpersonal skills, and decision making skills (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Domitrovich, Durlak, Staley, & Weissberg, 2017). Common trends in relation to the meaning behind SEL relate to crucial personal, social, and emotional skills individuals need in order to be successful members of society, functioning independently and with others in productive ways.

The term SEL has taken on different meanings and different stances throughout history. However, The CASEL Model of Social-Emotional Learning is largely accepted and referenced within these meanings and practices across the country. This model consists of five tenants: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and

Emotional Learning, 2013). Though the definitions of SEL may vary at times and between groups and individuals, many of the components of each definition find their roots in CASEL's model and core beliefs of SEL (Larrier, 2017; Martinez & Melnick, 2019; Meyers, Domitrovichi, Dissi, Trejo, & Greenberg, 2019; Tate, 2019). The self-awareness component accounts for an individual's ability to identify strengths and weaknesses within themselves, allowing for identification of one's limitations. With self-awareness, children can build a growth mindset, as well as develop confidence and optimism in situations. Self-management deals with managing various aspects students experience in life such as stress as well as setting and achieving goals. The development of self-management can increase an individual's self-motivation and impulse control. The social awareness component focuses on awareness of others and respecting differences in others. An individual with social awareness develops empathy and can understand the perspective of others. CASEL's relationship skills component centralizes on the ability to communicate and work well with others. An individual with strong relationship skills is better adept in resisting peer pressure, resolving conflicts with others, and seeking assistance when needed. Responsible decision-making includes an individual's ability to make appropriate personal and social decisions that maintain safety, morals, and social norms. According to WenLing & Sidhu (2020), teachers perceive self-awareness to be the easiest component to integrate. This component is followed by social awareness and responsible decision-making, and self-management was viewed as imperative or one that was easy to teach (WenLing & Sidhu, 2020). Based on these standards, CASEL's components of SEL are skills which are pertinent to



an individual's success not only in school, but in life as well and can be integrated within the curriculum in classrooms today.

One notion that has resurfaced throughout educational history is the idea of teaching to the whole child. SEL is connected with the Whole Child Approach. The Whole Child Approach is built on the foundation of teaching the whole child, not focusing on solely academic skills. It is based on five tenants of the child development theory, which calls for all students and children to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged (Slade & Griffith, 2013). This is done by educating the whole child: academically, socially, and emotionally. These ideals are supported through SEL. Through the implementation of SEL, you are reaching the whole child. In addition, it meets Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Developed in 1943, it is the philosophy that lists the order in which students can acquire knowledge through a pyramid representation. In other words, a child's basic needs of safety and security must be met first before they can be open enough to learn. In order for a child to accurately succeed academically, one would need to teach to the whole child, personally, socially, and emotionally. Without this, students have less motivation and more isolation (Slade & Griffith, 2013). Based on the Whole Child Approach, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and SEL, in order for students to find success in the classroom, it takes more than the teaching of content; one must consider the dynamics of each child individually- the whole child.

By focusing on the whole child and incorporating social and emotional skills into a content driven world, students will be well equipped with personal and interpersonal competencies, which provide the foundation for students' academic and personal success

in school and life. SEL includes the development of non-cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, persistence, and self-control which are crucial for a child's full growth and development (Garcia & Weiss, 2016). Garcia & Weiss (2016) feel that these skills should be the goal for public education. These non-cognitive skills are in alignment with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity) which many also feel are imperative for an individual's success in school, life, and future careers (Griffith & Slade, 2018). SEL, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, and the Whole Child Approach were all developed for different purposes, but are often intertwined in their mission and vision. Each focuses on more than just the traditional competencies, with more emphasis on meeting the needs of diverse learners through an integrated approach that takes the well-being of the current and future state of each student.

## **2.2 Benefits of SEL**

Literature findings indicate SEL can be beneficial for students in a multitude of ways. The benefits range from personal to academic, current to future, and preventative to reactive. There is also an inclination that SEL is more pertinent for specific groups of children such as at-risk youth and children with Adverse Childhood Experiences. Each of these benefits will be discussed based on literature findings.

**2.2.1 Preventing and protecting.** SEL can be used as a preventative measure to risky behaviors as well as a protective measure for students that are at-risk (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2013; Domitrovich, Durlak, Staley, & Weissberg, 2017; Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik, & Elias, 2003; Koffman, Ray, Berg, Covington, Albarran, & Vasquez, 2009;

Larrier, 2017). Implementing SEL is considered protective because it provides children with skills essential to persevere and navigate through situations they are likely to encounter in their lives. For instance, according to Greenberg et. al. (2003), promoting SEL will lead to children enhancing positive, safe, and healthy behaviors in their lives. SEL can improve student's social, emotional, intrapersonal, and behavioral skills that can then decrease risky or harmful behaviors such as bullying, violence, dropping out, and behavioral outbursts (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013). In addition, SEL can promote mental health which can lead to positive effects among children and reduction in risk factors (Koffman et. al., 2009).

SEL is a method of providing students with an invisible tool belt equipped with various tools they need to successfully navigate life. Each tool has its own purpose and is utilized when something arises that deems necessary for use. Developing a social-emotional tool such as emotion regulation would be essential in stressful times or situations. In addition, a communicative or intrapersonal tool would equip a student with the ability to work successfully with other students or within their work environment. Each tool helps build a student's growth and development that helps prevent and protect them from risky or harmful behaviors and promote positive, prosocial behaviors. In addition, research indicates that infusing SEL into schools can decrease depression in youth (Koffman et. al., 2009), reduce conduct problems and increase prosocial behavior (Payton, Weissberg, Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Schellinger, & Pachan, 2008; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013), and improve academic achievement (Carstarphen & Graff, 2018; Collaborative for Academic, Social,

and Emotional Learning, 2013; Durlak et. al, 2011; Payton et. al., 2008; Weissberg, 2016).

**2.2.2 Academic achievement.** Current research indicates that SEL has positive outcomes related to academic achievement; however, the root and dynamics of how these results occur should be examined further (Panayiotou, Humphrey, & Wigelsworth, 2019). A study conducted by Panayiotou et. al. (2019) indicated that mental health was a direct contributor to future academic accomplishment. Therefore, development of mental health skills through SEL can impact a student's current and future academic achievement. On the contrary, children that lack these skills have a decline in the ability to focus on learning thus increasing their academic knowledge (Denham, Bassett, Mincic, Kalb, Way, Wyatt, & Segal, 2011). As students increase those SEL skills (self-awareness, self-management, relationship building, interpersonal skills, and decision making skills), they are increasing their abilities and motivation to tackle academic content and knowledge.

Sheard, Ross, & Cheung (2013) found that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and educational achievement. They found that emotional intelligence could be used to predict the level of exam scores. In fact, an individual's ability to self-regulate (one of CASEL's 5 Core Competencies) is more indicative of academic outcomes than their IQ score (Duckworth & Carlson, 2013). For instance, self-management, a core competency in SEL, helps an individual regulate their study efforts, motivation, and ability to manage new learning. Therefore, increasing these abilities can increase academic achievement. Many researchers have found that SEL can increase

academic achievement and help close the achievement gap for students (Carstarphen & Graff, 2018; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Duckworth & Carson, 2013; Payton et. al., 2008; Weissberg, 2016). In fact, a meta-analysis conducted by Durlak et. al (2011) found that students who received SEL programs showed an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement over students without SEL practices. Their findings indicated that students that lack social-emotional competencies often feel less connected at school and can lead to negative behaviors that can harm a student's learning potential. By developing social and emotional skills within students, one can reap the benefit on multiple platforms which lead to student success.

**2.2.3 Development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.** SEL has shown to improve work ethics as well as the ability to work collaboratively and think critically which are essential 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are defined as competencies, such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity, which allow students to actively participate in their education success. Social-emotional skills are considered a crucial component of these 21<sup>st</sup> century skills which students need in order to thrive in their current and future lives (Greenberg et. al., 2013; Griffith & Slade, 2018; McCloskey, 2011; Slade & Griffith, 2013). McCloskey (2011) believes that as educators focus on educating the whole child with the support of parents, they will develop those essential 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Focusing on the whole child allows for social, emotional, and academic growth. Slade & Griffith (2013) have similar beliefs in that educating the whole child with integration of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are crucial for an individual's success. "Research has shown that SEL skills are critically important to success in work,

especially for higher paying jobs, and employers strongly advocate that education should promote these important 21st century skills” (The Pennsylvania State University, 2017).

There is consistency within the research that SEL is a crucial component to educating the whole child and enhancing those 21<sup>st</sup> century skills which are a top priority within the career field. .

**2.2.4 Increased well-being.** SEL allows students to develop a sense of self and fosters a sense of belonging through relationship building. Through the development of these social and emotional competencies, one becomes more self-aware and is better able to self-regulate. The development of these competencies is a strong predictor of well-being (Taylor, Durlak, Oberle, & Weissberg, 2017). Koffman et. al. (2009) found that focusing on the social and emotional needs of students in school and within their community led to a healthier lifestyle with less depression and increased mental health. These improvements in well-being has shown to increase academic and life success. In addition, “SEL programs improved students’ social-emotional skills, attitudes about self and others, connection to school, positive social behavior, and academic performance; they also reduced students’ conduct problems and emotional distress” (Payton et. al., 2008). These each have a direct link to an individual’s well-being. These skills also indicate individuals will be prepared to become contributors in society and citizen-ready for life outside of school (Griffith & Slade, 2018; Larrier, 2017). By becoming a prominent member of society provides individuals an identity which is important for growth and development and can lead to increased well-being. Additionally, SEL is rooted in relationship-building and connections among others (Carstarphen & Graff,

2018; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Durlack et. al., 2011). These are not only necessary life skills but increase an individual's welfare.

**2.2.5 Prosocial behaviors.** The development of social and emotional skills for children can lead to increased prosocial behaviors and less negative behaviors. As children begin to learn how to navigate relationships and regulate themselves, their prosocial behaviors will be enhanced. Weissberg (2016) finds that certain prosocial behaviors such as kindness, empathy, sharing, and working collaboratively increase as students' social and emotional competencies increase. This leads to a decline in behavioral outbursts, bullying, and aggressive behaviors. This also helps students build positive relationships among peers and staff members within the school. Positive relationships are important in allowing a student to feel connected within school. This connection can affect a student's academic performance, behavior, and health (Durlak et. al, 2011).

**2.2.6 At-risk students.** 21st century schools serve a diverse set of students that each require a unique set of needs in order to adequately ascertain social and emotional competencies that can lead to success. At-risk students often have a dynamic set of needs. Students who are at-risk have the potential to lack the fundamental needs and experiences surrounding the development of social and emotional competencies. Research indicates that SEL practices are very beneficial for youth considered at-risk. Koffman et. al. (2009) found this to be even more instrumental when involving parents in order to enhance their environments at home as well. However, many of the SEL competencies can alleviate the behaviors associated with a student identified as at-risk.

For example, Larrier (2017) states that many of the qualifiers for at-risk include truancy, aggressive behavior, and low school performance. However, many of these are considered the proponents and benefits of SEL. Therefore, with the acquisition of social and emotional competencies through SEL, many of the behaviors within these qualifiers would be diminished. This indicates that SEL can be extremely impactful for at-risk students.

Research suggests that there are many benefits of SEL for an individual's current and future success, and that these benefits have the potential to sustain in time (Durlak et. al, 2011). However, the dynamics of how to achieve these results are varied and complex, making it difficult to determine the best methods for implementation. However, research indicates certain components to take into consideration when implementing SEL within a school system.

### **2.3 Components of SEL**

SEL has taken on different meanings, which has led to various applications within classroom settings. However, high quality implementation of SEL is essential for the development of SEL skills and success (The Pennsylvania State University, 2017). The literature on SEL provides insight into the various components that should be considered in order to effectively implement and evaluate SEL within the classrooms.

There appears to be a rather large consensus among principals, teachers, and parents that SEL is an essential component to school success, but there is a disconnect in the manner in which this should be approached and taught within the school setting. The beliefs and philosophies on the how and why of SEL within the school are often



conflicting among stakeholders (Princeton University & The Brookings Institution, 2017). It is true that there have been varying degrees of success for SEL, depending upon how it is implemented within the school setting. These complexities make it hard to determine the necessary components of SEL. Examining the research can aid in discovering component considerations to find success.

One component to be considered is the amount of involvement needed from the various stakeholders within the school system. Parent involvement, community involvement, as well as school staff member's involvement are considered to be crucial aspects of SEL success (Greenberg et. al., 2003; Weissberg, 2016). Effective SEL requires "all hands on deck." It requires support from teachers within the classroom, leadership and administrative support to provide direction and guidance, additional support staff such as counselors and psychologists to enhance instruction, as well as parents to extend the values and skills in their home lives.

Students need time and practice to hone the skills so that they can become a natural part of their lives and they are able to apply them within multiple avenues of their lives. By involving parents and community in school efforts to increase SEL can enhance these skills and developments. Involving parents is more impactful in the development of SEL, specifically for at-risk youth (Greenberg et. al., 2003). In addition, school administrator support is imperative when implementing SEL for full and effective implementation. Without administrator support, funding as well as teacher buy-in are likely to suffer for SEL success. The review of literature indicates that the more

stakeholders there are that play a pivotal role in the development of SEL for students, the more effective and transformative it can be for the student.

Another consideration to take in regards to SEL implementation is in the action of it. Research shows that it is important that SEL has a systemic approach in order to be effective (Koffman et. al., 2009; Meyers, Domitrovichi, Dissi, Trejo, & Greenberg, 2019). This systemic change can create a SEL climate that allows for equitable learning with evidence-based practices put in place throughout the school system. It increases student and teacher involvement enhancing their abilities to increase their social and emotional skills (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013). However, there are many other forms of implementation that lead to the benefits that SEL can produce. For example, there is an eclectic mix of strategies for implementation through direct teaching within the classrooms as well as indirectly by providing stakeholders with the knowledge and positive learning environment needed to build social and emotional skills for youth.

Students need not only the knowledge surrounding social and emotional skills, but ample opportunities to practice and apply the knowledge in various situations. Classroom instruction, discussions, engaging activities, and practicing consistently allows for children to build their social and emotional competencies (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013). These provide for personal knowledge and application of the social and emotional skills in order to appropriately use these skills in their lives. In order to implement this skill development within the classroom, the school can implement policies, procedures, professional development for

staff and parents, structures, practices, and student support services. This will lead to the development of a cohesive and comprehensive understanding of SEL within the school. This will also lead to the development of a school climate centered on SEL. Developing a school climate can seep into the daily interactions and pedagogy of a school enhancing the positive effects on academic, behavioral, and mental health outcomes of the students (Weissberg, 2016). In addition, it can also promote teacher equanimity and self-regulation which are a necessary component to high quality implementation of SEL (The Pennsylvania State University, 2017).

As with the acquisition of any new knowledge, it requires ample opportunities, time, and meaningful engagements in order to retain and effectively apply this information. This is even more important with SEL given that much of it is acquired in a social setting and through scaffold experiences that build upon each other. Srinivasan (2019) found that SEL can be infused within the curriculum, thus enhancing the social, emotional, and academic competencies for the students. In addition, Durlak et. al (2017) found that SEL interventions can be incorporated into daily routines within the classroom as well as educational practices. Character development within stories during a read-aloud can often spark discussions related to problem-solving as well as self-management and identity development. This is one example of seamlessly integrating SEL strategies into the fabric of the school day that would provide meaningful engagements for SEL development. By integrating SEL into your everyday practices and the curriculum, it increases teacher buy-in as it alleviates the need for extra time or the

burden of adding on something extra (Srinivasan, 2019). It also provides paralleled learning for students.

Though not mentioned as part of CASEL's Framework of Social and Emotional Competencies, Character Education is often associated and deemed an important part of SEL. Given that self-awareness, self-management, positive decision making, social awareness, and relationship skills are often embedded or a central focus of Character Education, there is definitely a connection between SEL and Character Education. In fact, a Whole Child Approach considers Character Education as a prominent and positive direction for individual growth as well as long-term development and success (Griffith & Slade, 2018). Character Education is rooted in the development of positive character traits that leads to productive citizens and successful futures. When analyzing the competencies outlined within CASEL's SEL Framework, much of the knowledge and skills gained within each competency are related to a form of a constructive character trait. For instance, listening well, cooperating with others, and negotiating conflict would be considered characteristics of respect which is a common character trait within Character Education. In addition, managing stress, gaining confidence, and upholding a personal goal emphasizes the character trait of perseverance which is critical to overcoming adversities faced in life. Character Education often integrates SEL skills and competencies in order to ascertain the imperative character traits in life. One of the SEL programs utilized by the campus of this Record of Study offers a combined approach to SEL and Character Education. The program, PurposeFull People by

Character Strong, works to develop character traits within students which are founded by CASEL's Framework of SEL.

The age at which SEL should be implemented varies among researchers. Some believe it should start as early as preschool (Denham et. al., 2011; Greenberg et. al., 2003) and others believe it starts at school age (Daunic, 2013; Larrier, 2017; Payton et. al., 2008) and continues through high school and beyond. Durlak et. al (2017) found that SEL implementation is effective each educational level: elementary, junior high, and high school. Advocates for SEL want for these social, emotional, and academic competencies to be developed and built as a foundation that will last their lifetime. This will allow for current and future success for students in school and life.

As with the implementation of any program, an evaluative piece should be used to monitor, assess, and adjust implementation efforts. Research would indicate that this is a critical part of understanding and evaluating the impact that a program has based on the needs of the campus. An aspect to SEL implementation is the use of a needs assessment in order to determine the direction of the needs on campus. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development has developed an assessment tool that can help narrow the needs of a campus and provide areas of support to enhance academic, social, and emotional skills on campus (Griffith & Slade, 2018). The results can help direct future decisions related to SEL for students and staff members. Findings from DePaoli, Atwell, & Bridgeland (2017) indicate that various stakeholders, especially principals, understand the importance that assessment and evaluation of SEL practices hold in the proper implementation of SEL.

**2.3.1 The role of the educator.** “Teachers are the engine that drive social and emotional learning (SEL) programs and practices in schools and classrooms, and their own social-emotional competence and wellbeing strongly influence their students” (Schonert-Reichi, 2017, p. 137). Educators play a critical role in the implementation and success of SEL for their classrooms and their students (Hanson-Peterson, Schonert-Reichl, & Smith, 2016). Therefore, teacher buy-in and effective use of SEL practices is essential for student mastery of social and emotional competencies. One consideration to make is the shift in pedagogical beliefs and essential practices that may alter due to the implementation of SEL. For some educators and commonly with implementation of new practices, a shift in mindset is necessary. While the complexity of this varies, it is an important consideration to take into account that there may be some resistance to the implementation of SEL. These could stem from a lack of knowledge or even a complete shift in thinking surrounding instructional practices and even for students’ learning. How teachers respond to the new practices can impact the effectiveness of the implementation. Research showed that when teachers did not fully embrace or instill SEL within their classrooms, that their students’ SEL skill actually worsened (Srinivasan, 2019). However, when teachers fully embrace and apply it within the structure of their classroom and personal practices, both the teacher and the student benefitted from the development of SEL skills (Tate, 2019). This is also noted within students as they begin to gain new insights and learning that may be different from what they have always known in their personal and school life. Understanding this dynamic among students and staff at a campus is crucial when infusing SEL into classrooms.

**2.3.2 Teacher’s perceptions anchor their practices.** Over 60 years of research has indicated that teachers’ beliefs impact their instructional practices as well as student outcomes (Summers, Davis, & Wookfolk Hoy, 2016). Given that much of this ROS is rooted in the perceptions teachers have for their students, it is imperative to understand how this can anchor their practices within their classrooms.

Education is a profession unlike any other, and the educator’s job is unique, personal, and emotional. It often includes roles aside from the ones prescribed in preservice training, jobs such as building relationships with students, investing in the lives of students, and increasing the social, emotional, and wellbeing of students. However, this viewpoint is not always clear or consistent among teachers. In fact, teachers’ beliefs about their role as an educator is often a journey, collected through experiences and realities the individual develops (Dray & Delgado, 2008). These experiences help an educator develop their identity as an educator which often determines how they view themselves with their colleagues, within their classrooms, and with their students (Dray & Delgado, 2008; Summers, Davis, & Wookfolk Hoy, 2016). These identities also shape a teachers’ lens in how they view their students and how they interpret their behavior (Dray & Delgado, 2008). Teacher perception is defined as “the thoughts or mental images which teachers have about their professional activities and their students, which are shaped by their background knowledge and life experiences and influence their professional behavior” (Papadakis & Kalogiannakis, 2020).

This perception guides a teacher’s daily interaction with his/her students as well as instructional practices and implementation of SEL (Summers, Davis, & Wookfolk

Hoy, 2016). It also anchors a teacher's expectations of his/her students. Hargreaves (2001) states that a teacher's job requires "emotional labor" as teachers are often invested in the outcome produced by students. They are often deeply rooted in their students' lives and well-being as well as their success. This emotional appeal guides a teachers' perceptions which then in turn affects their behavior and the students' responses. A teacher's perception becomes the reality of the classroom and the needs of his/her students. These perceptions of students becomes the source of teacher's expectations of students. When a teacher thinks about their students, they are thinking about more than the test score they received, they think about their motivation in class, their willingness to follow directions, and how they interact with others (Brandmiller, Dumont, & Becker, 2020). Teachers' perceptions are guided more about the social and emotional aspects of the child than the grades they are receiving. And, our experiencers and those that influence us, which can often be the educators in our life, help frame us into the people we become (Pelton, 2019). Educators are not only influenced by their experiences, but these experiences also impact and influence the students in their lives which can then impact their future lives. "If children are placed in a warm, safe, loving environment, they will blossom to become fully actualized individualized equipped to pursue their dreams and make a positive impact on the world around them" (Pelton, 2019). According to a study by Rosenthal and Jacobson in 1968, a teacher's expectation can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Cunningham & Farmer, 2016) in which a student will live up to the expectations set forth by the teacher. If a teacher has low expectations, then the student will only rise to those expectations. Therefore, if a teacher has a limited



belief in their student achieving social-emotional skills through SEL instruction, then they will live up to those standards. Students are cognizant of their teacher's perception of them and this perception matters greatly (Ee, 2013). Students are guided by these viewpoints. Teachers' beliefs about their students, either as individuals, or as a class as a whole can impact their planning, instruction delivery, as well as their interactions with and treatment of students (Dray & Delgado, 2008; Hanson-Peterson, Schonert-Reichl, & Smith, 2016). Teachers' perceptions about their students can guide how they praise students, how they grade them, or even how they respond to their needs (Brandmiller, Dumont, & Decker, 2020). This will then impact the manner in which the students respond to that teacher. How a teacher feels, their beliefs, and their perceptions determine everyday decisions within the classroom which will have a marked impact on the implementation of SEL.

The beginning of the 2020 school year marked the beginning of a school year unlike any before it. New protocols were implemented due to the impact of COVID-19. Teaching transformed as students moved to virtual environments and desks were separated to ensure the safety of students was maintained. These new procedures and protocols have created new teaching environments and teachers around the world are mourning the loss of old teaching habits, styles, and environments. "Teacher well-being has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic" (Bentliff, 2020). In addition to dealing with the loss of the pre-pandemic teaching, teachers are often dealing with secondary trauma as they work to manage the complexities their students are experiencing (Bentliff, 2020). The new dynamics caused by the pandemic have created

new elements of teacher stress and have taken a toll on the well-being of teachers and students which could impact the viewpoints and beliefs of educators within the classroom. While this makes SEL implementation even more necessary than before, it also makes it more complex. There are many considerations to make about the various components to SEL implementation. However, much of these considerations should be gauged by your campus, dependent upon the structures and supports that are available as well as the needs on your campus. How, why, and who implements are also considerations to make based on the complex dynamics on a campus or within a school district.

#### **2.4 Conclusion**

Though SEL is not a new concept, it is becoming a more prevalent component in our classrooms as trends in declining attendance, increased behavioral outburst, heightened depression, and increased school dropouts begin to plague the school system. The literature surrounding SEL indicated that the CASEL Model of Social-Emotional Learning is largely accepted, referenced, and utilized for SEL (Larrier, 2017; Martinez & Melnick, 2019; Meyers et. al, 2019; Tate, 2019). Many of its components are rooted within SEL programs and implementation within schools. In addition, the benefits of SEL indicate that the social and emotional competencies gained through successful implementation of SEL can alleviate the growing concerns students face in today's society.

This literature review has indications that SEL can help build skills such as self-awareness, grit and self-management that would be crucial to persevering through the

threshold of graduation as well as academic and life success (Basu & Mermillod, 2011; Moulton, 2019; Weissberg, 2016). SEL can prevent, protect, and provide proactive skills that will allow children to be successful in life. However, it is imperative to understand the various complexities involved in implementing SEL and how it relates to the needs on a specific campus for specific students. The literature indicated multiple dynamics that could alter the course of SEL implementation and its success for students (Greenberg et. al, 2003; Weissberg, 2016). Careful consideration should be given to the different components related to the how and why of SEL within the school setting.

As with the beliefs of many stakeholders in the education field, more research is needed to understand how the complex natures of SEL in the classroom setting can achieve optimal success for all students. Understanding which components of SEL implementation are necessary to achieve success is important. Future research in the area of the impact of embedded SEL practices and isolated practices could allow more insight into SEL implementation and its implications on future success of students.

Through my Record of Study, I examined teachers' perceptions of their students' SEL skills and behaviors and how a teacher's belief system related to their implementation of SEL. Based on the findings, I developed an SEL implementation plan based on successful SEL practices within the classroom. Further research on these components is needed in order to determine the impact that SEL can have on student behavior.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

Based on the findings within the literature review, it is likely that student behavior would improve after SEL is implemented with fidelity. Therefore, this study sought to understand which behaviors are most impacted from this implementation and which are more difficult to enhance and why. In addition, understanding how teachers' beliefs about their students related to their level of implementation provided insight into the need for additional supports for teachers in order to ensure successful implementation. Selecting a methodology provided a comprehensive picture of this dynamic circumstance was crucial. Given the multiple components involved with SEL implementation and its impact on student behavior, a mixed methods design seemed most appropriate for this study. Within this section, I analyzed the proposed solution in order to appropriately determine the best methodology for the study and its application within the research design.

#### **3.1 Proposed Solution**

The aim for this Record of Study was to determine teachers' perceptions of the effects of SEL implementation on students' academic, social, and personal/emotional behavior as they relate to CASEL's Framework, specifically analyzing the five domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills. As examined previously, SEL has the potential to increase positive student behaviors which can lead to success in school and life. Therefore, I developed a

comprehensive model for SEL program implementation based on the results of the study in order to increase the likelihood of success and increase positive student behaviors. In addition, I shared results through a detailed professional development delivered to fellow counselors within the district as well as staff members on the selected campus. The goal of this delivery was to help enhance and refine SEL practices both at the campus and district-wide as well as bring an awareness to the impact that one's belief system can have on their implementation of SEL.

In order to develop a comprehensive model and appropriate professional development opportunities, I gathered, analyzed, and synthesized various data using both qualitative and quantitative methods. I utilized a questionnaire delivered to all Face to Face educators on campus to gather teachers' perceptions of student behavior based on SEL implementation (see Appendix B). This provided information related to observed student behaviors as well as changes in student behavior, in addition to data about specific teacher characteristics as they relate to levels of SEL implementation. This helped determine which areas of student behavior have had a high impact and which areas have had little growth. In addition, this aided in identifying educators that have high, medium, and low beliefs about their students' social-emotional abilities and behaviors. This was used to find how a teachers' belief system related to their implementation of SEL. I also gathered qualitative data in the form of interviews, observations, and artifacts provided by teachers at each of the three determined levels of teacher belief: high-level believers, mid-level believers, and low-level believers. This data was used to gauge the teachers' perceptions of SEL implementation on observed

student behaviors and changes in student behaviors since the beginning of the year. It also helped to identify challenge areas of SEL implementation as well as best practices of SEL implementation within the classroom setting in order to build a comprehensive model of SEL. I delivered results to school staff towards the end of the school year. In addition, I offered a presentation to the elementary school counselors within the district at the end of the 2020-2021 school year to allow for planning of SEL implementation at various campuses for future school years.

The development of a comprehensive, effective SEL program will be utilized by the campus to further develop students' social and emotional skills. Implementation of SEL within classrooms has shown success in the increase of students' soft skills that can enhance their capabilities of success in life to reach their fullest potential. Through the development and implementation of SEL, students would be equipped with the social and emotional skills necessary for prosocial and positive behaviors that can lead to success in academics and in life. If our hope for students throughout their educational journey is to find success in life, then it is crucial that we provide them with the tools to achieve that success. Therefore, the work within this Record of Study can help pave the way for effective implementation of SEL practices in order to increase those ever-important skills within our students for their current and future success. In addition, presenting the findings to other counselors within the district allowed for a widespread impact of SEL across several schools within the district. This can lead to increased abilities on social and emotional aptitude which can lead to current and future success in school and life.

### **3.2 Study Context and Participants**

The campus was selected for this study given the relation to the researcher. The selected campus has implemented practices of SEL instruction as well as many of the necessary components for successful implementation of SEL. This is the first full year of implementation for this campus. However, SEL practices will be focused on and continuously monitored for successful implementation as a long-term commitment to student success. All school personnel on campus received training and support of SEL implementation on campus utilizing various SEL programs and practices within their classrooms. Training was held at the beginning of the school year and provided to all school personnel. All programs presented and utilized on the campus are grounded in CASEL's SEL model and are directly related to the five components that make up the framework of SEL. Two main SEL programs and practices are utilized continuously throughout the campus. Character Strong's PurposeFull People program, as well as Community Circle practices, are used daily to infuse SEL into the classrooms. Additionally, teachers received monthly support, resources, and tools from the counselor and district personnel for implementation fidelity. The counselor was also available for consultation regarding specific classroom or student dynamics that require additional support to increase positive student behaviors throughout the school year.

In order to set priority for SEL in classrooms and support SEL practices, there was devoted time within every teacher's schedule each day for implementation of SEL. This time was set aside for specific SEL practices meant to develop social and emotional competencies as well as develop relationships and connectedness between all members

within a classroom. School staff have also been provided strategies for interweaving various components of SEL within the fabric of the school day.

Given the nature of the study, selected participants needed to have direct contact with the delivery and implementation of the SEL program. Therefore, selected participants included all face-to-face campus teachers in grades Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, First Grade, Second Grade, Third Grade, Fourth Grade, and Fifth Grade. Classroom teachers within the virtual setting were excluded due to the dynamic nature of this new learning environment. Though information from virtual teachers would have provided a wealth of information about this setting, it was omitted from this study because this environment was both novel and short-lived. Had this been an environment that would be implemented long-term, information would have provided imperative information about the impact of SEL instruction within the virtual setting. The total sample population included 23 face-to-face teachers. All participants voluntarily completed a confidential questionnaire via secure, online forms during the middle of the school year after implementation of SEL practices within their classroom. The results from this questionnaire provided an initial indication of teachers' perspectives of the impact SEL has on student behavior as well as observed changes in student behaviors since the beginning of the year. It also provided insight into how teachers' beliefs about their students can relate to their level of implementation of SEL practices. Finally, results from this questionnaire helped determine five subsequent participants based on the teachers' level of belief about student behaviors within their classroom. I purposefully sampled five participants based on the results of their questionnaire: two



high-level believers, one mid-level believer, and two low-level believers. These five participants partook in interviews and observations and provided artifacts of SEL to provide a more in-depth review and understanding of their perspective of SEL implementation on student behavior and SEL implementation. The qualitative data provided an explanation of the findings from the initial quantitative data. These forms of data provided additional data to teachers' perceptions of the impact of SEL on student behavior within their classrooms and their implementation of SEL based on their construction of beliefs. Data collection methods including participant sampling was explained in more detail in Section 3.4.

### **3.3 Proposed Research Paradigm**

A mixed methods design was essential for this study in order to gain a comprehensive picture of the impact of SEL. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used within this study. This allowed for me to initially collect quantitative data from all face-to-face teachers on campus. I analyzed this data in order to guide collection of qualitative data. I used the qualitative data to help explain the results from the quantitative data with more detail and clarification (Creswell, 2014). The use of initial quantitative data from the questionnaire helped determine subsequent participants and specific areas to address using qualitative methods of interviews, observations, and artifacts. I utilized data gathered from both the qualitative and quantitative methods to create a comprehensive analysis of the teachers' perceptions of the impact of SEL implementation on student behavior and how their beliefs about their students relate to their implementation of SEL and possible reasoning for these constructed beliefs.

The quantitative portion of the research design provided a broad picture of the impact SEL has on student behavior. The questionnaire was structured in a Likert scale allowing me to “assess the causes that influence outcomes” (Creswell, 2014, p. 7). The questionnaire was designed to quantify the domains of CASEL’s framework as they relate to specific, observable student behavior. This allowed me to determine teachers’ perceptions of the impact of SEL implementation on the five specific domains of student behavior. I was able to identify areas of growth within each domain based on teachers’ perceptions. In addition, I was able to measure the rate of observed student growth in behavior using a Likert scale within the questionnaire. Teachers rated their level of belief of improvement or decline in student behaviors since the beginning of the year, after implementation of SEL in their classrooms. The quantitative nature of the questionnaire allowed for a distinctive set of variables to determine teachers’ beliefs of student behaviors, growth in student behaviors, and their level of implementation.

Utilizing a constructivist paradigm, the qualitative portion of the research design sought to understand teachers’ constructed perspectives of the behavioral changes within their students. Given that this ROS was based on teachers’ perceptions which are constructed by teachers, qualitative data was an essential component of this study. This was grounded in the ideals of social constructivism given these perspectives are developed based on their understanding of the world in which they work (Creswell, 2014). In addition, these perceptions were based within the natural setting of their classrooms, the classrooms in which they constructed. The open-ended questions utilized within the interview allowed for me to capture the formation of these perceptions (see

Appendix C). Given that the constructivist paradigm understands the importance of the environment in which these perceptions are constructed, the observations occurred in the natural setting and allowed for a comprehensive understanding of each of the components necessary for successful SEL implementation (see Appendix D). Finally, teachers provided artifacts that represented SEL implementation within their classrooms. Each of these sets of qualitative data helped to explain the findings from the initial quantitative data.

This research design followed a pragmatic worldview in that I collected both quantitative and qualitative data in order to develop a complete, comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions of the impact of SEL implementation (Creswell, 2014). It was my belief that a mixed methods design was the best fit to develop a comprehensive understanding of such a complex experience. Utilizing various forms of data within both qualitative and quantitative methods allowed for triangulation of data in order to converge data gathered in both areas. Qualitative data was used to help explain the quantitative data and to provide more insight into the initial findings. Both sets of data provided a comprehensive picture of the perspective of the impact SEL has on student behavior and the role that teacher belief levels had on SEL implementation.

One unique aspect of this study is the selection of participants. Selection of participants included all face-to-face teachers who voluntarily completed the questionnaire and was representative of the population of teachers on campus. To reduce bias, I engaged in purposeful sampling of face-to-face educators for semi-structured interviews and observations. Given our current circumstances surrounding COVID-19,

the school district and its educators have adapted instruction to accommodate students both in-person and virtually. Teachers within the virtual setting have had to adapt instruction given the temporary restrictions and accommodations provided by our district for students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the novelty and temporary nature of the virtual classroom and the pivotal role of the utilization of teachers' perspectives within this study, only face-to-face teachers were selected for this study and virtual teachers were removed from the population of this study.

### **3.4 Data Collection Methods**

Given this study followed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, I gathered quantitative data initially from all face-to-face teachers on campus using a questionnaire. I then analyzed this data to determine which areas within each of CASEL's five domains of student behaviors teachers perceived had the greatest impact on observed student behaviors within their classroom. I also used quantitative data to identify teachers' level of belief of students as well as their level of implementation. Following this initial quantitative data, additional data in the form of qualitative was used with a limited number of participants, representative of the three teacher belief levels, to help explain the results gained from the initial quantitative data in more detail.

I gathered quantitative data in the form of a questionnaire in order to analyze the rate, occurrence, and trends of student behaviors after implementing SEL within classrooms. The questionnaire was structured in a Likert scale in order to formulate the rate and occurrence which aided in identifying trends and to allow for quantification of each of the five domains (see Appendix B). This questionnaire was provided to all face-

to-face teachers on campus and participation was voluntary and anonymous. Within the questionnaire, I also gathered data to determine a teacher's beliefs about their students, the rate of change in behaviors, and their level of implementation. This provided data indicated the relationship between a teacher's belief level (high-level believer, mid-level believer, low-level believer) and their level of implementation (high, medium, and low).

Based on the findings from this quantitative data, I selected five participants for the qualitative portion of the study: two high-level believers, one mid-level believer, and two low-level believers. Purposeful sampling was utilized in order to determine the most information rich sources based on data provided within the initial quantitative set. High-level believers had an average score of more than 4.0, mid-level believers had an average score between 3.4 and 3.9, and low-level believers had an average score below 3.4. These scores were determined based on the range and the relativity to the average of the results produced within the quantitative data. Though initially projected at a lower rate, scores from participants required an alteration to the range for each group. Results from the quantitative data prompted this alteration because participants responded with higher averages than had anticipated. In fact, results showed that teachers never selected a one on the Likert scale for observed student behaviors. Therefore, when analyzing the results from the questionnaire, a low range was selected based on average responses, a mid-range was selected and a high range was selected based on the averages of the results from the questionnaire. Having two representatives in the high-level and low-level allowed for various perspectives to be gathered within each area. In addition, one mid-level believer's perspectives was used to determine their perspective on SEL

implementation on student behavior as it related to their beliefs about students and their level of implementation. These five participants of the qualitative data were utilized to further explain the initial quantitative results in more detail.

I gathered qualitative data from the five participants in the form of interviews, observations, and artifacts using purposeful sampling from the initial quantitative data. Following the mixed methods design, the sample size for the qualitative data was smaller than that of the quantitative data. This is due to the breadth of information provided by the qualitative instruments. The qualitative data helped determine teachers' perceptions of the impact of SEL instruction on student behavior within the classroom and school setting after more than half a year of implementation with more detail. This was used to explain why these behaviors were prevalent or lacking as well as how the components of SEL was utilized within their classrooms. I utilized the information gained from the qualitative methods to understand, with more depth, the teachers' perceptions of specific practices that impact specific student behaviors as they related to CASEL's framework. In addition, I was able to better understand the meaning behind a teachers' beliefs about their students and how it relates to their level of implementation and implementation practices.

By collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, I was able to capitalize on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative designs as well as minimize the limitations of both (Creswell, 2014). This design was selected because of the data rich information it can provide in order to fully develop a comprehensive picture of the complex nature of student behavior and SEL implementation.

The use of these instruments allowed me to identify trends in behaviors to understand the impact of SEL implementation from both a qualitative perspective and a quantitative perspective. The questionnaire helped determine the rate, occurrence, and trends in student behavior after implementation. It also helped determine how teachers' beliefs relate to their level of implementation; whereas, qualitative data helped provide the reasoning behind implementation given that teachers' perspectives anchor their practices. The interviews, observations, and artifacts put the findings from these instruments into perspective by providing more breadth of information as it relates to student behavior and teacher implementation. In addition, it provided insight into the role a teachers' perceptions can have on both implementation and observed student behaviors. Utilized together, a comprehensive picture can be established to fully understand the impact SEL can have on student behavior and trends in teacher belief levels as it relates to implementation.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Data analysis utilizing an explanatory sequential mixed methods design suggests that researchers analyze both forms of data separately and then interpret how the two forms of data expound on one another. Data obtained from the initial step utilizing quantitative phase, was analyzed to understand the impact of student behavior and teacher belief levels. I analyzed both sets of data utilizing a coding scheme, allowing for trends in results to be identified, compared, and further explained. Student behaviors were coded based on the component within CASEL's framework the behavior falls (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible

decision-making). In addition, the occurrence and rate of behaviors were coded based on their level of occurrence and improvement. Teachers' belief level was coded based on their indicated level of behavior responses (high-level believers, mid-level believers, and low-level believers) in addition to their level of implementation (high, medium, and low). This information helped plan and guide the next phase of data analysis. During the second phase, qualitative data were analyzed to determine how the information further explained data gathered within the quantitative phase. The interviews, observations, and artifacts gathered during the qualitative phase measured the same outcomes from the quantitative phase and was coded based on occurrence and level similar to that within the quantitative phase. However, this phase provided more insight and contextual perceptions in order to understand more about the observed student behaviors and impact of teacher implementation. During the final phase, data were interpreted and triangulated based on findings from both the quantitative and qualitative phases. Qualitative data was utilized to further explain the findings from the quantitative data.

### **3.6 Research Timeline**

Research was conducted during the 2020-2021 school year. SEL implementation occurred at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year and continued throughout the duration of the school year. Initial quantitative data in the form of a questionnaire was collected at the mid-year time of implementation. Future participants were selected allowing for interviews and observations to occur during the spring semester of the 2020-2021 school year. Results of the research study were presented to campus staff and fellow counselors within the district near the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year in



order to guide future implementation of SEL practices both on campus and within the district.

### **3.7 Reliability, Validity, and Trustworthiness**

I addressed reliability, validity, and trustworthiness for all instruments utilized and data gathered within my Record of Study. Instruments utilized within this study were delivered anonymously to participants and participation within the study was voluntary. All participants had a direct relation to the campus and SEL implementation. Participants were provided a Research Study Consent Form (see Appendix F) following their completion of the questionnaire. The anonymity was designed for an increase in participation and reduction in concern related to privacy and risks of providing information. Participants willing to participate in the qualitative portion of the research had the opportunity to grant permission to remove this anonymity for the researcher in order to participate in the qualitative portion of the research. Given that the researcher was an employee on campus, anonymity was an important component of reliability of data obtained. Since the researcher was the counselor on the campus in which the research was conducted, which allowed for prolonged engagement in which there was time to build trust and rapport with participants enhancing the reliability of the study.

In addition, instruments were obtained from research-based companies related to SEL. Instruments have been utilized as valid sources of information. Questions within the questionnaire, observation, and interview were adapted from Panorama's Social-Emotional Learning Survey. Panorama Education has provided feedback surveys to millions of users nationwide with research-backed tools (Panorama Education). Over

1,000 schools use Panorama Education to refine their practices related to SEL. According to Panorama Education, a test was conducted on reliability and validity measures. They found that “the SEL variables displayed measurement invariance, in that their inter-correlations were stable across districts (i.e., the three data samples) and student populations” (Panorama Education, 2016). In addition, the difference between SEL inter-correlations differed on average of .09 and indicated stability when compared to student demographics with an average difference of .05 (Panorama Education, 2016).

Though sample sizes were not congruent between quantitative methods and qualitative methods, the amount of information gathered was congruent given that qualitative data provided a breadth of information that cannot be gathered utilizing quantitative methods. I triangulated the data gathered utilizing qualitative methods in order to “build a coherent justification for themes” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Having multiple viewpoints of data allowed for triangulation. This enhanced the study’s trustworthiness as it relates to credibility as well. Utilizing previously conducted, research-based instruments allowed for reliability in the instrument and findings from these instruments.

Some concerns and limitations existed regarding this research study. These concerns and limitations within the research included: conducting research in the same parameters in which the researcher works, presence of personal bias, and the omission of the perspectives from teachers in the virtual setting. As the researcher and employee on campus, I acknowledged the dual relationship involved and the potential for bias. Researcher positionality was acknowledged. These concerns and limitations were

addressed and monitored to ensure reliable and valid results were found within the research. Given the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and instructional methods, only participants from the in-person setting were utilized. The omission of educators in the virtual setting provided limitations to the study, but the unique nature of the circumstances warranted their omission. Data gathered from the virtual setting could have provided information on the attainment of SEL competencies in the virtual setting versus the traditional setting. However, this setting was removed from the study. Trustworthiness was also an imperative aspect of qualitative data. Triangulation of data and purposeful sampling were utilized to increase the trustworthiness of the study.

All ethical considerations were made prior to completing research in order to ensure that there were no harmful effects from the research. Artifact B displays the Texas A&M IRB application submitted with ethical considerations made about the conducted research.

### **3.8 Closing Thoughts**

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used to gain a deep understanding of the impact of SEL from many different angles. This was best accomplished by gaining initial information from many participants in the form of quantitative data. This data was further explained by the use of qualitative data methods that provided a breadth of knowledge as it related to the observed student behaviors and behavioral changes mentioned within the quantitative data. The proposed solution for this study was the delivery of a SEL professional development that is effective for improved student behavior for future SEL implementation in the school setting as well

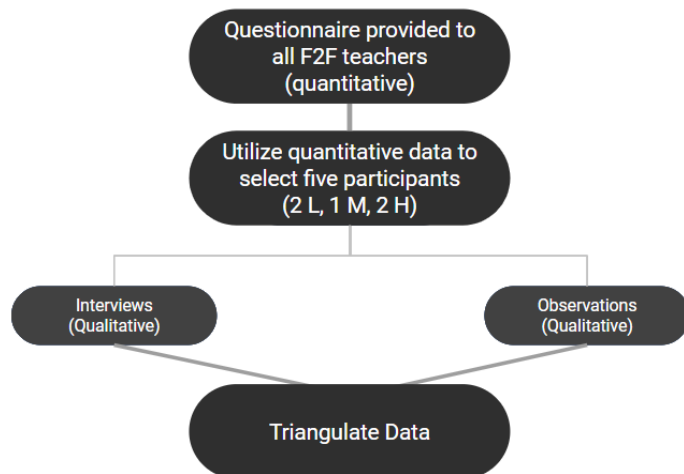
as bringing awareness to educators about the impact their belief systems can have on their SEL implementation which impacts students' behaviors. The creation of a professional development opportunity to present findings to fellow counselors across the district allowed for considerations of SEL implementation for future school years in schools across the district.

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

#### 4.1 Introducing the Analysis

This Record of Study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. Figure 1 represents the flow of research conducted for this Record of Study. Initial quantitative data were gathered utilizing a questionnaire provided to all Face to Face teachers in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth. The total number of teachers meeting this criteria was 44; however, the total number of participants that completed the questionnaire was 23. This was a 52.3% response rate. The questionnaire remained anonymous unless participants willingly removed this anonymity in order to participate in the second stage of research. It was done in this manner because participants were purposefully selected based on their average score of belief of student behavior. Of the 23 participants, twelve gave permission and were willing to participate in the next stage of research.



*Figure 1: Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design.* This figure represents the steps taken within the research process which followed the explanatory sequential mixed methods design.

The questionnaire included items related to student behavior as it corresponds to SEL implementation in the classroom and teachers' perceptions of those specific behaviors and the impact of SEL instruction. Each student behavior was directly tied to one of the five components of CASEL's SEL Framework. The questionnaire used for this study can be located in Appendix C. Responses were quantified based on the level of response provided for each answer (Almost Never = 1; Once in a While = 2; Sometimes = 3; Frequently = 4; Almost Always = 5). Therefore, the range of responses for observed student behaviors was between a one and five.

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were gathered and analyzed to select five participants for the qualitative portion of the research. The five participants were purposefully selected based on their average score from the questionnaire. Two participants from the low range (1.0-3.3), one from the mid-range (3.4-3.9), and two from the high range (4.0-5.0) were selected to participate in the qualitative portion of the research study. These participants were selected using Research Randomizer. Each participant falling within the range of level of belief were numbered within each category. Based on their timestamp of entry for the questionnaire responses, teachers were assigned a number based on where they fell within each category. For instance, the first teacher that fell within the high-believer category was given the number H1, the first teachers that fell within the low-level believer was given the number L1. These

were coded for the remainder of participants that responded to the questionnaire and volunteered for the qualitative portion of research. Each number was placed in the randomizer. The resulting numbers output were selected for the qualitative portion of the research. Participants that did not elect to voluntarily complete the qualitative portion were removed from the selection. Selecting participants from each range allowed for varying perspectives and helped to determine if a teacher's level of perception about student behavior relates to their implementation of SEL.

Qualitative data in the form of observations, interviews, and artifacts were gathered from the five participants. Observations and interviews were conducted to seek more information to help explain the findings from the quantitative data and to provide additional data on the impact of SEL on student behaviors and how the teacher's belief system relates to their implementation of SEL. Teacher interviews were transcribed and coded to identify underlying themes and perceptions. Observations were coded as well to identify common trends and themes between participants and in relation to the interviews. These themes were then compared to data gathered during the quantitative stage of research. This allowed for triangulation of data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research questions from the study.

Both sets of data, quantitative and qualitative, provided a plethora of information to build a comprehensive picture of teachers' perceptions on the impact of SEL on student behavior. All data were utilized to answer the research questions: How do teachers perceive the impact of SEL on student behaviors within their classrooms? How

does a teacher's belief system about their students relate to their implementation of SEL within his/her classroom?

## **4.2 Presentation of Data**

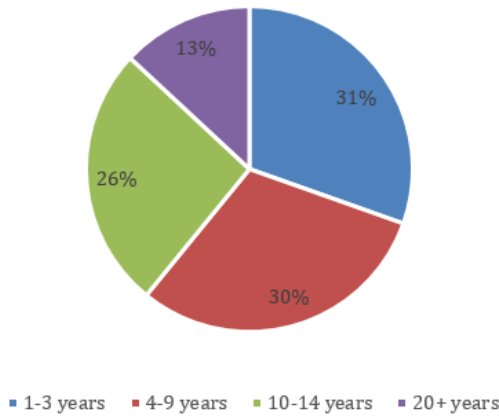
Data were gathered, analyzed, and organized to answer the research questions in order to understand the impact of SEL on student behavior based on teacher perceptions and how those perceptions relate to their implementation. Initial quantitative data allowed me to analyze areas of student behavior teachers perceived as areas of growth and areas of strengths from students. These were broken down into the five components of CASEL's Framework. Teachers' perceptions were analyzed within the qualitative portion of data to identify explanations to these findings and to understand how these perceptions guided implementation. This section was organized by research questions as they relate to CASEL's Framework. Initial quantitative data was discussed in conjunction with data from the qualitative research.

**4.2.1 Sample of participants.** This Record of Study consisted of a participant sample of 23 face-to-face teachers in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The original population sample consisted of 44 face-to-face teachers. Virtual teachers were removed from the original sample given the new and dynamic nature of the environment in which they were teaching and difficulty with measuring student behavior in the virtual setting. Additional teaching characteristics were gathered through the teacher questionnaire including the number of years of experience in education, the content area they teach, and whether they taught primary grades (pre-kindergarten-second grade) or secondary grades (third grade-fifth grade). For these characteristic questions, teachers



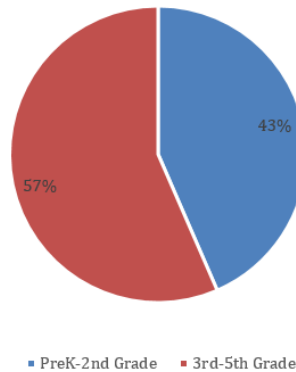
could select the following responses: grade level (pre-kindergarten-second or third-fifth), content (ELA, Social Studies, Science, and/or Math), and years of experience (1-3 years, 4-9 years, 10-14 years, 15-19 years, or 20+ years). Participant data is listed in Figures 2 and 3.

Question 15: How long have you been working in education?

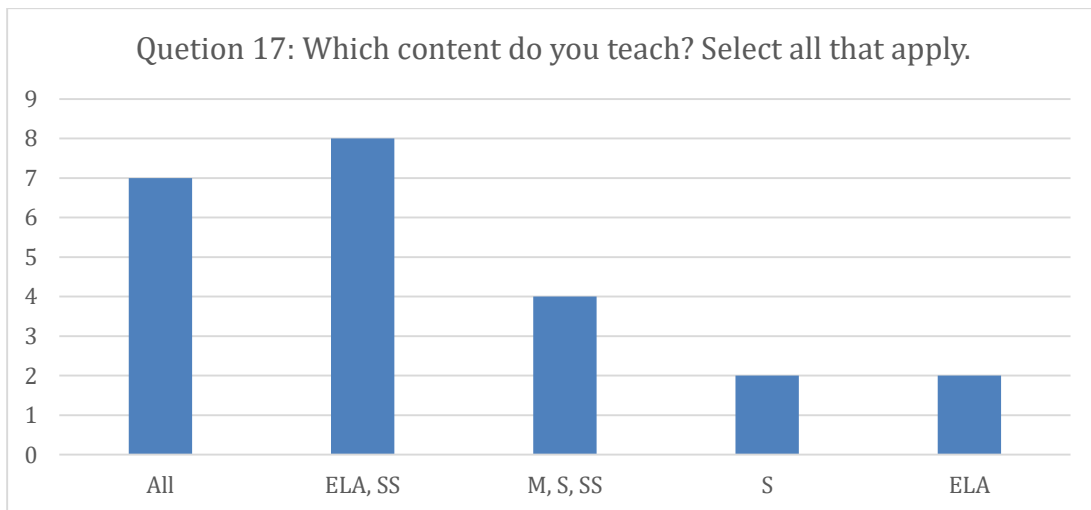


*Figure 2: Years of experience.* Participants responded to the question related to their number of years of experience in education. Results indicated that seven participants have served in education for one to three years, seven participants have served in education for four to nine years, six have served in education for 10-14 years, zero participants have served for 15-19 years, and three participants have served in education for 20 or more years.

Question 16: What grade do you teach?



*Figure 3:* Primary or secondary teacher. Participants responded to the question related to the grade levels they teach. Ten participants responded with pre-kindergarten-second grade and thirteen participants responded with third grade-fifth grade. This is representative of the population of teachers in the original sample.



*Figure 4:* Content. Participants responded to the question related to the content areas they teach. It should be noted that teachers at this campus in grades pre-kindergarten through first grade are not departmentalized and teach all subjects. Teachers in grades second through fifth are departmentalized and typically teach between one and three

subjects. Responses included all subjects (N=7), English Language Arts and Social Studies (N=8), Math, Science, and Social Studies (N=4), Science (N=1), Math (N=1), and English Language Arts (N=2).

Participants responded to question 17 related to the content areas they teach. However, data from this question resulted in small numbers for each representative group. Therefore, without a representative sample for this section, data were not considered. Data were collected out of interest of findings, but this data were dismissed given its limited results of conclusive, representative data.

Of the 23 participants that participated in the questionnaire, 12 volunteered to participate in the qualitative portion of the research. Of these 12 participants, five were purposefully selected for the qualitative research portion which consisted of an interview, observation, and artifact. These participants were selected based on where they fell on the range of perception of student behavior: low-level believer (range of 1.0-3.3), mid-level believer (range 3.4-3.9), and high-level believer (range 4.0-5.0). This level was determined based on their average score from the responses to the 15 questions posed in the questionnaire. Of the 23 participants, five scored within the low-level believer average, eight scored at the mid-level believer range, and ten scored at the high-level believer range. Of the 12 volunteers to participate, three scored at the low-level believer range, four scored at the mid-level believer, and five scored at the high-level believer range. For the qualitative research portion, two participants from the low-level believer average were selected (Participants A and B), one participant from the mid-level

believer average (Participant C), and two participants from the high-level believer average (Participants D and E).

Participant A is a teacher in third grade through fifth grade in the content of science with four to nine years of experience. She scored within the high-level believer with an average score of 4.3. Participant B is a teacher in grades pre-kindergarten through second grade as a self-contained teacher of all content areas with four to nine years of experience. She scored within the high-level believer range with an average of 4.2. Participant C is a teacher in grades pre-kindergarten through second grade as a self-contained teacher of all content levels with one to three years of experience. She scored within the mid-level believer range with an average of 3.6. Participant D is a teacher in grades three through five in the content of English Language Arts with ten to fourteen years of experience. She scored within the low-level believer range with an average of 3.25. Participant E is a teacher in third grade through fifth grade in the content of English Language Arts and Social Studies with one to three years of experience. She scored within the low-level believer range with an average of 2.9.

Each participant for the qualitative portion of research engaged in an interview, observation, and provided an artifact of SEL implementation within their classroom. Data from the quantitative and qualitative research were organized by research questions and described in the next sections.

**4.2.2 Teachers' Perceptions of the impact of SEL on student behaviors within their classroom.** This section of the Record of Study focused on the research question: How do teachers perceive the impact of SEL on student behaviors within their

classrooms? Data were first analyzed by component as it relates to CASEL's Framework. The manner in which each question related to the specific component within CASEL's Framework was noted within the questionnaire by each question. Table 1 shows an analysis of Self-Awareness, Table 2 shows an analysis of Relationship Skills, Table 3 shows an analysis of Social Awareness, Table 4 shows an analysis of Self-Management, and Table 5 shows an analysis of Responsible Decision-Making. Each component was analyzed by mean (Column 2), standard deviation (Column 3), and variance (Column 4). This was also compared to the teacher's perception of improvement in student behavior since the beginning of the year (Column 5). The average presented in column five was gathered by the teachers' response as a sub question to each question. This sub question determined a teachers' perception of a behavior change since the beginning of the year after implementation of SEL practices. Responses of "decrease" received a score of 1, "remain the same" received a score of 2, and "increase" received a score of 3. Therefore, the range for this data was 1-3. Averages from each question were obtained to identify trends in data as it related to teachers' perceptions of behavior changes after SEL implementation. The results of the quantitative data were analyzed by comparing each of the five components. For each area, the total number of participants remained as N=23 to represent the total sample size for the quantitative data.

In the area of self-awareness, the mean score for the three questions was a 3.87 with a standard deviation of 0.588 and a variance of 3.566 (see Table 1). In addition, the level of change in the behaviors related to self-awareness was a 2.222. Of the three

questions, question two, focusing on students’ ability to control their emotions when needed, had the lowest score for teachers’ perception of observed behaviors. In addition, it had the largest variance in comparison to the other responses. Question one, focusing on the students’ abilities to pull themselves out of a bad mood had the lowest rate of change since the beginning of the year within the component of self-awareness. However, question three, the effort students put into learning the materials in class, had the highest average (4.17) and the highest rate of change in behavior since implementation (2.4).

*Table 1*

*Self-Awareness*

N=23	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Level of Change (average)</b>
Question 1: How often are your students able to pull themselves out of a bad mood?	3.73913	0.43911	0.19282	2.066667
Question 2: How often are your students able to control their emotions when needed?	3.695652	0.68745	0.47259	2.2
Question 3: How much effort do your students put into learning all the material for this class?	4.173913	0.63603	0.4045	2.4
<b>Averages for Self-Awareness</b>	<b>3.869565</b>	<b>0.58753</b>	<b>0.3566</b>	<b>2.2222</b>

Data from observations and interviews indicated that regulation tools and recognizing emotions were major themes for self-awareness. Three of the five participants shared examples in which coping strategies helped students regulate their emotions and were implemented and used effectively within their classrooms. Strategies

included calm down corners, breathing techniques, and SEL activities meant to teach the zones of regulation of emotions were expressed. Participant C was observed teaching a lesson on recognizing emotions within ourselves, connecting those emotions with others, and strategies to turn our emotions around when they are not healthy or helpful (see Appendix G). Within the interview, participant C shared that as students “become more aware of their feelings,” they are able to “dig deeper” into who they are and adapt to situations as needed. During the observation one student reported that sometimes they “feel more than one emotion. Sometimes I am sad and scared.” They asked for clarification from the teacher to understand the normalcy of this ideal. The teacher helped explain the likelihood of experiencing several emotions at the same time and allowed for other students to share similar experiences. Participant B read a book that focused on perseverance and had students discuss different emotions that are present when things become difficult (see Appendix H). Students were able to express emotions they feel when things are difficult and ways they overcome these emotions when they become too big. The teacher shared a list of strategies they review frequently as a class: breathe, talk, and plan. One student shared a recent experience in which the student shared the following experience: “I had to persevere through the loss of my grandfather. At first I couldn’t focus on anything else, but I started to focus on the good times I had with him and I was able to not hurt as much anymore.” Participant A was observed teaching a lesson that had students explore different personality types and asked students to select one with which they identify most (see Appendix I). Participant A then allowed for discussion to explore conflicts that may arise when working with someone with a

different personality as their own. The teacher did this activity prior to putting students into groups, ensuring students identifying from the different personality groups were put together. Participant A shared that activities like this force students to become self-aware of their identity and how this might impact the world around them. Participant A has seen a significant increase in students' self-awareness and adaptations in the conversations students have with one another. All five participants felt that as self-awareness increased, students were better able to handle difficult situations.

Questions four and five focused on the area of relationship skills in alignment with CASEL's Framework (see Table 2). Based on quantitative data from the questionnaire, teachers had higher levels of belief about their students' abilities to show support for one another in their interactions with each other (3.8696) than carefully listening to other people's point of view (3.5217). Teachers also believed there was more growth in this behavior after implementation of SEL practices with an average score of 2.6 on question four versus a 2.4667 on question five. The level of variance and standard deviation for both questions were close in range.

*Table 2*

*Relationship Skills*

N=23	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Level of Change (average)</b>
Question 4: How supportive are students in their interactions with each other?	3.8696	0.7404	0.5482	2.6



Question 5: How carefully do your students listen to other people's points of view?	3.5217	0.8272	0.6843	2.4667
<b>Averages for Relationship Skills</b>	<b>3.69565</b>	<b>0.7838</b>	<b>0.61625</b>	<b>2.53335</b>

Data from observations and interviews indicated that effective communication and collaborative teamwork were major themes for the component of relationship skills. All five participants mentioned effective communication as an observed behavior within their classrooms. This included effective listening skills (N=2), communicating your needs (N=2), and the ability to work through problems or issues that arrive within relationships (N=3). Participant E shared that varied opportunities within the classroom allowed for students to get to know each other at a deeper level, allowing for these relationships to develop, in addition to the development of various relationships that “branch out” from their typical “cliques” of friends. Participant A was observed providing a lesson in which students learned effective ways of handling various personalities within a group of students. Students were then asked to consider how they will “ensure that everyone’s voice is heard” within the group. The teacher took notes of ways in which students of various personality types were able to interact with one another. Other themes that emerged included support, empathy, problem solving, and positive interactions.

In the area of social awareness, question six focused on how well students got along with people who are different from them and question seven focused on how well students compliment others’ accomplishments. As seen in Table 3, question six had a higher average (3.8261), standard deviation (0.9624), and variance (0.9263) than

question seven in regards to teachers' perceptions of students' level of observed behaviors. However, question six had a lower average (2.333) than question seven (2.667) in regards to teachers' perceptions of the level of change in that behavior since the beginning of the year.

*Table 3*

*Social Awareness*

N=23	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Level of Change (average)
Question 6: How well do your students get along with students who are different from each other?	3.8261	0.9624	0.9263	2.3333
Question 7: How often do your students compliment others' accomplishments?	3.6522	0.8652	0.7486	2.667
<b>Averages for Social Awareness</b>	<b>3.7392</b>	<b>0.9138</b>	<b>0.8375</b>	<b>2.5002</b>

Data from observations and interviews indicated that empathy and encouragement were major themes for the component of social awareness. Three of the five participants shared the importance of providing opportunities in which students are exposed to situations and students from diverse backgrounds or contexts in order to build empathy towards one another. Each of the five participants discussed the use of community circle to build empathy and allow for students to become more aware of each person as an individual in order to build a community within their classrooms. Each of the five participants also shared about the observed behavior of encouragement, though sometimes it was described as support or help. Participant D shared that students have become more aware when another student is struggling through something and are

making a cognizant effort to support those students through their struggle. Participant A shared the importance of compromise when developing empathy within students.

Participant E shared that this has been particularly difficult in developing this year because of restrictions placed upon her class due to COVID-19. In all aspects of the school day, students are limited to the experiences within their classroom and have not had opportunities to interact with students outside of their classroom. Participant E feels this has diminished their ability to “broaden their social circle” and has created heightened levels of “stress and tension” among friends and classmates. Three of the five participants expressed that exposing students to situations in which they are able to develop empathy towards one another allowed for a deeper development of social awareness. The artifact presented by Participant C included an example in which students practiced social awareness by finding and highlighting the strengths in one another. This included an activity in which students would walk around the room and write positive traits about each student that highlighted their strengths. One of the students asked if they could make one for the teacher as well which served as the presented artifact. Participant C shared that this experience made a lasting impression on students as they began to interact with one another and also developed a heightened sense of confidence within students. The observation of Participant E produced many complimentary statements towards one another as they work collaboratively to accomplish a goal. One group complimented another with a “I like the way they worked together in a creative way” while team members on the same team encouraged each

other with a “good job.” Other common themes that emerged through the interviews and observations included perspective-taking, viewpoints, and listening.

The questionnaire posed three questions that focused on self-management behaviors. Results from this component are found in Table 4. Question eight focused on whether or not students come to class prepared, question nine focused on students’ abilities to follow directions in class, and question ten focused on students’ abilities to stay focused while working independently. Question nine had the highest level of teacher perception of student behavior with an average of 3.9565, while question ten had the lowest level of teacher perception of student behavior for both self-management behaviors and for all student behaviors found within the questionnaire with an average of 3.4347. In addition, all questions within the self-management component had the lowest levels of change in behavior since implementation of SEL with an average belief of change of 1.67, 1.867, and 2.133 respectively. This resulted in an average of a 1.89 which makes it the lowest score for teachers’ beliefs of student growth in behavior.

*Table 4*

*Self-Management*

N=23	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Level of Change (average)
Question 8: How often do students come to class prepared?	3.8696	0.6792	0.4612	1.67
Question 9: How often do your students follow directions in class?	3.9565	0.55	0.3024	1.867

Question 10: When your students are working independently, how often do they stay focused?	3.4347	0.7118	0.5066	2.133
<b>Averages for Self-Management</b>	<b>3.7536</b>	<b>0.647</b>	<b>0.4234</b>	<b>1.89</b>

Data from observations and interviews indicated that self-discipline and goal setting were major themes for the component of self-management. Self-discipline was a recurring theme within the interviews, observations, and artifacts of the qualitative data. Two of the five participants shared that students have started to self-advocate and initiate calming strategies when dysregulated. In addition, students are more likely to seek help when needed after initially trying a strategy. Participant B shared that students are “becoming personal problem solvers” because they are now more equipped with tools to successfully manage problems. Goal setting was also a common theme observed within classrooms and noted within interviews. Every classroom has a goal setting poster and a targeted focus for the day’s instruction stated as an “I can” statement. Participants shared that providing students with a self-selected goal leads to motivation within their students. Providing students with a targeted focus allows them to see teacher focused goals for students to accomplish that day. Based on results from interviews, self-management was the area in which most students still needed improvement based on teachers’ perspective or that teachers were hoping for more growth that hasn’t been achieved yet. This is also noted within the quantitative data. Participant E shared that this component was still a “work in progress.” However, Participant E was able to share a specific example of growth she witnessed within a student with initial problematic behaviors. “Initially, one student really struggled overcoming situations when something wasn’t perfect. However,

this student is now able to recognize when his/her emotions are taking over and is able to de-escalate when getting worked up and even seeks help when it can't be managed alone." In addition, three of the five participants shared examples of specific students within their class in which they have seen growth or noticed applications of this specific skill. Other common trends in the qualitative data for this area included coping strategies, expectations, attention-getters, and relationships.

The final component analyzed within CASEL's Framework was the area of responsible decision-making (see Table 5). Question eleven sought to understand teachers' perceptions of students' behavior related to the likelihood of trying again after failing an important goal and question twelve focused on students' abilities to change their behavior in class. Both questions had similar averages for both teachers' perceptions of observed student behaviors and in the level of change since implementation of SEL practices. Students' likelihood of trying again after failing at an important goal had an average of 3.5217 based on teachers' perceptions and has improved at a rate of 2.333 since the beginning of the year. Whereas, students' abilities to change their behaviors in class had an average of 3.5652 based on teachers' perceptions and has improved at a rate of 2.467 since the beginning of the year.

*Table 5*

*Responsible Decision-Making*

N=23	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Level of Change (average)</b>
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Question 11: If your students fail at an important goal, how likely are they to try again?	3.5217	0.9264	0.858	2.333
Question 12: How possible is it for your students to change how well they behave in class?	3.5652	0.7704	0.5936	2.467
<b>Averages for Responsible Decision-Making</b>	<b>3.5435</b>	<b>0.8484</b>	<b>0.7258</b>	<b>2.4</b>

Qualitative data indicated that consequences, character, and a family mentality were major themes for the component of responsible decision-making. Three of the five participants related observed student behaviors for responsible decision-making based on their reaction to consequences of their actions. Participant B shared that students take more processing time before they act based on the consequences of these actions. Participant D shared that students relate their actions to the impact on others and put more effort into their choices because of this. Participant A shared that students relate their action to consequences both good and bad and can reflect on these after their choices have been made. Anticipating the consequences associated with their actions has been an observed behavior as it relates to responsible decision-making. Character development was also a common theme. Character traits are viewable in each of the five participant's classrooms as well as anchor charts of previous activities related to character development (N=3). Two of the five participants related the development of responsible decision-making to the core traits of character development. The observation of Participant E included a perseverance lesson in which students worked collaboratively to solve a task. Students were observed talking through the problem with each other when they did not initially find success. They would come up with a plan and do it

again, often stopping to analyze and working collaboratively to find a solution. Finally, three of the five participants related responsible decision-making to the family mentality that is built within their classroom. Students have become more aware of their impact on others within their class family as well as the personal, interpersonal, and community impact surrounding their experiences. Participant C shared that “they want others to view them more positively as contributors to their class family.” This community mentality was a common theme within the area of responsible decision-making.

After analysis of each component separately, data were analyzed on how each of the components relate to one another. Each of the components within CASEL’s Framework were analyzed for differences between the averages, standard deviations, and variances of the teachers’ perceptions of observed student behavior as well as the average of the level of change in the behavior after SEL implementation (see Table 6). When analyzing the mean score of teachers’ perceptions of student behaviors as they relate to the five components within CASEL’s Framework, the average responses ranged from 3.5435 to 3.8696. Averages of teachers’ perceptions placed the components in the following order based on the average of teachers’ level of belief about student behaviors from highest to lowest: self-awareness (3.8696), self-management (3.7536), social awareness (3.7392), relationship skills (3.6956), and responsible decision-making (3.5435). However, this order shifted when comparing teachers’ perceptions of student growth in those behaviors since the beginning of the year, placing them in the following order from highest average to lowest average: relationship skills (2.5334), social awareness (2.5002), responsible decision-making (2.4), self-awareness (2.2222), and



self-management (1.89). All standard deviations and variances remained within the normal distribution range, indicating the results were within one standard deviation of the mean with limited variance. This is indicative that the results are reliable.

*Table 6*

*CASEL's Framework Comparison*

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Level of Change (average)</b>
Self-Awareness	3.8696	0.5875	0.3566	2.2222
Relationship Skills	3.69565	0.7838	0.61625	2.5334
Social Awareness	3.7392	0.9138	0.8375	2.5002
Self-Management	3.7536	0.647	0.4234	1.89
Responsible Decision-Making	3.5435	0.8484	0.7258	2.4
<b>Averages</b>	<b>3.7203</b>	<b>0.7561</b>	<b>0.5919</b>	<b>2.3092</b>

Qualitative data in the form of interviews, observations, and artifacts sought to explain the findings from the quantitative data. Interviews were conducted in either the counselor's office or the teacher's classroom based on their preference in location in order to ensure they feel comfortable. Observations were conducted within the teacher's classroom during a preferable time for the teacher. During observations, notes were taken based on items within the environment as well as captured statements by the teacher in the presentation of SEL. Artifacts were presented by teachers during the

interview or observation. Teachers were asked to provide an artifact of their implementation of SEL within their classrooms.

A recorded frequency of common themes was tallied across all three forms of qualitative data. Results from this frequency analysis (see Table 7) noted the following themes to be: developing an awareness about student behaviors, developing empathy and a sense of understanding as a tool for SEL development, building relationships with students, focusing on character trait development, and identifying feelings and regulating emotions as an important factor in SEL skills development.

*Table 7*

*Themes of Teachers' Perspectives of Student Behavior Related to SEL Components*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Observations and Artifacts</b>	<b>Interviews</b>
Theme 1: Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I Can..." statements</li> <li>• Goal setting posters</li> <li>• Stated behavior expectations charts</li> <li>• Personality matching activity (Participant A)</li> <li>• Identify your personality trait and how this may impact the dynamics of your group (Participant A)</li> <li>• Coping strategies review and practice (Participant B)</li> <li>• Share positive traits in others (Participant C);</li> <li>• Students shared how their behaviors impacted others (Participant D)</li> <li>• Share one way you have made a positive difference towards others (Participant D)</li> <li>• "Amazing Behavior" chart (Participant E)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Students are more aware of their own behaviors" (Participant A)</li> <li>• "Made me more aware of my students" (Participant A)</li> <li>• "Students are more aware of what they are doing and how it affects other people" (Participant A)</li> <li>• "Kids that have previously like being the center of attention are now giving other kids a chance to share" (Participant A)</li> <li>• "Students are becoming personal problem-solvers" (Participant B)</li> <li>• "Understanding consequences of actions- both good and bad" (Participant B)</li> <li>• "Students understand themselves more and develop a sense of responsibility" (Participant C)</li> <li>• "I have become more aware that everyone comes in with different experiences and I need to adjust instruction based on what they need. I am more aware of my students and their different needs" (Participant C)</li> <li>• "More aware of their classmates" (Participant C)</li> <li>• "Becoming more aware of who they are as a person in this world" (Participant D)</li> </ul>

<p>Theme 2: Empathy and Understanding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Communication sentence stems</li> <li>● No Place for Hate signed pledges</li> <li>● Bucket filler activities</li> <li>● Listening and being responsive</li> <li>● “How can we ensure that everyone’s voice is heard?” (Participant A)</li> <li>● “Everybody’s voice matters” (Participant A)</li> <li>● Identify personality traits of others and how that may impact your group and how you plan to respond to them (Participant A)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Builds empathy between students, connecting to the emotions of each other” (Participant A)</li> <li>● “Checked in on students that might be by themselves” (Participant A)</li> <li>● “Learning to compromise” (Participant A)</li> <li>● “Kids care more about each other” (Participant B)</li> <li>● “Students check in on each other” (Participant B)</li> <li>● “Recognizing when someone is upset and jumping in to help them” (Participant B)</li> <li>● “Recognizing the amazingness of differences in others” (Participant B)</li> <li>● “Starts with getting to know each other” (Participant C)</li> <li>● “Perspective-taking” (Participant C)</li> <li>● “Understand more than one side of a situation” (Participant D)</li> <li>● “Understand how to hear people and how to treat each other” (Participant D)</li> <li>● “Feel empathy towards others and specific situations in the moment” (Participant D)</li> <li>● “Understanding the emotions of others” (Participant D)</li> <li>● “Connecting to what other students are going through” (Participant D)</li> <li>● “Becoming more empathetic” (Participant E)</li> <li>● “Checking in on each other more when they learn about each other” (Participant E)</li> </ul>
<p>Theme 3: Relationships and Family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No Place for Hate signed pledges</li> <li>● Bucket filler charts</li> <li>● House points</li> <li>● Support of one another</li> <li>● “Everybody’s voice matters” (Participant A)</li> <li>● Partner building activity (Participant E)</li> <li>● Evidence of group projects displayed (Participants A, C, and E)</li> <li>● Bucket filler sticky notes students wrote toward one another (Participant D)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Weekly check-ins with emojis to touch base with students” (Participant A)</li> <li>● “Brings the kids closer together” (Participant A)</li> <li>● “More caring and considerate and willing to help out” (Participant A)</li> <li>● “Family mentality” (Participant A)</li> <li>● “Family feeling within our classroom” (Participant A)</li> <li>● “Strong family class unit” (Participant A)</li> <li>● “Community circle allows everyone to get to know each other on a personal basis” (Participant B)</li> <li>● “Kids care about each other” (Participant B)</li> <li>● “They interact with each other like we are a family” (Participant B)</li> <li>● “Better at teamwork” (Participant B)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Built a positive classroom community” (Participant B)</li> <li>• “Compliments to others” (Participant C)</li> <li>• “Aware of commonalities” (Participant C)</li> <li>• “Class family” (Participant C)</li> <li>• “Community circle” (Participant E)</li> <li>• “Checking in on each other more when they learn about each other” (Participant E)</li> <li>• “Building a connection and relationship is the most important thing we can do” (Participant E)</li> <li>• “When students feel safe and trusted, they learn better” (Participant E)</li> <li>• “Having more positive relationships” (Participant E)</li> </ul>
<p>Theme 4: Character</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Portrait of a Graduate posters</li> <li>• PurposeFull People character traits posters</li> <li>• Kindness nomination posters</li> <li>• Goal setting posters</li> <li>• Character building books displayed</li> <li>• Bucket filler display</li> <li>• No Place for Hate signed pledges</li> <li>• Kindness chart</li> <li>• Kindness Wall</li> <li>• Classroom Jobs listed</li> <li>• "How is this book an example of perseverance" (Participant B)</li> <li>• Discussion on definition and strategies for perseverance (Participant C)</li> <li>• House Points based on character traits (Participant D)</li> <li>• "How can you develop this trait within yourself?" (Participant E)</li> <li>• Jabari Jumps- read aloud about perseverance and specific goals students will set for themselves and how to get there (Participant B)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Gives them a sense of ownership, purpose, and responsibility" (Participant B)</li> <li>• "Gives them a sense of responsibility" (Participant C)</li> <li>• "United through kindness" (Participant C)</li> <li>• "From the books and the activities tied to kindness, they are starting to make better decisions" (Participant C)</li> <li>• "Develop interpersonal skills" (Participant C)</li> <li>• "Want them to be good humans" (Participant D)</li> <li>• "Set goals to act like characters based on read-aloud within class" (Participant E)</li> <li>• “Read books based on character traits” (Participant E)</li> </ul>

<p>Theme 5: Feelings and Emotions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Scenario practice (Participant A)</li> <li>● Feeling words (Participant B)</li> <li>● Strategies to use when feeling frustrated (Participant B)</li> <li>● Changing of emotions and motivations for the change (Participant B)</li> <li>● Identify emotions we are feeling (Participant C)</li> <li>● Relate those emotions/feeling with others in class (Participant C)</li> <li>● Feelings corner (Participant C)</li> <li>● Ways to turn around your emotions (Participant C)</li> <li>● Step out when you get angry (Participant D)</li> <li>● “How did it feel when...” (Participant E)</li> <li>● Bucket filler activities (Participants C and E)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Weekly check-in with emojis” (Participant A)</li> <li>● “Advocating for time to cool down” (Participant A)</li> <li>● “Students are better able at removing themselves from the situation, managing their emotions, and finding a solution to the problem” (Participant B)</li> <li>● “Express their feelings” (Participant C)</li> <li>● “Understand how they are feeling” (Participant C)</li> <li>● “Students react based on their feelings” (Participant C)</li> <li>● “Analyze how they are feeling” (Participant C)</li> <li>● “Becoming more aware of their feelings” (Participant C)</li> <li>● “De-escalate” (Participant C)</li> <li>● “Thinking about the feelings of others (Participant D)</li> <li>● “Understanding the emotions of others” (Participant D)</li> <li>● “Notice when my emotions are taking over” (Participant E)</li> <li>● “Use strategies to calm down” (Participant E)</li> </ul>
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As seen within the quantitative data, themes often emerged and revolved around the highest resulting behaviors such as self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills. These were reported as the highest observed behaviors from teachers as evidenced in the interviews and observations. Results of this qualitative and quantitative research data were explored in more depth in section 4.3.

**4.2.3 Teachers’ belief system and their implementation of SEL within their classroom.** This section of the Record of Study will focus on the research question: How does a teacher’s belief system about the students relate to the implementation of SEL within their classroom? Quantitative data were gathered utilizing the questionnaire provided to all Face to Face teachers in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Question fourteen asked participants how often he/she implemented SEL into his/her classroom.

When responding to their level of implementation, participants could select from low levels of implementation (almost never or once in a while), mid-levels of implementation (sometimes), and high levels of implementation (frequently or almost always). Based on participants' responses, there were no low levels of implementation (see Table 8). All participants responded to implementing SEL in their classrooms at the mid-level and high level of implementation. Given that this is the first full year of SEL implementation on campus, this might be an indication of these results. The novelty and expectation of SEL implementation for all participants might have made them more likely to implement SEL or indicate within the questionnaire a higher level of implementation. After initial quantitative data were gathered, data were compared to teachers' perceptions of their belief in student behaviors (see Table 8) as well as to their level of belief of change in student behavior since the beginning of the year (see Table 9).

Table 8 presents an analysis of teachers' perceptions of their level of belief about student behaviors in relation to their level of implementation. Participants responding with "sometimes" as their frequency of implementation (N=6), had the highest mean (4.111) in comparison to other levels of implementation. This was followed by participants responding with "almost always" as their frequency of implementation with a mean of 3.917. The lowest mean was that of 3.628 was derived from responses in relation to their response "frequently" (N=15). This was also the highest recording response for this question.

*Table 8*

*Level of Implementation in Relation to Level of Belief of Student Behaviors*

<b>Question 14: How often do you implement SEL into your classroom?</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Teacher's Level of Belief of Student Behavior (average)</b>
Almost never	0	N/A
Once in a while	0	N/A
Sometimes	6	4.111
Frequently	15	3.628
Almost always	2	3.917

Quantitative data were also analyzed to determine the relation of a teacher's level of belief to their level of implementation. Table 9 represents the analysis of this data. Participants that fell in the low-level believer of student behavior bracket (those with an average score of 1.0-3.3) had an average score of 4 on their level of implementation, putting their average in the "frequently" level of implementation of SEL in their classrooms. In fact, all participants from the low-level believer category responded with "frequently" as their response to question fourteen. Participants that fell in the mid-level believer of student behavior bracket (those with an average score of 3.4-3.9) had an average score of 4 on their level of implementation, also making their average within the "frequently" level of implementation. Participants within this category had varied responses between "sometimes," "frequently," and "almost always." Participants that fell in the high-level believer of student behavior (those with an average score of 4.0-5.0) had an average score of 3.667 on their level of implementation, putting them below the "frequently" level of implementation and above the "sometimes" level of

implementation. Participants within this category had varied responses between “sometimes” and “frequently.”

*Table 9*

*Level of Belief of Student Behaviors in Relation to Level of Implementation*

<b>Teachers' Level of Belief of Student Behavior (average)</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Teachers' Level of Implementation</b>
Low-level Believers	5	4
Mid-Level Believers	8	4
High-Level Believers	10	3.667

Qualitative data sought to explain the findings presented from the quantitative data. The five participants previously selected based on their level of belief about their students helped explain how their level of belief about their students related to their implementation of SEL within their classrooms. Qualitative data was broken down by participant responses to questions within the interview and observed practices within observations and artifacts. Based on the three forms of qualitative data, some common ideas emerged. Qualitative data on the implementation of SEL is organized and presented according to the teachers’ level of belief of students in order to understand how they relate to one another. Though originally analyzed separately, both high-level believers (Participants A and B) and the mid-level believer (Participant C) had some common themes emerge. Table 10 displays an analysis of the qualitative data gathered. Each column designates responses from the level of believers. Within these columns, participants are noted in parentheses. Common themes are noted in the final column and row.



Table 10

*Qualitative Data on Teachers' Implementation of SEL in their Classrooms*

Data Source	High-Level Believers	Mid-Level Believers	Low-Level Believers	Common Themes
Interview Question 1: In what ways have you implemented SEL into your classroom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly check-ins (A)</li> <li>• Daily community circle (A&amp;B)</li> <li>• Daily read alouds (B)</li> <li>• Real world experiences (B)</li> <li>• Align with character traits (B)</li> <li>• Accountable talk (B)</li> <li>• Time for interaction and opportunities to practice skills (B)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily community circle (C)</li> <li>• Weekly classroom job assignments (C)</li> <li>• Weekly feelings check-in (C)</li> <li>• Read-alouds (C)</li> <li>• Monthly kindness activities (C)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community circle (D &amp; E)</li> <li>• Integrate in instruction (D)</li> <li>• Perspective-taking (D)</li> <li>• Kindness wall, jar, and nominations (E)</li> <li>• Cool down area (E)</li> <li>• Reward system (E)</li> <li>• Check-ins (E)</li> <li>• Games, activities, or read-alouds to promote character development (E)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community circle</li> <li>• Read alouds</li> <li>• Check-ins</li> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• Character development</li> </ul>
Interview Question 2b: In what ways has SEL impacted your instruction?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More aware of students and their mannerisms (A)</li> <li>• Weave things together (B)</li> <li>• More than academics (B)</li> <li>• Real-world connections (B)</li> <li>• Integrate into curriculum (B)</li> <li>• Create connections (B)</li> <li>• Different ways to show understanding (B)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More aware of different experiences children have (C)</li> <li>• Adjust instruction based on needs (C)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate within social studies (D)</li> <li>• Don't brush it off any more (D)</li> <li>• Dive in and understand (D)</li> <li>• Ties into lessons (E)</li> <li>• Integrate PurposeFull People traits into all genres (E)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• Adjust instruction</li> </ul>

<p>Interview Question 4: What challenges exist for successful implementation within your classroom?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big personalities (A)</li> <li>• Time (B)</li> <li>• Intentionality (B)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building connections between students (C)</li> <li>• Developing empathy (C)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When it doesn't work or isn't transferring (D)</li> <li>• Continuing and knowing it may take time (D)</li> <li>• So many skills (E)</li> <li>• Restrictions surrounding COVID (E)</li> <li>• Prioritizing (E)</li> </ul>	<p>Varied</p>
<p>Interview Question 5: What has been the greatest impact on SEL implementation within your classroom?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented more frequently this year than ever before because of collective trauma caused by COVID (A)</li> <li>• Created a strong family class unit (A)</li> <li>• Seeing students grow socially and academically and accept people even with all of the changes (A)</li> <li>• Positive classroom community (B)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendships formed (C)</li> <li>• Students getting to know each other (C)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on observed student misbehavior (D)</li> <li>• Big improvements for small amounts of time (D)</li> <li>• Be good humans (D)</li> <li>• Seeing them grow (E)</li> <li>• Caring and understanding (E)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deeper relationships</li> <li>• Student growth</li> </ul>
<p>Interview Question 6: Do you find benefits in implementing SEL in your classroom? In what ways?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes (A)</li> <li>• Yes (B)</li> <li>• Community, family feeling (A)</li> <li>• Our work is more than academics (A)</li> <li>• Successful in life (A &amp; B)</li> <li>• CASEL 5 (B)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes (C)</li> <li>• Positive outcomes (C)</li> <li>• More aware (C)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes (D &amp; E)</li> <li>• Growing emotionally (D)</li> <li>• Not all benefit, but many do (D)</li> <li>• So important (E)</li> <li>• Connection (E)</li> <li>• Relationships (E)</li> <li>• Safe and trusted (E)</li> <li>• Learn better (E)</li> <li>• A lot of work (E)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• Connections</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Positive</li> </ul>

Presentation of Artifacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personality styles before grouping activities, implemented every once in a while (A)</li> <li>• List of read-alouds used within instruction (B)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings corner activity, used weekly within her classroom as a check-in (C)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to fill a bucket activity- students write one way they intentionally fill someone's bucket and pass a note to someone letting them know how they intentionally filled someone's bucket, implemented weekly (D)</li> <li>• Cool down dude, cool down card (E)</li> </ul>	varied
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students grouped in pairs (A)</li> <li>• Classroom incentive chart (A)</li> <li>• Kindness nomination forms (A)</li> <li>• Attention getter used (A)</li> <li>• Opportunities for talk and reflection (A)</li> <li>• Students grouped in pairs with flexible seating options (B)</li> <li>• Class family pictures (B)</li> <li>• Opportunities for questions and reflection (B)</li> <li>• Review of coping strategies (B)</li> <li>• Read-aloud</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read aloud (C)</li> <li>• Students grouped in multiples of four with flexible seating (C)</li> <li>• Classroom jobs listed with student pictures (C)</li> <li>• Daily objectives listed (C)</li> <li>• Discussed connection to previous activities (C)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students grouped in pairs (D &amp; E)</li> <li>• Daily house points posted (D)</li> <li>• Shared connection to last week's activity (D)</li> <li>• Kindness challenge (D)</li> <li>• Time for sharing and reflection (D)</li> <li>• Weekly objective posted (E)</li> <li>• Conversation starters posted (E)</li> <li>• Behavior expectations posted (E)</li> <li>• Connected to previous read-aloud (E)</li> <li>• Activity and time for reflection (E)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groupings</li> <li>• Reflection</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Read-aloud</li> <li>• Objectives</li> <li>• Connections to previous activities or discussions</li> </ul>

<b>Common Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time for interactions</li> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Intentionality</li> <li>• Community feeling</li> <li>• Opportunities</li> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• Community circle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings</li> <li>• Connections</li> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Check-ins</li> <li>• Community circle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• Important</li> <li>• Perseverance</li> <li>• Community circle</li> <li>• Character development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• Community</li> </ul>
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Initial quantitative data indicated that teachers were implementing SEL at different, but very closely connected, levels. Qualitative data indicates common themes shared by participants falling within each area of student belief. A theme in which the manner in which SEL is implemented began to emerge, indicating that the level of implementation might not be as important as the motivation for the implementation. This will be explored in more depth in section 4.3.

Quantitative data were also analyzed to determine how teachers' levels of implementation related to their belief of student growth. Table 11 presents an analysis of teachers' perceptions of their level of belief about student growth in behaviors since the beginning of the year in relation to their level of implementation. Each question within the questionnaire had a sub question "Since the beginning of the year, have you seen the above behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?" Responses from this question determined a participant's level of belief of change in a range from 1-3. This was then compared to a teacher's level of implementation. The results, as seen in Table 11, show a teacher's level of belief of student growth in behavior increased as the teacher's level of implementation increased, creating the following order for responses based on average highest to lowest: almost always (2.417), frequently (2.295), and sometimes (2.1389).

Table 11

*Level of Implementation in Relation to Level of Belief in Improved Student Behavior*

<b>Question 14: How often do you implement SEL into your classroom?</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Teacher's Level of Belief of Student Growth in Behavior (average)</b>
Almost never	0	N/A
Once in a while	0	N/A
Sometimes	6	2.1389
Frequently	15	2.295
Almost always	2	2.417

Qualitative data sought to explain the findings presented from the quantitative data based on teachers' perceptions about student change in behavior since the beginning of the year. The five participants previously selected based on their level of belief about their students helped explain how they viewed student change in behavior. Qualitative data was broken down by participant responses to questions within the interview and practices evident through observations and artifacts. Based on the three forms of qualitative data, some common ideas emerged. Qualitative data on the implementation of SEL is organized and presented according to the teachers' level of belief of students in order to understand how they relate to one another. Common ideas presented among high-level believers (Participants A and B) included: positive outcomes, student-initiated, caring attitude, and self-realization. Common ideas presented among the mid-level believer (Participant C) included: self-realization, student-initiated, and positive outcomes. Common ideas presented among the low-level believers (Participants D and

E) included: some improvement, a work in progress, development of empathy, and getting better.

Use of both quantitative data and qualitative data help provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact of SEL on students' behavior based on teachers' perceptions as well as how their level of belief impacts their implementation of SEL within their classrooms. Results of the mixed methods research will be discussed in the next section and organized by research questions.

### **4.3 Results of Research**

Results from the quantitative data and qualitative data provided more depth to understanding the dynamic nature of SEL and how it related to both student behaviors based on teacher perception as well as a teacher's level of belief about their students.

**4.3.1 Teachers' perceptions of the impact of SEL on student behaviors within their classroom.** The first research question was: How do teachers perceive the impact of SEL on student behaviors within their classrooms? Based on both the quantitative and qualitative data, it appears teachers see a benefit in the implementation of SEL on student behaviors.

Teachers had the highest belief about student behavior as it related to self-awareness (3.8696). This was evident within the themes of the qualitative data as well. One of the initial themes gathered was awareness. Teachers reported that students were more aware of themselves, their feelings, their behaviors, and how those play into the different roles they hold within the classroom, their friendships, and who they are as individuals.

The area with the lowest average score of teacher perceived student behaviors was that of responsible decision-making (3.5435). This area also had limited results within the qualitative data when analyzed as a whole. However, this component was often described as a growth area for many teachers and described in relation to reflection of actions based on consequences. Participants also related it to character development which can take time to fully develop.

This question was also analyzed based on teachers' perceptions of observed student growth in behavior. Based on initial quantitative data, the area with the most teacher perceived student growth was relationship skills (2.5334). This was further explained in the qualitative data, given all five participants related the success of SEL implementation on the development of relationships with their students, between their students, and as a class community. The theme of relationships and family as well as empathy and understanding emerged as common areas of strength among teacher-perceived student behavior.

The lowest area of teacher-perceived student growth was self-management (1.89). Though it scored higher for teacher's belief of observed student behavior, it had the lowest perceived student growth since the beginning of the year. According to the quantitative data, this is largely a result due to question eight focusing on student preparedness (1.67) and question nine focusing on students' abilities to follow directions in class (1.867). During the qualitative portion of the research, many participants related self-management to goal-setting and self-discipline which are areas that could improve areas of self-management. However, participants noted that this was an area of

refinement that was taking time to implement, a “work in progress” as one participant referred to it. The information gathered leads one to wonder what caused this area to see such limited growth. This may be an area that needs more exploration.

When analyzing this data, understanding the developmental stages of attainment of each competency as well as the level of ease of implementation of each component is a consideration to make to understand the presented data. All of CASEL’s core competencies begin to develop in early childhood. However, some of the core competencies become much more complex in developing as students increase in age. Responsible decision-making becomes a complex competency as students take on more responsibilities as they get older and developmental considerations are important. This makes implementation of responsible decision-making more difficult which might explain why some of these behaviors were indicated at a lower level of observed student behaviors. In addition, people are naturally wired to seek out a connectedness with others. This might make relationship skills are more prevalent competency for teachers to implement. Building a community was a central focus for many of the participants and relationship skills was a competency that saw the most growth as teachers noted a more close-knit and open group of students.

Overall, based on presented research and findings, teachers perceive the impact of SEL on student behaviors within their classroom to be positive, leading to higher growth and observed student behaviors in the areas self-awareness, relationship skills, self-management and social awareness. Teachers have also noted an increase in student behaviors in the areas of relationship skills, social awareness, and responsible decision



making, but limited growth in self-management. All teachers found benefits in implementing SEL on student behaviors and felt it facilitated deeper connections and relationships with and between their students. According to Panorama Education, implementation of SEL can be beneficial when focusing on a few competencies which have proven to be of high relevance for the school. Therefore, based on the presented data and this information, reasonable expectations for future implementation would be to infuse SEL lessons with the identified competencies of self-management and responsible decision-making. These would be the focus competencies for next year's implementation. Then one new competency would be integrated each year until the campus is focusing on all five competencies for successful development by the fourth year of implementation. This would allow for a progressive model of implementation focused on areas where students and educators have shown a need for the most support.

**4.3.2 Teachers' beliefs systems and their implementation of SEL within their classroom.** The second research question was: How does a teacher's beliefs about their students relate to their implementation of SEL within his/her classroom? Findings from this question indicated a large portion of participants (65%) implement SEL frequently into their classrooms. In addition, there were zero participants that responded with an implementation frequency of "almost never" or "once in a while." This is indicative that implementation of SEL is happening often on this campus based on teachers' perceptions. Again, this is most likely given the novelty and expectation of SEL implementation on campus. However, findings for this question were also indicative that

participants implement SEL for varied reasons and student outcomes. This question was analyzed in a few different ways to gain a deep analysis of the research question.

First, the level of implementation related to a teacher's belief system about their students was analyzed. There were mixed results from this analysis. Participants who implemented SEL "sometimes" had the highest level of belief of student behavior, while those that implemented "frequently" had the lowest average, and those that implemented "almost always" had the middle average. Analysis of how the teacher's belief system related to their level of implementation, indicated that low-level and mid-level believers had the highest level of implementation with an average of four, while high-level believers had the lowest level of implementation with an average of 3.667. This would indicate that high-level believers are not implementing SEL at the same frequency as low-level and mid-level believers. However, they are witnessing positive student behaviors at high rates. I would guess the high-level believer teachers might be considering SEL implementation as a stand-alone process as many indicated the benefit found from integrating it within context. These results could be better explained if considering this when analyzing results. Teachers may have responded considering the implementation as a stand-alone event, creating a lower implementation rate because it was embedded within the content of their classrooms. Finally, analysis was centered on how the teacher's level of implementation related to their belief in student growth of behavior. This data indicated that as a teacher's level of implementation increased, so did their perceived level of belief in student growth of behaviors. Participants reporting "sometimes" as their level of implementation had the lowest average of perceived

student growth (2.1389) whereas participants reporting “almost always” as their level of implementation had the highest average of perceived student growth (2.417). Teachers who put more emphasis into their implementation perceived more improvement in student behavior. Therefore, it appears that the higher the level of implementation, the greater the student growth was observed by the teacher.

This was further explained in the qualitative portion of the research. Qualitative data indicated that high-level believers and mid-level believers often implement SEL practices based on their perception of students because of the relationship they built. They were able to promote intentional efforts to develop awareness, build community within their classroom, and practice new skills as well as skills previously taught by the teachers. Low-level believers reported implementing practices frequently focused on character development and as a reaction to misbehaviors noticed within the classroom. Low-level believers used the mindset of fixing misbehaviors while high-level believers used the mindset of strengthening skills within students and bringing awareness to the possibility of positive student behaviors. Based on these findings, a teacher’s belief about their students does not relate to the frequency of implementation of SEL but it does relate to the focus of SEL implementation. This may be a topic that needs further research to fully understand.

**4.3.3 Noteworthy findings.** Some noteworthy findings were discovered during research. When analyzing teachers’ beliefs about student behaviors, it should be noted that no participants ever selected the response “almost never” for any of the questions related to student behavior. In fact, parameters for the low-level, mid-level, and high-

level believers had to be modified after data was gathered because initial set parameters resulted in zero participants in the low-level believer range. A second finding was that of the impact of COVID-19. Within the responses of the qualitative research, many participants responded based on their perception of SEL implementation this year in comparison to others because of the impact of COVID-19 has had not only on students personally, but because of the restriction set in place to ensure students remain safe.

**4.3.4 Secondary checks.** Teacher characteristics in terms of years of experience and grade level taught were compared to teachers' perceptions as averages of student behavior (column 3), student growth in behavior (column 4), and their level of implementation (column 5) as a secondary check of results. However, qualitative data were not gathered on these secondary checks as participants were purposefully selected based on their level of belief in students without taking secondary checks into consideration. This section will focus on the quantitative findings from these secondary checks.

Table 12 represents an analysis of teachers' years of experience in education. Seven participants responded to working in education for one to three years, seven responded to working in education for four to nine years, six participants have worked in education for 10-14 years, zero participants responded to 15-19 years, and three participants have been working in education for more than 20 years. Data were compiled into averages within each category based on their response to years of experience. Teachers with more than 20 years of experience had the highest average of teachers' level of belief of observed student behaviors (4). However, teachers with one to three

years of experience had the highest level of belief of student growth in behaviors since the beginning of the year (2.467) and highest level of implementation (4.2).

*Table 12*

*Years of Experience*

<b>Question 15: How long have you been working in education?</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Teacher's Level of Belief of Student Behavior (average)</b>	<b>Teacher's Level of Belief of Student Growth in Behavior (average)</b>	<b>Teacher's Level of Implementation (average)</b>
1-3 years	7	3.6998	2.467	4.2
4-9 years	7	3.833	2.2	3.8
10-14 years	6	3.833	2.25	4
15-19 years	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
20+ years	3	4	2.167	3.333

Table 13 represents an analysis of the grade level in which participants teach: primary (pre-kindergarten-2nd grade) or intermediate (3rd grade-5th grade). Of the 23 participants, ten responded as teachers in the primary grade levels and thirteen responded in the intermediate grade levels. This is representative of the population of all Face to Face teachers on this campus. Teachers of primary grades scored higher in all three areas: teachers' level of belief of student behavior (3.893), teachers' level of belief of student growth in behavior (2.417), and teachers' level of implementation (4.1) compared to teacher in the intermediate grade levels: teachers' level of belief of student behavior (3.614), teachers' level of belief of student growth in behavior (2.135), and teachers' level of implementation (3.75).

*Table 13*

### *Grade Level Breakdown*

<b>Question 16: What grade do you teach?</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Teacher's Level of Belief of Student Behavior (average)</b>	<b>Teacher's Level of Belief of Student Growth in Behavior (average)</b>	<b>Teacher's Level of Implementation (average)</b>
PK-2	10	3.893	2.417	4.1
3rd-5th	13	3.614	2.135	3.75

Some considerations about this data could include the philosophies primary teachers typically hold for their students. Teachers' beliefs about SEL are often based on the developmental ages of the students in their classrooms. Students within the primary setting are often perceived as needing more social and emotional development because of their developmental stages. However, students of all ages need social and emotional development, but through differing approaches. We often witness teachers of primary grades holding that philosophical belief as the important role of social and emotional development within the classroom setting as the foundational tools for future success. In addition, the increased level of implementation might be more indicative to the structure of the school day in a primary classroom versus an intermediate classroom. Primary teachers are with the same students for the entire duration of the school day, allowing them more time with the same students and for the organization of school time within their classroom and what is devoted within that time. This opens up the possibility for more time devoted to SEL.

#### **4.4 Interaction between the Research and the Context**

This study is timely. Based on not only the research within this study, but on current topics and concerns related to students' self-being surrounding our collective

response to the impact of COVID-19, the need for SEL implementation is at the forefront of priorities for many educators. This section will focus on the interaction between the research and the context.

**4.4.1 How the context impacts the results.** At this campus, a designated time in the school schedule is devoted to SEL practices. Therefore, implementation is likely to occur more frequently as was seen in the results. In addition, staff were previously trained on SEL practices and provided tools for implementation. However, the manner in which these tools were used varied between participants. The initial quantitative data yielded a response rate of 52.3% which is accurate for internal questionnaires and can hold reliable results (Holbrook, 2007). Though no resistance to the study was found, a higher response to the questionnaire and volunteers for the qualitative study was anticipated. Participants of the study were adaptable and eager to participate in the study. Results from the participants were representative of the sample size and characteristics of the whole population of the Face to Face teachers on campus.

**4.4.2 How the research impacts the context.** Based on findings from the research, teachers see and feel the need for SEL within their classrooms, but aren't always confident in the delivery of SEL practices within their classrooms. Their current struggles on SEL implementation were varied and personally related, making it more difficult to target. Teachers were presented with the findings from the study and perceived it as useful information for future implementation and many appreciated the efforts made towards understanding the impact of SEL implementation as well as how their perception of students relates to their implementation of SEL.

## 4.5 Summary

The results of the data indicate that teachers perceive SEL implementation as producing positive results on student behaviors within their classrooms. Teachers' beliefs about their student behaviors averaged higher than the midline for each of the five components of CASEL's Framework indicating that many teachers witness these positive behaviors within their classroom. Research also indicated that there were high levels of growth for these behaviors since implementation at the beginning of the year. In addition, findings indicated that a teacher's belief about their students might not impact their level of implementation, but it may impact the manner in which they implement SEL into their classrooms. Low-level believers often implement SEL practices with the hope of correcting misbehaviors, whereas, high-level believers and mid-level believers often implement SEL practices as an opportunity to grow social and emotional skills to improve student well-being and interactions with others. In addition, low-level believers often find this growth to be slower and more challenging than mid-level and high-level believers. There are no known relationships between the secondary checks, though teachers with more years of experience have higher beliefs about students' SEL behaviors and teachers in the primary grades have a higher beliefs in their students' SEL behaviors. A summary of the findings will be presented in chapter five.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Within this chapter, a summary of findings from the research will be presented in addition to implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

#### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The impact of SEL on students is a topic that I am personally passionate about and wanted to learn more about in order to understand its impact on student behavior and implications for implementation within the classroom. This Record of Study sought to answer two research questions:

- How do teachers perceive the impact of SEL on student behaviors within their classrooms?
- How does a teacher's beliefs about their students relate to their implementation of SEL within his/her classroom?

An explanatory mixed methods design was used to provide a comprehensive analysis of these questions using teachers' perceptions in the form of quantitative data through a questionnaire and qualitative data through interviews, observations, and artifacts.

A questionnaire was provided to all Face to Face teachers on campus, excluding teachers within the virtual setting to provide initial quantitative data. Twenty-three of the 44 teachers responded to the questionnaire. Responses were calculated using a Likert scale based on their selection. Teachers' responses were then averaged to determine their overall level of belief of student behavior. Based on these initial quantitative results, five

participants were selected to participate in the qualitative research. These participants were purposefully selected based on their average score of their belief of student behavior. Two participants from the high-level belief, one participant from the mid-level belief, and two participants from the low-level belief were selected. This provided a well-rounded overview of their perspectives in order to explain the quantitative results.

Qualitative data were gathered using interviews, observations, and artifacts in order to triangulate data to determine findings to the questions. Responses were translated, broken into segments, and coded to identify trends and themes within responses. Data were then compared together to determine findings to the research questions. These were broken down into the five areas within CASEL's Framework. It was then compared as a whole in order to fully answer the research questions.

Findings for the first research question indicate teachers overall find SEL to impact students' behaviors positively and promote prosocial behaviors. All five components from CASEL's Framework indicated means higher than the midline of responses for student behaviors, indicating teachers are observing these behaviors more positively within their classrooms. This was further explained using the qualitative data from teachers. Teachers from each of the three belief levels expressed that SEL has made a positive impact on student behaviors, though some areas showed to be more problematic in developing. The areas of self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness had the highest average based on teachers' perceptions of these student behaviors within their classrooms. Though responsible decision-making had the lowest average for positive student behaviors, it had a higher average for teacher's perception of

student growth since the beginning of the year. Relationship skills and social awareness also had high levels of teacher-perceived student growth since the beginning of the year. However, teachers were able to express ways in which students have shown mastery of these behaviors within their classrooms.

Findings for the second research question were analyzed using multiple analysis viewpoints. The first analysis compared a teacher's level of implementation to how it relates to a teacher's level of beliefs about their students. This analysis did not yield many results. Responses fluctuated from the highest average for "sometimes" implementers, to the lowest average for "frequent" implementers, and a mid-average for "almost always" implementers. However, when shifting the analysis to the teacher's level of belief about their students as it relates to their level of implementation, results showed that low-level believers and mid-level believers scored a higher level of implementation than high-level believers. Additional qualitative data indicated that while the frequency of implementation did not yield many results, the type of implementation varied based on the teacher's level of belief about their students. High-level and mid-level believers utilized SEL implementation as a skill builder to increase student's well-being. However, low-level believers implemented SEL as a response to student misbehavior. High-level believers, mid-level believers, and low-level believers implement with similar frequency, but they implement SEL for different outcomes. This outcome seems to be related to their level of belief about their students' behaviors.

## **5.2 Discussion of Results in Relation to the Extant Literature**

CASEL continues to be the leading advocates of SEL. Therefore, this Record of Study was rooted in the framework developed by CASEL. Questions found in the questionnaire, interviews, and observations were directly tied to the behaviors within this framework. Results were analyzed based on their relation to the five components of CASEL's Framework: self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationships skills. This framework makes up the core principles surrounding SEL support to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to social, emotional, and academic growth.

Within chapter two, topics from the literature review uncovered many benefits which can be gained from the implementation of SEL. One of those benefits was the development of prosocial behaviors. These prosocial behaviors include self-awareness, grit, self-management, kindness, empathy, sharing, and working collaboratively. Findings from this study were indicative of what is found in literature. Qualitative and quantitative data indicate that teachers' perceived these prosocial behaviors within their students and observed student growth in these behaviors as well. Empathy was an underlying theme among participants within the qualitative portion of this study. This was a skill participants believed to be of high importance, and observed growth within their students was observed and celebrated. Self-awareness and self-management were also areas reported with higher averages among participants and were underlying themes within the qualitative portion of the research. The findings within this study are indicative that SEL can have a positive impact on students' prosocial behaviors,

specifically as they relate to CASEL's outlined prosocial behaviors, though some may be more difficult to ascertain.

Another finding from the research in relation to extant literature was that of the dynamic nature of the implementation of SEL. The literature indicated that many considerations must be made in order to achieve successful and consistent implementation. Based on the quantitative data, teachers' levels of implementation varied even though all teachers were provided with the same amount of time within the school day to devote to SEL practices. In addition, findings indicated that implementation methods varied among teachers as well. Though many participants shared similar methods such as community circle, read-alouds, and activities or discussions to promote practice and application of skills (another component noted within literature), there were variations on how and why SEL was implemented within their classrooms. Literature found that successful implementation of SEL requires a systematic approach. Findings from this study indicate that this might be one area that requires refinement based on the variances produced through implementation of SEL in the classrooms.

Finally, as seen within the literature, a teacher's perception often anchors their practices within the classroom. This study found a teacher's perception of their students is related to their implementation of SEL. The literature indicated that teacher's beliefs about their students can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy, meaning that if a teacher holds high expectations on their students, they are likely to work to achieve that standard set forth by the teacher. The cause for this varies, but can be tied to the impact this belief

system has on the way in which they deliver instruction and instructional practices to their students in addition to the way they interact with them. This study analyzed a teacher's level of belief about their students and how it relates to their implementation of SEL. The findings from this study, specifically within the qualitative portion which helped explain any findings from the quantitative research, indicate that this belief system related to the manner in which SEL was implemented within their classrooms. Findings indicated that teachers that held lower levels of belief about their students' behaviors within their classrooms often approached implementation as a reactive method to student misbehaviors. However, teachers with higher levels of belief about their students' behaviors often implemented SEL practices with the mindset of promoting prosocial behaviors within their students as a preventative measure for current and future success.

### **5.3 Discussion of Personal Lessons Learned**

I learned a tremendous amount about SEL practices and how they can impact student behavior. One of the biggest lessons learned and reinforced is that the teacher remains at the center of the efforts to develop social and emotional skills within our students in our classrooms. Teachers bring their own perspectives and experiences into the classrooms which can impact the way in which students acquire the knowledge and skill development related to SEL.

I also learned the power and importance of relationships in developing these skills. This was a recurring theme from the participants, but this was not something I had originally considered or discussed prior to the data results from the research. Though the

area of relationship skills was not among the highest scoring averages from teachers in the quantitative data, it was definitely a focus area for them in the qualitative data and served as the foundation for SEL practices within the classroom.

One of the biggest realizations from this Record of Study was the level and quality of implementation of SEL. Though all teachers are provided the same amount of time daily within their schedule for SEL implementation, high-level believers of their students did not implement as frequently as mid-level and low-level believers. I wasn't surprised to see that as a teacher's level of implementation rose so did their belief of student growth, but I was surprised to see that those high-level believers were not implementing SEL as often as low-level and mid-level believers. Upon further analysis within the qualitative results, it was discovered that the outlook, often guided by the teacher's belief system about their students, was what related to SEL implementation. I think the most important lesson learned from this study is realizing the impact our perceptions have on our practices which can impact the outcomes we see as it relates to student behavior.

#### **5.4 Implications for Practice**

There are several implications for practice based on the findings from this study. These implications are the foundation for the artifact presented to staff and counselors as these implications should guide future implementation practices.

**5.4.1 Connect to context.** A common theme seen within this study was the importance of intentionality and integration. Time is often a barrier to SEL implementation and participants shared the importance of seamlessly integrating SEL

into the curriculum in which they teach. This was done to allow for successful transference of skills as well as providing them time to implement SEL as well as content standards. By intentionally planning lessons that allow for integration enabled teachers to “weave” it into their practices within the classroom. This was done through read alouds as well as content-specific applications such as social studies, as many SEL components can more easily be integrated within this content area according to teachers.

Another consideration to be made is the idea presented by two of the participants. They shared frustration when immediate results were not obtained or growth in student behavior is short-lived or minimal. Implications for practice include identifying ways in which educators can bounce back when things are going as imagined or sticking with it when results are not immediate. SEL results may not always be immediately observed which can lead to frustration or feelings of defeat. It is imperative for teachers to understand the long-term commitment to SEL development. Preparing teachers for the efforts to be made each year of implementation will allow for teachers to understand the focus of each competency and the longevity of attainment of SEL development. In addition, reasonable expectations should be set by an SEL committee to determine the path for future implementation.

Finally, making educators more aware that their perspective can relate to the manner in which they present or implement SEL is an important consideration to make and an awareness to bring to educators. This is imperative because this has the potential to impact the results they obtain in student behavior and student outcomes. Providing



educators with ways to shift their viewpoint to effectively impact SEL instruction and implementation is imperative for students' success.

**5.4.2 Connect to field of study.** Bringing awareness to the impact SEL can have on student behavior, as well as how educators' perspectives can anchor their practices, is an important implication for practice for teachers within the classrooms as well as counselors impacting the manner in which SEL is implemented. Not only bringing this awareness to educators, but presenting implications for practice to ensure successful implementation can occur is crucial.

In addition, based on extant literature as well as findings from this study, it is important to take a systematic approach to SEL implementation. This includes ensuring all teachers are educated in SEL and practices is necessary for successful implementation and transference of skills. Without this knowledge, teachers won't always feel equipped with tackling such a large endeavor. Removing barriers such as this is important to ensure successful implementation in order to promote desired results in student behavior and success.

## **5.5 Lessons Learned**

Many lessons were gained from the experience provided through this study. First and foremost, teachers need to be knowledgeable about SEL practices, implementation, and the possible positive outcomes it can provide. Experience such as professional development on SEL, specifically what it is and how to successfully apply it, can help build this knowledge base. I learned the importance of continued efforts in this area in order for teachers to feel confident in delivering SEL within their classrooms.

I have also learned the importance of quality over quantity when it comes to SEL implementation. It wasn't the amount of time or effort given to SEL implementation that had the greatest impact on observed students' behaviors; it was the quality of the content provided within SEL implementation. When teachers approached SEL implementation as opportunities to strengthen already existing skills, they held stronger beliefs about their positive behaviors within their classrooms.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

SEL is meant to have long-lasting effects on student behavior, but a teacher only gets a glimpse into the impact that this can make for a student within the timeframe of one school year. This might be the underlying cause that some participants expressed initial frustration when there was not an immediate result in student behavior. Initiating a study that can compare both long term and short term impacts of SEL instruction might be beneficial to understand the effects of SEL implementation.

In addition, based on secondary characteristics, further exploration and research may be warranted in understanding the relationship between SEL implementation and the teacher's grade level. This was the area that showed some relation in the results gathered. Given that only quantitative data were obtained, more information might provide insight into their heightened level of belief about student behaviors and student growth in behaviors.

Future research to understand the areas in which integrating SEL into content would be beneficial to identify ways to maximize SEL implementation. Integration and intentionality were topics of high interest for teachers. In addition, time is often a barrier

to SEL implementation, so understanding ways to integrate SEL would be a topic to consider for future research. Understanding which competencies are easiest to integrate within content as well as which might be the most difficult to implement can provide information on ways to maximize SEL implementation within the busy classroom.

### **5.7 Closing Thoughts**

This study allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the impact SEL can have on students' behaviors. As a school counselor and throughout my education journey, I have witnessed the importance of the development of these skills to improve prosocial behaviors and increase a student's likelihood of success in school and life. This study allowed me to analyze how SEL implementation relates to observed students' behaviors and which areas need refinement in order to provide systematic SEL instruction for student success. It also helped me realize the importance of recognizing how perceptions of students can guide instruction within classrooms, thus impacting students' behaviors. These perceptions can either hinder a student's behaviors or allow them to thrive and develop prosocial behaviors that can lead to current and future success. The more educators can be made aware of these impacts, the better chances our students will have for success in life.

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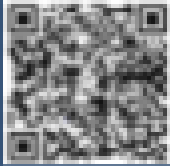
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APPENDIX A

Artifact



# SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Teacher Perceptions of Student Behavior and Levels of Implementation

**OBSERVED STUDENT BEHAVIORS**

1. Self-Awareness
2. Self-Management
3. Social Awareness
4. Relationship Skills
5. Responsible Decision-Making

1. Relationship Skills
2. Social Awareness
3. Responsible Decision-Making
4. Self-Awareness
5. Self-Management

**STUDENT GROWTH IN BEHAVIORS**

**TEACHERS' BELIEF SYSTEMS AS IT RELATES TO STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

## APPENDIX B

DIVISION OF RESEARCH



### NOT HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION

February 11, 2020

Type of Review:	Initial Review Submission Form
Title:	Teachers' Perspectives of the Impact OF Social Emotional Learning on Student Learning Characteristics
Investigator:	Mary Margaret Capraro
IRB ID:	IRB2020-0100
Reference Number:	105739
Funding:	
Documents Received:	IRB Application (Human Research) - (Version 1.0)

Dear Mary Margaret Capraro:

The Institution determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by DHHS and FDA regulations. Data gathering efforts are intended only for the student's record of study and will not yield generalizable data.

Further IRB review and approval by this organization is not required because this is not human research. This determination applies only to the activities described in this IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made you must immediately contact the IRB about whether these activities are research involving humans in which the organization is engaged. You will also be required to submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Please be aware that receiving a 'Not Human Research Determination' is not the same as IRB review and approval of the activity. IRB consent forms or templates for the activities described in the determination are not to be used and references to TAMU IRB approval must be removed from study documents.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Administrative Office at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636.

Sincerely,  
IRB Administration

750 Agronomy Road, Suite 2701

1186 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-1186

Tel. 979.458.1467 Fax. 979.862.3176  
<http://rcb.tamu.edu>

## APPENDIX C

### Teacher Perception of SEL: Teacher Questionnaire Adapted from Panorama Education

\*RDM (Responsible Decision-Making), RS (Relationship Skills), SA (Self-Awareness), SM (Self-Management), and SoA (Social Awareness)

1. How often are your students able to pull themselves out of a bad mood? (SA)

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always

Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

2. How often are your students able to control their emotions when needed? (SA)

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always

Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

3. How much effort do your students put into learning all the material for this class? (SA)

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always

Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

4. How supportive are students in their interactions with each other? (RS)

- Not at all supportive
- Slightly supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Quite supportive
- Extremely supportive

Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

5. How carefully do your students listen to other people's points of view? (RS)

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always

Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

6. How well do your students get along with students who are different from each other? (SoA)

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always

Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

7. How often do your students compliment others' accomplishments? (SoA)

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always



Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

8. How often do students come to class prepared? (SM)

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always

Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

9. How often do your students follow directions in class? (SM)

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always

Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

10. When your students are working independently, how often do they stay focused? (SM)

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always

Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

11. If your students fail at an important goal, how likely are they to try again? (RDM)

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always

Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

12. How possible is it for your students to change how well they behave in class? (RDM)

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always

Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

13. How much does the behavior of students hurt or help learning? (Climate)

- Hurts learning a tremendous amount
- Hurts learning some
- Hurts learning a little bit
- Neither hurts nor helps learning
- Helps learning a little bit
- Helps learning some
- Helps learning a tremendous amount

Since the beginning of the year, have you seen these behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- About the same

14. How often did you implement SEL into your classroom?

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always

15. How long have you been working in education?

- 1-3 years
- 4-9 years
- 10-14 years
- 15-19 years
- 20+ years

16. What grade do you teach?

- Pre-Kindergarten - Second Grade
- Third – Fifth Grade

17. Which content do you teach? Select all that apply.

- ELA
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies

Thank you for your participation in the Teacher Questionnaire. In the next stage of research, I will need voluntary participants. This stage of research will include an interview and observation from willing participants. If you are willing to be a participant, please complete this section of the Questionnaire. Please note: if you complete this section, your anonymity within the questionnaire responses will be waived. If you are willing to participate in the next stage of research, please provide your name here.

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APPENDIX D

Teacher Interview Questions

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer:

\_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee:

\_\_\_\_\_

Please read the following to the interviewee: *Information obtained from this interview will remain confidential in the form of identity. All information will be utilized for research purposes. If you have any questions during the interview, please ask. Given that this interview is conducted on a voluntary basis, if at any time you would like to leave the interview or pause the interview, please notify the interviewee of the request.*

Please ask the following questions and provide detailed notes of the responses from the interviewee.

1. In what ways have you implemented SEL into your classroom?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

2. In what ways has implementing SEL impacted your classroom?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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a. In what ways has SEL impacted your students?

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b. In what ways has SEL impacted your instruction?

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3. What specific behavior changes have you observed in student since implementation?

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a. What changes have you noticed in regards to students' self-awareness?

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b. What changes have you noticed in regards to students' self-management?

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c. What changes have you noticed in regards to students' social awareness?

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d. What changes have you noticed in regards to students' relationship skills?

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e. What changes have you noticed in regards to students' responsible decision-making?

4. What challenges exist for successful SEL implementation within your classroom?

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5. What has been the greatest impact on SEL implementation within your classroom?

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6. Do you find benefits in implementing SEL within your classroom? In what ways?

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Thank you for taking the time to be a part of this research study and providing insights into the impact of SEL within your classroom. If you have any follow-up questions, please email Penelope Flores at [penanddave@tamu.edu](mailto:penanddave@tamu.edu).

APPENDIX E

Teacher Observations

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Setting:

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What components of student behavior are observed within the classroom?

Self-Management: \_\_\_\_\_

Self-Awareness: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Awareness: \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible Decision-Making: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship Skills: \_\_\_\_\_

What components of SEL implementation are observed?

Self-Management: \_\_\_\_\_

Self-Awareness: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Awareness: \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible Decision-Making: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship Skills: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional notes:

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## APPENDIX F

### Research Study Consent Form

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled “Teachers’ Perspectives of the Impact of Social Emotional Learning on Student Behavior.” This study is being led by Penelope Flores at Texas A&M. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Dr. James Laub, Texas A&M.

#### **What the study is about**

The purpose of this research is to determine the impact implementation of SEL can have on student behavior. By analyzing student behavior based on the CASEL model post-implementation, I will be able to determine the most effective implementation of SEL on student behavior and targeted areas of refinement.

#### **What we will ask you to do**

I will ask you to participate in an anonymous questionnaire that seeks to understand student behavior within your classroom(s). I will also ask for volunteers to participate in an interview to describe your perception on the impact of SEL on student behavior within your classroom(s). I will also ask you to allow for me to do one classroom observation to take note of student behaviors within the classroom and SEL practices within your classroom(s).

#### **Risks and discomforts**

I do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

#### **Benefits**

Research shows that, when implemented effectively, SEL has the potential to decrease negative student behavior and increase student achievement and motivation. Therefore, the benefits of this study will lead to developing a successful implementation plan of SEL within the classrooms which will lead to the benefits seen with effective implementation.

#### **Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security**

Questionnaires will be submitted anonymously with no trackable or identifiable information, unless provided willingly by the participant. During interviews and observations, all identifiable information will be removed. All records will be maintained in a secure format. Interviews and collection of data will be conducted in a private setting to maintain confidentiality. When reporting findings, names of participants and the school name will be replaced with pseudonyms.

#### **Taking part is voluntary**

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions/procedures that make you feel uncomfortable.

#### **If you have questions**

The main researcher conducting this study is Penelope Flores at Texas A&M, and she can be reached through email communication at [penanddave@tamu.edu](mailto:penanddave@tamu.edu) or by phone at 832-798-5230. If you have any questions or concerns and want to contact the Faculty Advisor, you can email him at [jlaub@tamu.edu](mailto:jlaub@tamu.edu).

I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for five years beyond the end of the study.

## APPENDIX G

### SEL Lesson 1

#### Identifying Emotions and Emotional Regulation

SEL Competency Focus: self-awareness (major), self-management (minor)

**Objective:** Students will learn to identify the emotions they feel and the possible causes for these emotions. Students will also learn emotion regulation strategies for each emotion.

**Engage:** Teacher read aloud “The Way I Feel” and referred to an anchor chart of emotions previously made with students. The anchor chart had the feeling word at the top of a box with an image of a student expressing that emotion underneath the word. Next to the image, within each box, were examples of events that created those emotions. For example, the word scared was written at the top with an image of a student feeling scared and the following examples were written next to it: a storm, when my dog got lost, when I got lost. As the teacher read aloud the book, she discussed each emotion and students connected to the feelings. As new emotions were introduced from the book, they added them to the anchor chart.

**Apply:** Once the book and running anchor chart were completed, the teacher asked student to reflect on how they are feeling right now or how their feelings might have changed throughout the day. Emotions change based on our experiences and interactions with others. Students were each given a paper plate. The teacher asked each student to make the paper plate representative of the emotion they were feeling right now. Students drew their emotions on the plate and discussed it with their table group. The teacher then asked students to make groups within the classroom based on their emotion- there could be a sad group, happy group, etc. (One child asked for clarification because he was feeling two emotions. The teacher was able to explain that sometimes we experience several emotions at the same time. The child was able to form a “mixed feelings” group). Once in their group, students discussed two things: what might have led to feeling that emotion and any strategies they might need to overcome that emotion or maintain that emotion.

**Closure:** The teacher asked students what coping strategies they discussed with their groups for overwhelming emotions they felt. These were added on a sticky note and placed in the emotion box as a coping strategy. The teacher explained that they will continue to develop and foster these skills.

## APPENDIX H

### SEL Lesson 2

#### Character Development: Perseverance

SEL Competency Focus: Responsible Decision-Making (major), Self-Management (minor)

Objective: Students will develop an understanding of perseverance and ways to develop it within themselves in their daily lives.

Engage: The teacher reviewed the PurposeFull People definition of perseverance with students. The teacher read aloud the book “Jabari Tries” as an example of perseverance. The teacher discussed different emotions one feels when persevering through an obstacle, challenge, or something difficult. Once starting the book, the teacher charted two things at the front of a sentence stem and at the end of the sentence stem. At the beginning, she put where the character was starting in the book. At the end, she charted the character’s end goal. As they progressed through the book, the teacher charted the experience the character was going through they exemplified perseverance and the emotions the character was currently feeling because of that experience. Once the book finished, the end goal was slightly modified based on what occurred within the story and the whole picture of perseverance was reviewed. The teacher highlighted the various emotions and experiences that led to the end goal (which ended up shifting slightly at the end). The teacher explained that we feel many different emotions throughout an experience and some may make us feel like giving up. However, the character in the book focused on the end goal to help persevere through. The teacher asked for students to share coping strategies that might have helped them persevere through at different spots within the book.

Apply: Students were placed in groups of 3-4. Within the groups, students were asked to share their personal experiences of perseverance and chart it through as seen in the book. They discussed where they started, what obstacles they encountered, the emotions they experienced, and what happened at the end.

Closure: Students were each given a sentence strip. They were asked to think of a personal goal they have for themselves that they want to accomplish by the end of the school year. Students wrote this goal at the end of the sentence strip. The teacher then asked students to write their starting point for achieving this goal and think about anticipated obstacles that might occur. Sentence strips were displayed on a Perseverance wall. The teacher stated that as experiences come that get you closer to that goal they can chart them on the strip, keeping that end goal in mind.

## APPENDIX I

### SEL Lesson 3

#### Conflict Resolution Personality Types and How it Impacts Collaborative Efforts

SEL Competency Focus: Social Awareness (major), Relationship Skills and Self-Awareness (minor)

**Objective:** Students will be able to self-identify with a conflict resolution personality type and better understand how their (and others) personality type impacts the manner in which they can collaborate as a group and be effective. Students will learn how to navigate various personality types to accomplish a goal together and how their personality type might impact the group as well.

**Engage:** The teacher reviewed their upcoming group project that will require collaboration among all team members for an extended amount of time. In order to prepare for effective communication and efforts among all team members, the teacher introduced the idea of Conflict Resolution Personality Types: Accommodating, Avoiding, Compromising, Collaborating, and Competing. The teacher went through each personality type and students identified the strengths this personality type would bring to the group and the difficulties of this personality type. Students were asked to self-identify with one personality type, explaining that there may be parts of each they identify with, but picking one that is most representative of who they are right now, in this class, for this project.

**Apply:** Students got into groups based on how which personality type they selected for themselves. The teacher asked the groups to first determine how their personality might conflict with others and strategies they will utilize to ensure all students have a voice in the group and are contributing members of the group. Then groups went through each personality type and identified areas in which each personality might conflict with them and others and specific strategies to overcome these conflicts. Each group presented their ideas and strategies and a running list was kept by the teacher as they presented as an anchor chart for future reference when working in groups. Students then placed their name in the box that represented their personality type.

**Closure:** The teacher used this activity to group students for the upcoming group project. She placed (as close to possible) one student from each personality type into each group. The group then created a plan for ensuring that every member's voice is heard and everyone will be able to be contributing members of the group. Students could use the anchor chart for reference in strategies for this group plan.