

Effective Practices for Cultivating Strong Social and Emotional Competencies in Students from a
Racially and Economically Diverse Setting

By

Surbhi Madia Barber

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2014

Date of final oral examination: 4/24/14

The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Carolyn J. Kelley, Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis
M. Bruce King, Faculty Associate, Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis
Clifton F. Conrad, Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis
Peter M. Miller, Associate Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis
Michael Fultz, Professor, Educational Policy Studies

© Copyright by Surbhi Madia Barber 2014

All Rights Reserved

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Sejal and the miracle of life that is growing inside of me now. In your lives, may you both be genuinely kind above anything else. My main wish for you both is that you are compassionate to others, that you take action, and that you love yourselves. I will guide my motherhood based on C5 for Action Framework and hope that you are confident in yourselves and genuinely happy; that you are compassionate and actively seek out ways to help those in need; that you are strong communicators who can connect with others; that you are peaceful in your actions and in your hearts; and that you celebrate and embrace diversity of background, belief, and thought. Above all, I hope that you are never idle about issues that matter to you, and that you both act against injustice and stand up for what is right, even when you have to stand alone. I love you, sweet Sejal, my angel, my whole world, and I love you too, Baby Number Two!

Acknowledgements

Thank you, John, for your constant encouragement and uplifting words when I needed them the most. Realizing that I have been in this program all of Sejal's life reminds me that you have been so supportive through it all, encouraging me every step of the way. You have supported me whole-heartedly through this process, even when it was not easy on our family. When I was discouraged, you provided an optimistic perspective that encouraged me to keep moving forward and to take pride in my work. Thank you for always listening to my ideas and constant Social Emotional Learning talk (even at three in the morning!), and for genuinely taking interest in an area that I am so passionate about. I am so grateful that together we will have the opportunity to provide Sejal and Baby Number Two with meaningful Social Emotional skills and help them value kindness and compassion above anything else. I love you, sweetheart.

Thank you, Dad, for inspiring me from the age of twelve to get my PhD. You always said that I should get as much formal and informal education as possible in whichever field I chose to pursue. I am glad I listened to your advice. Thank you for always pushing me to challenge myself, and never settling for the easy route. I also want to thank you for all of the social emotional lessons you provided me with from such a young age. I can directly attribute my communication skills, social quotient, confidence, appreciation of diversity, and commitment to non-violence to your teachings. You never allowed me to compromise in certain areas, and it is because of you and Mom that I am the person I am today. More than anything, thank you for teaching me what unconditional love really means. I love you more than I could ever express, and more than you will ever know.

Mom, There is no way I would have gotten through this program without your constant encouragement and ability to help me focus my energy on being productive instead of feeling stressed. Your simple advice of just making small goals and celebrating after attaining them helped me get through my Qualifying Exam, and I am sure I would not be finished it weren't for you. It seems that your simple advice has been what has guided me so much in my life. I need to thank you for all of your social emotional lessons throughout the years as well. I can directly attribute any compassionate act I have ever done to your teachings. Further, I have you to thank for my ability to focus on the positive aspects of my life, gratitude, and other strategies that bring me happiness and peace. All of the small life lessons you have provided me with have shaped me in more ways than I could ever express. I love you so much, Mom. You have a heart of gold.

Jigar, You'll never let me settle for average. If it weren't for you, my dissertation topic would have been on a subject that I was not deeply passionate about, and it would have been done to simply get my degree. Thank you for always pushing me to be better. When we talked after Newtown, you told me to write an op-ed piece. I was too consumed with classes and my dissertation, and I didn't want to do it. You kept on encouraging me, and because of that, I was able to find my passion in education- Social Emotional Learning. If you hadn't pushed me to write that op-ed piece, I wouldn't have discovered my passion, and my life would be significantly different. It is because of that op-ed piece that I changed my dissertation topic, and it is because of changing my dissertation topic that I now have my dream job as a district-wide Social Emotional Learning Facilitator. Thank you for always encouraging me to "be the person I want to be." I love you so much, big brother.

Virat, without you to talk to and vent to on the phone, I don't know how I could have gotten through this program. You always let me complain, and you just listened without judging. You always helped me sort out my conflicting emotions regarding wanting to finish this degree yet feeling guilty having a baby at home. Thank you for your constant reminders of balance and perspective. Thank you for always taking time for me and letting me gripe- especially when you were experiencing far more of a challenge in medical school residency. I am so grateful for the way you took genuine interest in my research and always wanted to listen to me talk about my work. You are one of the few people who actually seemed to want to hear me talk about my study. Thank you especially for celebrating my hard work like no one else, and for always making my accomplishments seem truly significant. I love you so much, little brother.

Pam, thank you for being my mentor, my editor, and most importantly, my friend. I am so grateful for our friendship, our exchange of ideas regarding educational reform, and for our history. If you had told me that my 9th grade Health teacher would end up playing the kind of role that you have played in my life, I never would have believed it. I am so grateful to know you, Pam, and so grateful for all of the Social Emotional Learning you taught me so many years ago at Maple Grove Junior High.

Bruce, I always dreaded getting feedback from you because you never accepted average. You were a true advisor to me, and a phenomenal educator who inspired me regularly to be more than average, to truly put forth my best effort, and to do it again until it was right. Thank you. Thank you for the best qualitative methods course I could have ever taken- working as a graduate assistant on the grant work. Thank you for pushing back on my ideas and helping me expand my views. Thank you for your guidance, thank you for your friendship. You might not have to deal with me as a student anymore, but you're never getting rid of me. You'll be a friend for life.

Table of Contents

Dedication	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	ix
Chapter 1:	1
The Statement of the Problem and Social Emotional Learning as Part of the Solution	1
The Problem: Depression and Violence in America	1
Depression & Mental Health.....	2
More Than a Mental Health Issue.....	3
Social Emotional Learning as Part of the Solution	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework	9
Historical Roots of SEL	9
Recent Contributions to SEL	11
Various SEL Frameworks	14
Emotional Intelligence, Bar-On, and Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences.....	14
Character Education.....	17
The Whole Child Movement.....	18
PBIS & School Climate.....	18
Violence Prevention Programs.....	20
Diversity Education & Anti-Bullying Programs.....	21
Outcomes of Social Emotional Learning	23
Academic Outcomes.....	23
Other Benefits of SEL: Student Well-Being.....	27
Successful Implementation of Social Emotional Learning	30
Problems with Implementation of SEL Programming	34
Lack of Resources.....	35
Lack of Authenticity.....	36
Fragmented Efforts.....	38
C5 for Action Framework	39
Dimension One: Confidence & Happiness.....	43
Dimension Two: Communication Skills & Social Quotient (SQ).....	44
Dimension Three: Compassion & Inclusion.....	45
Dimension Four: Conflict Resolution & Non-Violence.....	45
Dimension Five: Celebrate Diversity, Authentically.....	46
Taking Action.....	47
Introduction to the Study: A Study of Effective SEL Practices	48
Research Questions & Hypothesis.....	50
Summary of Chapters 1 and 2	50
Chapter 3: Research Methods	52
Qualitative Design	52
Sampling	55
School Selection Criteria.....	56
Interviewee & Classroom Selection.....	60
Procedures	62
Observations.....	63

Interviews.....	66
Focus Groups.....	67
Document Analysis	69
Sherman Elementary School	70
Instrumentation	71
Email Screener 1	72
Email Screener 2	72
Telephone Screener	72
Observation Protocol.....	73
Interview Protocol.....	73
Focus Group Protocol	75
Document Analysis	76
Pilot Study	76
Analysis	77
Trustworthiness & Validity	80
Ethical Considerations	82
Research Bias & Positionality	83
Chapter 4: Effective Social Emotional Learning	87
Findings.....	87
Morning Meetings & SEL.....	89
Math & SEL.....	95
Literacy & SEL.....	103
SEL in Read-Aloud Book Discussions	103
SEL in Music, Transition Times, & Recess	114
Transition Times	116
Personal Life Stories	118
Altering Second Step Scenarios.....	123
Teachable Moments & Student Experiences	123
Taking Action	137
Taking Action in Ms. Lee’s Class.....	137
Taking Action in Ms. Rhonda’s Class.....	138
Taking Action in Ms. Jane’s Class.....	140
Taking Action in Ms. Dorothy’s Class.....	140
Chapter 4 Summary.....	142
Chapter 5: Conditions for Effective Social Emotional Learning	143
Routines, Expectations, & Maximizing Instructional Time	144
Circulating & Checking for Understanding.....	147
Gaining Attention & Reviewing Rules Regularly	148
SEL-Related Student Responsibilities	149
Focus on Positive Behavior	151
Super Stars Positive Classroom Management System	153
Class-wide Reward System	155
Reminders	156
Morning Greetings & Connecting with Students	159
Positively Shaping Student Identities.....	163
One-on-One Time	164
Love.....	165
Chapter 5 Summary.....	167

Chapter 6: Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications.....	168
Summary of Findings.....	168
Answering the Research Questions	169
Circulating & Checking for Understanding.....	170
Gaining Attention & Reviewing Rules Regularly	171
Student Responsibilities.....	172
Positive Behavioral Supports: Focus on Positive Behavior	173
Emphasis on Student-Teacher Relationships.....	175
Morning Greeting & Connecting with Students	175
Positively Shaping Student Identities.....	176
One-on-One Time	178
Love.....	178
More Than Classroom Management Alone	179
Why Do Relationships Matter to SEL?	180
Answering Research Question 1a:.....	180
Personal Life Stories	181
Altering Second Step Scenarios.....	181
Teachable Moments & Student Experiences	182
Answering Research Question 1b:	184
Morning Meetings & SEL.....	185
Math & SEL	185
Literacy & SEL.....	186
SEL in Music, Transition Times, & Recess	186
Transition Times	187
Effective SEL Classrooms.....	188
Answering Research Question 2:	190
Answering Research Question 3:	192
Difference in Quality of Responses.....	193
Beyond the Surface Responses.....	193
Utilizing SEL Skills	194
Internalizing Repeated Messages.....	196
Implications for Future Practice.....	197
Establishment of a Positive Behavior Plan.....	197
Reallocating Time.....	198
Teacher Training Programs and On-going Professional Development	199
Teacher Individuality	201
Hiring Practices.....	201
Limitations & Reflections.....	202
Further Research	203
Conclusion	204
References	207
Appendix A: Email Screener 1	222
Appendix B: Email Screener 2	223
Appendix C: Telephone Screener	224
Appendix D: Observation Protocol.....	225
Appendix E: Interview Protocol—Educational Leaders.....	227

A. About Me (to create a relaxed, conversational experience)	227
B. Purpose of this study	227
1. How is social emotional learning implemented successfully?	227
C. Institutional Review Board Protections	227
1. Informed Consent	227
Appendix F: Interview Protocol—Teachers	230
A. About Me (to create a relaxed, conversational experience)	230
B. Purpose of this study	230
1. How is social emotional learning implemented successfully?	230
C. Institutional Review Board Protections	230
1. Informed Consent	230
Appendix G: Focus Group Protocol—Students	233
D. About Me (to create a relaxed, conversational experience)	233
E. Purpose of this study	233
F. Institutional Review Board Protections	233
1. Informed Consent	233
Appendix H: Artifact Review for Document Analysis	236
Appendix I: Adult Consent Form	237
Appendix J: Parental Consent Form	239
APPENDIX K: SIMPLE LANGUAGE PARENTAL CONSENT FORM	241

Abstract

Many people today are unhappy and isolated resulting in alarming rates of depression, mental illness, suicide, and violence. Despite the substantial research documenting the benefits of social emotional learning (SEL), there are problems with the current implementation of SEL programs in schools. A lack of authenticity is one major problem, as many SEL programs do not reflect the individual school or classroom culture to teach SEL in context-specific ways that resonate with students. Furthermore, there is a lack of qualitative studies that actually describe what effective SEL looks like in practice, especially in school settings with a racially and economically diverse student population. The specific aims of this study are to understand: (1) how effective SEL programs are delivered and integrated into classroom lessons and the conditions in which these practices are occurring; (2) the impact of SEL on students by exploring their perspectives; (3) how teachers adapt formal SEL programming to be more personally meaningful to students and fit their classroom culture, while maintaining program fidelity and school-wide coherence; and (4) the extent to which effective SEL programming reflects the *C5 for Action Framework*.

Chapter 1:

The Statement of the Problem and Social Emotional Learning as Part of the Solution

The Problem: Depression and Violence in America

The problem, simply stated, is that a large percentage of Americans are unhappy (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). Children, in particular, are depressed, lonely, angry, stressed, aggressive, and impulsive (Achenbach et al., 2003). Mass shootings, suicide, and other manifestations of depression plague our country and dominate the news each and every day. The statistics gathered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are jarring, and the stories of loss are heartbreaking. The following statistics illustrate how deeply America's children are hurting due to feelings of isolation and a lack of meaningful, community connections (Benson et al., 1999).

Children are being murdered at alarming rates in our country. Youth violence was the second leading cause of death for people ages 10 to 24 in 2009, with 5000 youngsters murdered (CDC, 2011). In this age range, homicide is the number one leading cause of death for African Americans; the second leading cause of death for Hispanics; and the third leading cause of death in American Indians and Alaska Natives (CDC, 2011). Violent acts resulting in death are not only directed at others, but also at oneself. An average of 105 suicides occurred each day in 2010, making suicide the tenth leading cause of death in America (CDC, 2010).

With such staggering homicide and suicide statistics, the origin of this violence is often questioned. Although there are numerous contributing factors that one could consider, bullying is one that will be briefly explored here. Bullying is a common experience for youngsters today. As much as 1/5 of youth reported being bullied at school within the past year, and over 5% of students skipped class at least once in a monthly period because they feared their own safety

(Eaton et al., 2012). Violent behavior occurs regularly with children under the age of 18. In 2011, 32.8% of high school students in a nationally representative sample reported being involved in a physical conflict within the year preceding the survey (CDC, 2011). In 2010, juveniles under the age of 18 accounted for 13.7% of all violent crime arrests (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010). Students who are the victims of violence or crime at school are more likely to be truant, perform poorly in academics, drop out, exhibit violent behavior, feel lonely, and be depressed (Robers et al., 2010).

Disturbing facts like these are only viewed as statistics until another major devastating event like that of the school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, occur and force policy-makers, educators, parents, and citizens to reflect upon what is causing such unrest in our country. Newtown reminded our country about the numerous other tragic shootings like Aurora, Virginia Tech, and Columbine, among countless others. While conversations and reform efforts around gun control are necessary, they will not solve the underlying problems that often cause these incidents to occur in the first place.

Depression & Mental Health

It has been estimated that 1 in 10 American adults reports feelings of depression (CDC, 2012). Factors contributing to this mental illness include feelings of isolation and loneliness that often start from childhood. Depression has been linked to other serious mental illnesses, substance abuse, and violent behavior. In a 2009 study of suicides in 16 states, 33.3% of suicide victims were under the influence of alcohol, and 23% were on anti-depressants (CDC, 2012). With this alarmingly high rate of discontented individuals in our country, it is clear that action must be taken.

Although an estimated one-fifth of children under the age of 18 show symptoms of mental illness (Eaton et al., 2010), as many as 80% of those do not receive the services they need or any at all (Greenberg et al., 2003). Social and emotional complexities that fester internally and lead to depression and mental illness have a negative effect on more than the individual and their family. It also hurts society as a whole as there are links between mental illness and violent behavior (Monahan, 1992; Swanson, 1994; & Shaw et al., 2006). When mental illness is not outwardly identified, children do not receive needed interventions, which increases the likelihood that these complexities are expressed externally through a variety of harmful behaviors including substance abuse and violence (Sprague & Horner, 2006).

The promotion of self-esteem and social inclusion can be instrumental in preventing and treating emotional, behavioral, and mental disorders (Institute of Medicine Report, 2009). A statement in The Report of the Surgeon General's Conference on Children's Mental Health similarly stated, "Mental health is a critical component of children's learning and general health. Fostering social and emotional health in children as a part of healthy child development must therefore be a national priority" (U.S. Public Health Service, 2000, p. 3). Since schools have limited resources and since children with mental health issues are not receiving sufficient services (Greenberg et al., 2001), comprehensive programs that focus on developing social and emotional competencies, or social emotional learning (SEL), are needed now more than ever.

More Than a Mental Health Issue

Those who advocate for the incorporation of social emotional learning (SEL) attest that these skills are necessary for all children, not just those with mental health issues. Many children who do not have mental health issues also experience significant social and emotional difficulties including feeling disconnected, out of place, and as if they don't "fit in." This detachment

negatively affects their behavior, academic achievement, and social emotional as well as physical health (Blum & Libbey, 2004; Greenberg et al., 2001; Zins et al., 2007).

Life is different for kids today. As Greenberg et al. (2003) articulated, the day-to-day demands on individuals can be taxing, and children today must balance far more than ever before. Many children today are faced with stress-inducing demands and pressures, including academic pressures from school, household responsibilities, and commitments to extracurricular activities, to name a few. Others have larger issues including homelessness and poverty (23% of all children in the U.S. in 2012). As Elias et al. (2003) articulated,

The effect of poverty on children's learning and mental health is pervasive... Perhaps it is the subtle, corrosive nature of poverty, the hopelessness, the cumulative impact of inadequate schools and school leadership and constant staff turnover and administrative and policy changes, all of which virtually consign a cohort of children to failure. (p. 6)

Given that adults have increasing economic and social pressures at home as well, there are serious concerns with a child's social and emotional development (Sprague & Horner, 2006).

With this, students cannot learn when their basic needs are not met. The day to day common stresses that many children are consumed with, ranging from feelings of exclusion and low self-esteem to social conflicts, often result in negative behavior, as well as less focus on academics (Elias, 2003). It seems logical that a child would experience difficulty concentrating in class if they are concerned about an afterschool fight or whether or not they will have dinner that night.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954), many children experience difficulty in academics and learning if their fundamental social emotional needs are not met. Maslow argued that mental growth can only be attained once basic physiological, safety, and

social needs have been met. Even those who reject Maslow's motivational theory accept that two of human's most basic needs are physical and mental health (e.g., Max-Neef, et al., 1991). As Pipher (1998) put it, "Children must have safety before they can pay attention" (p. 10). Some researchers have suggested that stress creates a physiological response, which creates a barrier that prevents the brain from accessing higher-order thinking skills (Vail, 1994). Further, when students do not feel safe, the brain functions that are necessary for classroom learning is over run by emotional functions of the brain that regulate self-preservation and survival (Bluestein, 2001). When children have their basic physical and emotional needs met, they are more likely to be engaged in lessons, achieve academically, follow school rules, develop social skills, and contribute to society (Blum et al., 2002; Zins et al., 2007; Durlak et al., 2011).

The recognition of the changing demands placed upon children in this generation has resulted in an increase in systematic prevention and early interventions that emphasize the importance of social emotional learning in schools. Clearly happiness is not something that is inborn, but rather, it is something that today's children (and adults for that matter), need to be taught how to attain. Given the striking information outlined above, universal SEL programs, programs that are geared toward all students rather than interventions geared toward selected students, are needed in schools now more than ever before. The benefits of these programs are not only for those with social emotional deficits or mental health issues; these skills benefit society at large.

Social Emotional Learning as Part of the Solution

"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."

(Aristotle)

Social emotional learning (SEL), broadly defined, is the process for learning life skills. It is generally viewed as a larger umbrella framework that has two focuses: (1) teaching social and emotional competencies and (2) fostering a caring, safe learning environment (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2012). Successful SEL instruction involves the modeling, practicing, and application of SEL skills with opportunities to apply these skills to various situations in order to facilitate the internalization of these skills so they become a regular part of a student's daily behavior (Weissberg, Caplan, & Sivo, 1989). Bear and Watkins (2006) explain that the development of social emotional competencies eventually progresses from being externally driven actions to internalized values, compassion for others, strong decision-making, and responsibility. Establishing a successful SEL environment involves a focus on creating a strong school culture that is safe, caring, and connected to the home and community (Cook et al., 1999).

The overall goals of social emotional learning have been widely accepted as, "The process through which children enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaving to achieve important life tasks...to recognize and manage their emotions, establish healthy relationships, set positive goals, meet personal and social needs, and make responsible and ethical decisions" (Zins et al., 2007, p. 192). Others define SEL as the ability to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve goals, make responsible decisions, appreciate different perspectives, form and maintain positive relationships, and handle interpersonal situations well (Elias et al., 1997). Similarly, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

(CASEL, 2012) defines social emotional learning as “a process for helping children, and even adults, develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness. SEL teaches the skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work, effectively and ethically” (p. 21). SEL is often referred to as “the missing piece” because it is a crucial aspect of education that has not been given sufficient attention (Reichl & O’Brien, 2012, p. 312).

Although the above definitions of social emotional learning may seem clear, the application is vague and difficult to classify since programs that fall under the SEL umbrella are “extremely heterogeneous in their nature, content, audience, settings, and expected outcomes” (Humphrey et al., 2010, p. 9). With this, since the concept of SEL includes numerous programs and frameworks with various approaches, it is nearly impossible to provide a comprehensive review of the entire field (Hoffman, 2009). By noting the search terms (and their variants) that Durlak et al. (2011) used in a recent meta-analysis of SEL outcomes, one can understand why some view SEL as ambiguous. The search terms used were: *social and emotional learning, competence, assets, health promotion, prevention, positive youth development, social skills, self-esteem, empathy, emotional intelligence, problem solving, conflict resolution, coping, stress reduction, children, adolescents, intervention, students, and schools*.

Ambiguity is not the only problem that exists with SEL. As I will discuss further in the next chapter, a lack of authenticity is another major problem, as many SEL programs do not reflect the individual school or classroom culture to teach SEL in context-specific ways that resonate with students. Furthermore, there is a lack of qualitative studies that actually describe what effective SEL looks like in practice. The specific aims of this study are to understand: (1) how effective SEL programs are delivered and integrated into classroom lessons and the conditions in which these practices are occurring; (2) the impact of SEL on students by exploring

their perspectives; (3) how teachers adapt formal SEL programming to be more personally meaningful to students and fit their classroom culture, while maintaining program fidelity and school-wide coherence; and (4) the extent to which effective SEL programming reflects the *C5 for Action Framework* (outlined in chapter 2).

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

This literature review starts with a brief overview of the progression of social emotional learning from historical roots to current efforts in order to offer a stronger understanding of the development of SEL. Due to the various interpretations of and confusion with what is considered SEL, one of the aims of this review is to provide needed clarity by concentrating on the various programs and models that fall under this umbrella term. Empirical studies related to these various frameworks are integrated throughout, and research conducted on the outcomes and implementation of SEL programs are then presented. Problems with SEL programs and implementation are discussed, followed by an alternative framework and implications for future research.

Historical Roots of SEL

The recognition of the importance of good character and virtue in education is nothing new. Throughout history, philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, Kant, Dewey, and Buddha, in addition to our nation's founders, have expressed the importance of the development of social emotional learning (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). Aristotle wrote numerous pieces expressing the value of ethical behavior and the need to educate citizens to be good people. Furthermore, Aristotle (fourth century BC) contended that happiness is the "highest good of a human being" and that "educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all." Similarly, Plato advocated for holistic learning that emphasized character, ethics, the arts, and physical education in addition to academic subjects. He explained that with solid education, "you produce citizens of good character" (Kakkori & Huttunen, 2007, p. 18).

More recently, it is believed that Edward Thorndike presented the definition of social aptitude in the early 1920's. He noted that social intelligence was one of three types of

intelligences and that it was different from academic or abstract intelligence. Thorndike viewed social intelligence as the ability to understand and manage people and to deal successfully within social contexts (Landy, 2006).

In 1968, child psychologist James Comer was concerned with the lack of continuity between home life and school, and how it affects children's psychosocial development and academic achievement. He started a program called the Comer School Development Program in order to further social, emotional, and academic learning through stronger collaboration between teachers, families, and communities. The Comer educational philosophy strongly emphasizes holistic child development and supports the idea that there is a link between a child's emotional wellness, social skills, positive school culture, and cognitive development. The general belief is that when students feel supported and cared for in school, they will perform better academically, socially, and emotionally. The Comer School Development program initially resulted in turning around two low-performing elementary schools with the lowest attendance and academic achievement in New Haven, Connecticut, and transforming them into schools with the highest attendance rates and no serious behavior issues. In a collaborative effort focused on more than just academics to make gains, social programs were largely involved in the transformation (Cook et al., 2000). The success of Comer's program was due to partnership between teachers, parents, the principal, and a mental health worker with an increased focus on social and emotional skills.

Comer's model is considered one of the first Comprehensive School Reform models in that it aims to improve whole school outcomes. Since 1968, when it was first established, Comer's School Development Program has expanded to over 1000 schools nationwide and when implemented with fidelity over a five-year period, it has proven to be extremely effective at improving student achievement in high poverty and high minority, urban areas.

Recent Contributions to SEL

In the late 1980s, Roger Weissberg, a Yale psychology professor, teamed up with a New Haven public school teacher, Timothy Shriver, to create the K-12 New Haven Social Development program. Also during this time, Weissberg and Maurice Elias chaired the W.T. Grant Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence. They directed their efforts at creating a framework for schools to use in order to promote social and emotional learning and identified the following as skills needed for emotional competence: "identifying and labeling feelings, expressing feelings, assessing the intensity of feelings, managing feelings, delaying gratification, controlling impulses, and reducing stress" (Edutopia, 2013).

The Character Education Partnership was formed in 1994, a year after a group of national leaders convened at the Josephson Institute of Ethics to discuss societal problems and what action could be taken. The group aimed to create a common set of character traits that could not be related to any religion, political party, or belief system (DeRoche & Williams, 2001). They agreed on seven traits: fairness, responsibility, respect, trustworthiness, caring, citizenship, and civic virtue. Other than collectively agreeing on these principals, the group also contended that good character is not innate, but it must be taught (Murphy, 1998). The Character Education Partnership's goal is to collaborate with communities and schools to develop character education in students throughout the United States.

Also in 1994, the Fetzer Group recognized the fragmented nature of efforts to address social development in schools. At the time, school reform efforts were primarily focused on academic success and managing behavior. With this, they introduced the phrase "social-emotional learning" as a conceptual framework with hopes to align these efforts (Greenberg et al., 2003). It was also during this year that New York Times writer and psychologist, Daniel

Goleman, co-founded The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a non-profit organization based in Chicago, Illinois. Today, CASEL is a primary leader in this movement and one of the largest advocates of prevention and early intervention programming through social and emotional learning both nationally and internationally (Reichl & O'Brien, 2012). They are committed to evidence-based approaches, and as an organization, they provide numerous resources to educators, policy-makers, parents, and the general public to further their cause. CASEL (2012) envisions:

a world where families, schools, and communities work together to promote children's success in school and life and to support the healthy development of all children. In this vision, children and adults are engaged life-long learners who are self-aware, caring and connected to others, and responsible in their decision-making. Children and adults achieve to their fullest potential, and participate constructively in a democratic society. (p. 8)

CASEL uses a five-dimensional framework to describe SEL: (1) Self-Awareness: Recognizing one's emotions and values as well as one's strengths and challenges; (2) Responsible Decision-Making: Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior; (3) Relationship Skills: Forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing effectively with conflict; (4) Social Awareness: Showing understanding and empathy for others; and (5) Self-Management: managing emotions and behaviors to achieve one's goals.

This organization aims to connect the research to practice locally and nationally by influencing classroom teachers as well as state and federal policy makers. They have been successful in both areas, as more and more states are adopting social emotional learning standards and additionally, SEL legislation has been passed. At a federal level, The Academic, Social, and Emotional

Learning Act of 2011 has expanded the availability of SEL programs by amending the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to allow funding to identify, advocate for, and support research-based SEL programming (CASEL, 2011).

- *Illinois' SEL Movement*

In 2002, a group of leaders in Illinois from various backgrounds including education, mental health, and violence prevention came together to advocate for social emotional learning standards. Included in this group was the Children's Mental Health Task Force, a volunteer organization that was comprised of over 100 other organizations, all committed to a comprehensive approach to bettering the mental health of children and social emotional competencies (Gordon et al., 2011).

The Children's Mental Health Act of 2003 in Illinois called for the development of a plan that would focus on prevention, early intervention, and treatment for children. With this, the legislation also called for the Illinois State Board of Educators (ISBE) to establish a set of social and emotional development learning standards. After this law was passed, the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership group was created, committees were formed, and they collaboratively worked with CASEL and the ISBE to develop the SEL learning standards. A number of stakeholders were involved in this process including teachers, educational leaders, and parents with backgrounds in child psychology, curriculum, and instruction. The three goals of the Illinois SEL standards that were agreed upon were: (1) develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success; (2) use social awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships; and (3) demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts. Those involved with this process explained that their goal was for the standards to be specific and clear, but also allow for a variety of instructional approaches (Gordon et al., 2011).

Although Illinois is the only state thus far that currently has comprehensive, free-standing social and emotional learning standards for kindergarten through high school, other states are moving toward doing the same. At this time, many states have social and emotional learning standards included to some degree in the standards for other subject areas. Many SEL advocates argue that it is critical for SEL standards to be separate standards and not simply included in current content standards so that social and emotional learning is prioritized appropriately (Dusenbury et al., 2011). With this, CASEL and the University of Illinois-Chicago is seeking to identify areas where SEL could be emphasized in Common Core State Standards. CASEL's goal is to create comprehensive, freestanding social emotional learning standards from Pre-K through high school in 20 states by 2015 (CASEL, 2008).

Various SEL Frameworks

The ambiguous nature of the term “Social-Emotional Learning” is largely due to differing perspectives regarding which programs and models fall under the term. This section aims to provide some clarity by concentrating on the various programs and models that fall under this umbrella term including Emotional Intelligence, Character Education, the Whole Child Movement, School Climate, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Violence Prevention Programs, and Diversity Education, since these models and their variants are the mostly widely used in schools today.

Emotional Intelligence, Bar-On, and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

The roots of social emotional learning lie with Emotional Intelligence (EI), as most SEL practices are a variation of EI theory and research, but applied to the school setting. Although one of the first times the term “emotional intelligence” was introduced was in Wayne Payne's 1985 doctoral dissertation, “A Study of Emotion: Developing Emotional Intelligence,” most

think of Daniel Goleman, Salovey and Sluyter, and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences when discussing EI.

Daniel Goleman, a journalist and psychologist, created a five-dimensional EI framework urging educators to compare the bell curve for academic success against the bell curve for success in life (Goleman, 1995), in order to recognize that academic achievement does not necessarily result in creating individuals that are well-rounded and happy. His framework involved self-awareness, meaning one's ability to know their own emotions, strengths, and weaknesses; motivation; values; impact on others; and the ability to make decisions based on instinct. Other dimensions involved self-regulation by controlling emotions and impulses; the ability to adapt positively to change; using social skills to manage relationships positively; demonstrating empathy by thinking of others' feelings; and intrinsic motivation—being driven to be excellent for the sake of being excellent. Goleman (1995) argued that 20% of an individual's success in life was due to their IQ while 80% of one's success was due to activities that occur in the right side of the brain where SEL functions occur. He argued for the importance of character and character education in his book entitled, "Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ." In it, he offered this definition of Emotional Intelligence,

Emotional intelligence = abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustration; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think, to empathize, and to hope thus learning and practicing ways to solve personal problems, to gain self-confidence in relationships with others, and seeking support from caring adults when necessary. (Goleman, 1995, p. 12)

Some say that until this publication, there was little collaboration between educational practitioners, psychologists, and researchers (Lantieri, 2011). The gap between data collection and meaningful practice can be highly problematic as researchers and teachers working independently do not benefit children. By creating the crucial bridge between these professions, Goleman's work was influential in the process of linking these unique perspectives on how to better serve children, and how to actually make use of the data.

Salovey and Sluyter (1997), two psychologists, believed Emotional Intelligence was the ability to understand one's own emotions and be able to regulate those emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. They established a model of EI that involved four branches: identify, use, understand, and manage emotions. Salovey and Mayer's theory of EI involved an emphasis on the idea that if an individual is not aware of their own emotions, they are not in control, and therefore emotions have the power to control the individual. Their five-dimensional framework involves knowing one's emotions and being able to recognize a feeling when it occurs; managing one's emotions and dealing with negative emotions in productive ways; motivating oneself by using emotions to achieve individual goals; recognizing emotions in others and understanding various viewpoints; and handling relationships and social competence (Salovey & Sluyter, 1997).

Another conceptual framework of emotional intelligence was developed by Bar-On (2006). Bar-On's framework is similar to the others in that it involves relating well to others, adapting to new situations, and understanding oneself and others. It's different, however, in its emphasis on training and therapy to improve EI. Bar-On contends that an individual's EI can be improved with enough therapy, training, or programming. Bar-On also argues that both EI and IQ contribute equally to a person's intelligence, which results in one's ability to be successful in

life. The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory was created to explore the EI of people throughout the world in hopes of gaining a stronger understanding of the area (Bar-On, 2006).

Howard Gardner has provided a broad perspective on learning and intelligence with his theory of multiple intelligences. This theory includes seven types of intelligence, and two of them are related to social and emotional intelligence: interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence. Gardner defined interpersonal intelligence as the ability to understand the behavior, emotions, and motives of others. Intrapersonal intelligence refers to the ability to understand oneself—who we are, what motivates us, how we can be successful in using our abilities and interests to achieve contentedness (Matthews et al., 2002).

Character Education

Character Education is a framework that has been used to advocate for many of the same goals as SEL and is considered by many as the forerunner to social emotional learning. The concept of what constitutes good character is not easily defined. One author says that it involves “knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good—habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action” (Lickona, 1991, p. 78). Others say that good character includes experiencing feelings of empathy and compassion in addition to acting on those feelings through service to others. Concepts of honesty, morality, conflict resolution, and ethical behavior are in most definitions of good character (Lickona, 2005; Berkowitz, 2002; Character Education Partnership, 2004). It is difficult to distinguish between CE and SEL, as the overarching goals are quite similar, but CE has religious roots while SEL has roots in the concepts of emotional and social intelligence. As stated earlier, SEL focuses on the knowledge and skills necessary to develop a child’s personal, social, and civic growth (Elias, 2005). Additionally, character education proponents are also concerned about the unhealthy messages that children are exposed

to by the media (CASEL, 2008) and argue that strong CE programs may help combat health damaging behaviors. Character Education has been viewed as helping students not only understand ethical behavior, but also actually behave responsibly, respectfully, and compassionately (Nodding, 1995; Schaeffer, 1998). Lickona (1991) stated that CE was beyond just understanding and acting ethically, but that it also involved genuinely caring about ethical values.

The Whole Child Movement

Advocates of the Whole Child Education movement often quote Mohandas Gandhi, as he said that a child's education should include the head, hand, and heart. Whole Child reformers believe that education should emphasize not only the mind, but the body and spirit as well to help create balanced individuals (Miller, 2010). The major tenets of the whole child reform effort involve a focus on health, safety, engagement, support, and academic challenge. Whole child advocates contend that children should be: taught about healthy lifestyles, learn in a physically and emotionally safe environment, participate in learning that is highly engaging and connected to the real world, feel supported by caring adults, and feel challenged academically in order to be prepared for life after graduation. They argue, "A child who enters school healthy and feels safe is ready to learn. A student who feels connected to school is more likely to stay in school. All students who have access to challenging and engaging academic programs are better prepared for further education, work, and civic life. These components must work together, not in isolation. That is the goal of whole child education" (ASCD, 2012, p.14).

PBIS & School Climate

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) involves teachers modeling school-wide expected behaviors, reinforcing positive behaviors, and focusing more on positive

reinforcement than negative interactions with students (Horner et al., 2005). These kinds of programs are more effective with dealing with problematic behaviors as opposed to reactive, punitive approaches (Lewis et al., 1998; Sprague & Horner, 2006). Consequences that are reactionary like suspension and expulsion briefly shift the problem from the school to a different environment, like the home (Sprague & Horner, 2006), and problem behaviors are repeated unless students understand the expected social skills and are taught how to exhibit these positive behaviors. Studies have shown a relationship between PBIS and a decrease in suspensions, office referrals, and an increase in academic achievement (Horner et al., 2005; Nelson et al., 2002; Cregar, 2008; Pavlovich, 2008).

The goals of PBIS include improving the traditional disciplinary system in schools by promoting social competence through proactive responses and increasing desirable behavior with positive reinforcement (Sugai et al., 2008). PBIS programs promote strong school climate and culture by developing safe, positive learning environments through community and family outreach, whole-school community building, and strong classroom management (Hawkins et al., 2004; Schaps et al., 2004). The combination of these efforts further result in stronger academic and personal outcomes for students since they feel more confident and develop intrinsic motivation (Greenberg et al., 2003). School climates that promote high expectations for student learning, caring relationships between teachers and students, strong classroom management, collaborative learning, and safe learning environments all support and reinforce SEL goals resulting in positive behavior (Blum & Libbey, 2004; Hawkins et al., 2004; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Brackett et al. (2011) studied the relationship between classroom climate and student behavior with 2000 fifth and sixth graders. Classroom observations, student reports of their

perception of their relationship with their teachers, and behavior data from report cards were all data points used in this study. After controlling for teacher characteristics, organization of the classroom, and instructional factors, results showed a statistically significant relationship between classroom climate and student behavior.

Similarly, Maldonado-Carreno and Votruba-Drzal (2011) found a relationship between teacher-student relationships and academic success. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's Study of Early Childcare provided the data of 1,364 kindergarten through fifth graders. Increases in the strength of relationships between students and teachers were associated with increases in academic skills according to teacher reports. It is clear that efforts toward developing a school climate that emphasizes the importance of relationships and high expectations is necessary to promote sustained academic and behavioral transformation (Catalano et al., 2004).

Violence Prevention Programs

Several school-based violence prevention programs that have focused on reducing youth violence, promoting pro-social behaviors, and teaching peaceful conflict resolution skills have been implemented in public schools (Farrell et al., 2001; Mytton et al., 2002). Some have experienced success as separate, curricular-based programs, especially when geared at select populations (e.g., students who regularly exhibit aggressive behaviors) (CASEL, 2003). Since a link between substance abuse and violence exists, many prevention programs aim to target both behaviors (Austin et al., 2004). Most school-based prevention initiatives focus on training children to resolve problems through peaceful strategies including problem solving, developing empathy, and non-aggressive conflict resolution (Clabby, 2003; Zins et al., 2007). The incorporation of these skills in school-based prevention programs have been successful in

decreasing violent and other problematic behaviors in students who are considered high-risk (Durlak, 1995; Gottfredson et al., 2000; Mytton et al., 2002). Further, research has shown that prevention programs not only reduce aggressive behavior, but also show a decrease in the number of school responses to this aggressive behavior (Mytton et al., 2002). Perhaps due to financial constraints, several current school-based violence prevention programs are mostly only directed at high-risk students (CASEL, 2003). Research has found that violence prevention programs that are done in conjunction with teaching social competency have been most successful in decreasing violence and promoting desirable behavior (Durlak, 1995).

Diversity Education & Anti-Bullying Programs

Violence prevention is directly linked to the crucial need to teach students about diversity. Research funded by the Carnegie Foundation found that successful violence prevention programs increase awareness of cultural diversity and strengthen positive ethnic identity (Elias, 2005). In order to prepare children to be successful in our increasingly diverse society, tolerance and acceptance must be a part of the curriculum as much as core academics (Cookson, 2006).

A physically and emotionally safe learning environment is essential for students to do their best in school. Research has shown that if the school environment is safe, a stronger commitment to school, better academic outcomes, and less risky behavior from students is exhibited (Elias et al., 2003). Too many students today do not feel safe in their schools and are marginalized and bullied because of their differences. As mentioned earlier, approximately 20% of students were bullied in the past year, and many skip class out of fear for their safety (Eaton et al., 2012). This results in suffering both emotionally and academically (Richards et al., 2007).

Bullying and harassment are common in unsafe schools, and research has shown a relationship between intolerance of diversity and bullying (Richardson, 2006; Hunt & Regis,

2006). Students are often targets of bullying due to their race, language, religion, sexual-orientation, beliefs, preferences, and socio-economic status. For example, harassment and bullying aimed at students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) are extremely common (Hunt & Regis, 2006; D'Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006), as 80% of LGBT students reported verbal harassment, and more than 30% were physically harassed in the past year (Kosciw et al., 2012). Bullying can have dire consequences on the victims, perpetrators, and others. Students who are the targets of bullying behavior often experience psychological problems including feeling more depressed, lonely, and anxious than other students, which also often leads to lower academic performance (Nishina et al., 2005) and more violent, aggressive behavior (Rusby et al., 2005).

Despite billions of dollars of funding for numerous anti-bullying programs in schools throughout the United States, uncertainty regarding their efficacy still exists (Sherman, et al., 2000). Traditional efforts to reduce bullying in schools follow the Olweus framework, which focuses on helping empower the victims of bullies while addressing the perpetrators and witnesses as well (Olweus et al., 1999). Other successful anti-bullying initiatives have involved the incorporation of SEL by improving pro-social behaviors (Taub, 2001). The Restorative Justice model has been embraced by many schools recently and aims to restore the relationship between the aggressor and the victim to reduce bullying (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006). Given that those who engage in bullying behavior are often less socially competent and lack empathy (Gini, 2006), the incorporation of SEL in schools is crucial.

Prejudice and bias are learned behaviors and can be unlearned, and research has found that diversity education can result in increased tolerance (Vogt, 1997). Nieto (1996) explains that diversity education promotes social justice by challenging racism, sexism, and other forms of

discrimination and oppression in our society. Some researchers argue that diversity education should be integrated into all aspects of school (Gay, 2004). Banks (1997), considered as one of the founders of multicultural education, argues that the goal of multicultural education should be to help all students from all backgrounds learn about diversity but also help rebuild and transform society.

Outcomes of Social Emotional Learning

The following section focuses on empirical studies that have been conducted regarding SEL programs. The various academic and social outcomes of such programming are outlined, and the link between academic achievement and social emotional well-being is highlighted. The research-based evidence is critical to understand when considering the problems and possibilities of social emotional learning programs.

Academic Outcomes

In most classrooms today, teachers are unable to prioritize SEL for a variety of reasons, including a lack of resources and increased emphasis on academic subjects. Some researchers have disputed the common belief that SEL takes time away from core academics and therefore decreases academic performance. They argue that certain SEL components may actually boost academic achievement due to students' increase in communication skills, self-regulation, and self-efficacy (Blair & Razza, 2007; Denham & Weissberg, 2004). In fact, there has been compelling longitudinal and correlational research showing the relationship between social emotional learning and academic achievement (Caprara et al., 2000; Zins et al., 2007; Durlak et al., 2011).

A student's self-efficacy, confidence level, and belief in their capabilities are strongly related to their academic success. Students with strong social emotional skills develop self-

efficacy, which lends itself to academic resiliency as these students take ownership of their own learning and persevere through challenges because they believe they can succeed (McTigue et al., 2009, Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). Furthermore, students who exhibit self-efficacy are more enthusiastic toward learning, which also results in stronger academic achievement (Luo et al., 2009).

Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (2004) studied 161 SEL programs and determined 25 to be effective. These 25 programs emphasized one or more of the following: self-efficacy, positive identity, optimism, positive reinforcement, pro-social behavior, perseverance, connecting to others, and social, emotional, academic, and behavioral competence. They found that with these programs, there was an increase in social skills, student-teacher relationships, and academic outcomes. Further, they noted a decrease in truancy, negative behavior, alcohol and drug use, violence, and aggression when these programs were implemented. Catalano et al. noted that longer interventions of nine months or longer were more effective than shorter initiatives and skill building was a critical component of all successful programs. This study is used as an argument for more standardization, structure, and assessment in SEL programs to promote consistency in delivery.

Dimension number five in CASEL's SEL framework, "self management," involves teaching children to manage their emotions and behaviors in order to accomplish their goals (CASEL, 2011). With this skill set, students develop self-discipline and self-regulation and are better able to focus on the instruction in the classroom in order to increase their learning (McClelland et al., 2007). Many studies have shown the positive relationship between self-regulation and academic achievement (Liew & McTigue, 2010; Valiente et al., 2008). These studies suggest that students who are able to control their behavior and attention are able to deal

with the challenges of distraction in the classroom and therefore have stronger control on focusing on their learning. Furthermore, students who learn to be self-disciplined and focused during lessons are less likely to exhibit problem behaviors that negatively influence their learning as well as the learning of their peers. SEL programs focus on self-awareness, confidence, setting high goals, and responsible decision-making, among other areas. When students have increased self-awareness and are more confident about their academic capabilities, they persevere through educational challenges (Aronson, 2002). On a similar level, when students set high academic goals for themselves, they demonstrate self-discipline and intrinsic motivation that results in the attainment of higher grades (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005). Further, when students use their responsible decision making skills to prioritize studying and homework, their academic performance increases (Zins & Elias, 2006).

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of various elements of SEL and their potential to have positive influences on students' academic achievement (Duncan et al., 2007; Liew & McTigue, 2010; McClelland et al., 2007; Durlak et al., 2011). Other research has found that schools with SEL programs have higher attendance and lower drop out rates (Ragozzino et al., 2003) as students feel a stronger connection to this supportive academic environment (Greenberg et al., 2003). Although core content skills like reading, writing, and math are crucial to the K-12 educational process; the acquisition of these academic skills can be hindered without an adequate focus on the development of SEL skills.

After a thorough study of 91 meta-analyses, 179 handbook chapters, and an analysis of 61 educational researcher surveys, Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1997) found that social emotional influences were among the strongest on learning. Classroom management, student-teacher relationships, social-behavioral traits, motivational-affective qualities, peer relationships,

school climate, and classroom culture constituted 7 out of 10 of the most influential components on learning. District and school policies, curriculum and instruction, and demographics were found to have the least influence on learning. With this, the researchers stated that “direct intervention in the psychological determinants of learning promise the most effective avenues of reform” (p. 210).

It is clear that academic instruction alone may not be enough to promote academic achievement (Zins et al., 2007). In a longitudinal study of 294 children, Caprara et al. (2000) found a link between SEL and improved academic outcomes. Third grade students were asked to rate themselves and their peers on social emotional competencies including sharing, helping, cooperating, and consoling, among others. Teachers also rated students on these behaviors. Researchers found that this composite score significantly predicted academic achievement five years later when the subjects were in eighth grade, even after controlling for subjects’ academic achievement in third grade. Alternatively, early academic success was not predictive of later academic success after controlling for effects of early social emotional competencies. Simply put, social emotional learning can be attributed to the academic gains over other variables (Reichl & O’Brien, 2012).

Similarly, a study of 423 middle school students in sixth and seventh grades also showed a link between social emotional skills and academic achievement (Wentzel et al., 1993). Classroom behaviors involving sharing, cooperation, and helping others were stronger predictors of academic achievement than students’ standardized test scores when considering many factors including IQ, days absent from school, ethnicity, and gender, among others.

Recognizing that large-scale evaluations and research on universal SEL programs, programs that are geared toward all students rather than interventions geared toward selected

students, have only recently emerged (Durlak, 1995; Payton et al., 2008), researchers set out to conduct a meta-analysis of 213 school-based, K-12 universal SEL programs involving 270,034 students in the United States. This study offers some of the most convincing evidence for the academic and social outcomes of SEL. Durlak et al. (2011) explored the effects of universal SEL programming on academics, attitudes toward self, others, and school, pro-social behavior, and general social and emotional skills. Improvements in problem solving, empathy, stress management, decision-making, and recognition of emotions, constituted the largest area of growth. Perhaps most compelling, they found that students who participated in school-based SEL programs experienced an 11% increase in academic performance on standardized tests and received higher grades compared to their peers who did not receive this kind of instruction (Durlak et al., 2011). Although the 11-percentile gain was only based on a small subset of all reviewed studies, this evidence might be influential to educational leaders and policy makers whose primary focus is increasing test scores.

Other Benefits of SEL: Student Well-Being

The benefits of strong SEL programs go far beyond academic growth. Research has shown that SEL programs have resulted in fewer disciplinary referrals for negative behavior, increased school attendance rates, fewer dropouts, less violence, lower rates of substance abuse, decreased sexual activity, and higher scores on academic standardized tests (Wynne & Ryan, 1997; Solomon et al., 2000; Greenberg, 2003; Battistich, 2003; Cherniss et al., 2006; CASEL, 2008; Durlak et al., 2011). The Character Education Partnership even noted an increase in parental involvement from schools that incorporated character education programs (Character Education Partnership, 2004).

Further, studies have also shown that schools with SEL initiatives have had positive effects on attitudes toward oneself, others, and school (Durlak et al., 2011). Improvements in school climate, classroom behavior, connection to school, and positive attitude toward learning were also found in schools that implemented SEL programs (Blum et al., 2002 & Zins et al., 2007). Bear and Watkins (2006) found that students who learn these skills make good decisions, demonstrate personal responsibility for their actions, and exhibit compassionate behaviors. Additionally, improvements in other pro-social behaviors, like cooperation and respect, have been noted in SEL schools (Character Education Partnership, 2004; Ragozzino, 2003).

In a meta-analysis of 165 studies that focused on SEL programs and interventions, Wilson, Gottfredson, and Najaka (2001) focused on interventions geared directly at students like mentoring, self-control strategies, and teaching social skills. Additionally, they looked at programs that focused on school culture efforts like school-wide behavioral expectations, positive reinforcement, and disciplinary measures. They found success in programs that emphasized the following, over a prolonged amount of time in diverse settings: explicitly modeled desirable behaviors with role playing, rehearsal, and feedback; behavioral goal setting; regular verbal and non-verbal signals to encourage positive behavior in diverse settings; self-control strategies; and social skills. Although there was a reduction in drug use, Wilson et al. found that these efforts were more successful with at-risk students and in decreasing negative behaviors and school problems. While this study offers many insights into the impact of SEL, it cannot be generalized for school-wide, universal SEL programs as not all of the interventions evaluated were presented to the general student body. More than 25% of the programs were delivered to a targeted group of students who were identified as at-risk for problem behaviors.

Research conducted by Moffitt et al. (2011) showed the long-term benefits of social emotional competencies. A longitudinal study spanning 32 years followed 1,000 children starting from their birth and found that self-management (or self-control) was predictive of substance abuse, health, finances, and criminal involvement. Even more compelling is that these results remained constant despite the socio-economic status and intelligence of the subjects.

Just as some studies have shown the positive effects of such efforts, others have also shown the negative effects of not implementing SEL programs. Students who demonstrate low social aptitude can experience personal, academic, and social troubles (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998). Strong SEL lessons can help students prevent these undesirable behaviors and other more serious behaviors like violence, bullying, and substance abuse (Zins & Elias, 2006). Furthermore, students who benefit from SEL instruction often give back to their community and feel a stronger sense of connection and contentedness in addition to intrinsic motivation (Hawkins et al., 2004).

Greenberg, Domitrovich, and Bumbarger (2001) analyzed more than 130 SEL mental health prevention programs in order to determine programs that decreased aggression, depression, and anxiety. Of the 130 programs, 34 were selected that met the following requirements: either randomized-trial design or quasi-experimental, with an appropriate control group; before and after assessments; and a written document articulating the program's conceptual framework, intervention procedures, and goals. Of the 34 programs selected, only 14 were school-based universal programs. Researchers categorized each of the 14 programs into four groups: general social emotional skill building; violence prevention; school ecology change; and multi-domain. They concluded that multiyear initiatives were more effective than short-term interventions and that multi-domain programs, involving the child, school, and family, resulted

in stronger outcomes. Further, they strongly emphasized the importance of school climate stating that school culture and climate should be a main focus of any prevention program. Last, the researchers found that successful programs focused on changing not only student behavior, but teacher and family behavior, as well, including a stronger emphasis on home-school and school-community collaboration. Like Wilson et al. (2001), not all programs evaluated were universal, therefore, it is difficult to make generalizations about the findings to whole-school SEL interventions.

The studies reviewed here all show that successful SEL programs involve teaching students SEL skills through interactive instruction and providing opportunities for students to use SEL skills in their daily lives. Moreover, strong SEL programming fosters a positive school culture in addition to student-teacher relationships and student-peer relationships. Further, as Greenberg et al (2003) put it, “In most cases, short-term preventive interventions produce short-lived results” (p. 470). Alternatively, multicomponent and longer multiyear programs are more likely to provide lasting results. Additionally, collaboration between the school, family, and community with these efforts result in higher SEL outcomes (Greenberg et al., 2003; Osher et al., 2002). Last, social emotional learning benefits all students, not just targeted populations. More comprehensive, universal SEL programs that involve increasing the social emotional competencies of the entire school community have been most successful in the academic, social, and emotional development of students.

Successful Implementation of Social Emotional Learning

Any program or intervention is only as good as its implementation, both at a district and school level (Devaney et al., 2006; CASEL, 2013). A wide range of elements have been shown to effect the implementation of SEL programs, including program compatibility with

adaptability, leadership, and communication and a shared vision among political elements, funding, and training (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Research and practice have continually showed the importance of moving away from piecemeal approaches to reform efforts. As mentioned previously, more comprehensive, universal SEL efforts involving the entire school community have been most successful, especially when there is ongoing assessment on the effects of the implementation on students, staff, and the school at large (Greenberg et al., 2003). Research conducted for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found extreme value in the following four areas: (1) planning/readiness stage; (2) strong materials (user-friendly, culturally relevant, age-appropriate, and visually appealing); (3) quality training content provided both before and during implementation; (4) skill level and attitudes of staff (Greenberg et al., 2005).

While some studies have highlighted the importance of universal interventions rather than programs geared at at-risk populations, Greenberg et al. (2005) brought attention to many of the complexities with universal SEL programs. One of the issues this research group brought to light involved how much of the universal SEL program research has been conducted in schools with plenty of resources and controlled conditions, rather than in schools with high rates of diversity. With this, most studies have only shown the effectiveness of universal SEL programs in these specific environments and that the benefits may not hold true to different learning environments. Therefore, more research on universal SEL programs is necessary in schools with economically and racially diverse demographics.

A social emotional learning implementation rubric for districts and school leaders developed by Devaney et al. (2006) is available from CASEL through a free, downloadable toolkit. The rubric highlights the belief that strong leadership is the most critical piece to ensuring strong implementation. With leadership at its core, the SEL Implementation and

Sustainability Process also lays out a 10-step cycle which is meant to be delivered over three years in a sequenced manner while also planning ahead for future steps.

Devaney et al. (2006) explain that the first year of SEL development should be the “readiness phase” which involves principal commitment and creating a leadership team comprised of various community stakeholders. The goal is to create a distributed leadership model so that the work can be sustained with or without current leadership. Further, rather than a top-down authoritarian decision being thrust upon the school, staff and community must be included from the very beginning in order to create authentic acceptance of the SEL initiative. This area needs further study, however, as qualitative data highlighting how this is done is limited. Shared leadership also means shared responsibility, which will lend itself to shared commitment to SEL implementation.

The second year of SEL development is the “planning phase” which involves establishing a shared vision, conducting a needs assessment, developing an action plan, and selecting an evidence-based SEL program. Numerous planning tools provided by CASEL, support each process in the planning phase, including meaningful questions to consider while creating a shared vision and sample school improvement plans. The selection of an actual SEL program is delayed until the end of the second year because the preplanning steps are critical to develop thoroughly before considering which program to adopt.

The third year of SEL development is the “implementation phase” which involves initial professional development, SEL in all classrooms, and reviewing and adjusting for future improvement. Devaney et al. (2006) strongly advise against creating a custom SEL program, rather than adopting one that has evidence showing its effectiveness. Six components that are essential in order to promote sustainability were also identified: ongoing professional

development, evaluation of practices and outcomes, develop infrastructure to support SEL, integrate SEL school-wide, collaboration with families and community, and strong communication with all stakeholders. In summary, Devaney et al. (2006) expressed that five elements are necessary for universal SEL programming: (1) shared vision; (2) norms regarding appropriate behavior; (3) safe, caring, cooperative, participatory learning environment; (4) quality SEL instruction for all students; and (5) embed SEL into every subject area and into all aspects of school. CASEL's implementation strategy is relevant because this organization has conducted extensive research in areas related to SEL and its effective implementation. The implementation strategies suggested by CASEL have been deeply grounded in research and have been found to result in the best academic and social outcomes for students.

In addition to understanding how SEL can be brought into a school or district as outlined above, it is also crucial to understand how effective SEL instruction is best delivered and implemented in the classroom. Research has shown that SEL programs are effective when they are sequenced, use active forms of learning, are given adequate and focused time for skill development, and have explicit learning goals (Durlak, 1997; Dusenbury, 2011; Durlak et al., 2011). These findings form the acronym SAFE (sequenced, active, focused, and explicit). A meta-analysis was conducted on after-school programs that focused on SEL and found that programs that followed SAFE practices were more successful in developing pro-social skills and emotional growth than those that did not follow SAFE procedures (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). Furthermore, SAFE procedures work in combination with one another rather than isolated efforts. For example, sequenced training is not as effective without active practice or enough time and focus (Durlak et al., 2010).

Durlak et al. (2011) also found that the most effective SEL practices followed SAFE strategies in a recent meta-analysis on universal SEL programs. Specifically, programs that focused on the “A” in SAFE (active) were successful through interactive learning and role-playing. Although the researchers expected multicomponent SEL programs that included intervention efforts outside of the classroom (either school-wide or home connections) to yield stronger results than classroom-only SEL programs, as was found in other reviews (Wells et al., 2003; Catalano et al., 2004), their findings did not support this hypothesis. The researchers believe this may be due to the fact that SAFE strategies are more likely to be implemented in single-component classrooms and that multicomponent programs involving parents and/or a school-wide aspect, have more vulnerability for problems with implementation of SAFE procedures.

Due to the recognition that SEL interventions are more likely to be used and accepted if they are successful in daily classroom practice, another one of the main aims of this meta-analysis was to determine whether or not SEL programs could be integrated into daily classroom lessons. Durlak et al. (2011) found that indeed, classroom teachers are able to effectively deliver SEL lessons, therefore suggesting that outside personnel are not required for successful implementation of SEL programs. Furthermore, they found that SEL programs are effective at every level of schooling including elementary, middle, and high school, although they openly note that SEL programming has not been studied sufficiently at a high school level.

Problems with Implementation of SEL Programming

Despite the numerous academic, social, and emotional benefits of social emotional learning programs, there are also many problems. Some schools are unable to adopt SEL programs due to financial constraints, and others deal with resistance from teachers who are

already overburdened. Further, opposition regarding concern with taking time away from academics is another hurdle. Once a school or district has decided to move forward with an SEL program, another set of issues arise. Effective implementation of SEL programming is rare due to the varied interpretations of what falls under the SEL umbrella. With this, fragmented efforts are common, and the decontextualized nature of prescribed programming is prevalent.

Lack of Resources

Despite compelling evidence that has shown the importance of social emotional learning, it must be noted that successful SEL programs were given adequate funding for materials and training and were properly implemented in order to ensure program fidelity. Without adequate time, funding, and proper implementation, school districts are either unable or unwilling to adopt SEL programs; and if they do, they may not experience the same positive gains. Technical assistance, promoting teacher competency and the process of identifying, selecting, planning, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining SEL programs, cannot occur without adequate financial support (Devaney et al., 2006). Furthermore, without sufficient funding, capacity is unable to be built through professional development.

Although most educators would agree that children ought to be prepared to be hard-working, compassionate, responsible citizens, they also find the pressures of “getting through the curriculum” to be overwhelming at times. With this, SEL is often viewed as an extra burden on teachers and school leaders as one more thing added to their plates. Ryan and Bohlin (2003) challenge this resistance by stating, “it is the plate” (p. 143).

With increasing pressure around high stakes and standardized testing, social emotional instruction is often the first to be removed from lesson plans. This can be problematic because students experiencing mental health issues and/or emotional and social problems experience

difficulty learning. Further, those with social emotional deficits or mental health issues are often the students that disrupt the learning of other students. When children are experiencing this kind of emotional and mental strife, it is nearly impossible for them to concentrate, and this results in a strain on the academic environment, as resources are needed to address their needs. With the increased emphasis on high-stakes testing, however, these needs are often not addressed, therefore perpetuating the cycle.

Lack of Authenticity

One of the other problems that often arise with the implementation of SEL programs is the lack of authenticity and de-contextualization that can occur with prescribed programming. Authentic learning entails students constructing knowledge (not passively receiving established knowledge) and developing in-depth understanding of key concepts and themes of SEL in ways that connect them to real world problems or personal and community issues and concerns (see Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007). Sometimes resistance from teachers exists, even in schools that have adopted formal SEL programming, due to perceptions that it can feel overly organized, contrived, and not genuine. Many SEL programs do not teach SEL in ways that are relevant to individual school or classroom cultures, and thus do not impact students in meaningful, personalized ways in which students can transfer the SEL skills to real situations in their lives. Several programs, including *Second Step* may feel prescribed as they involve reading a scripted text to students. Recognizing this and that all school districts are different, the implementation of SEL should reflect the individuals, initiatives, and overall culture of a school (DeRoche, 2004). Further, SEL should be connected to the curriculum rather than a separate, disconnected effort (Zins et al., 2007). By integrating SEL throughout the day and by altering

formal SEL lessons to meet the individual classroom culture through personalization and contextualization, SEL programming can be significantly more meaningful to students.

Furthermore, although many SEL programs are comprehensive and are integrated into the curriculum, many are still overly structured and focus exclusively on measurable outcomes. The implementation of some SEL practices often manifests as classroom management-related organizational efforts like group circles, morning meetings, collaborative tasks, rule following, and responsible decision-making instead of a focus on emotions and connecting with others (Hoffman, 2009). While those practices may certainly have positive outcomes, the aims of SEL are not necessarily met. The incorporation of social emotional skills can sometimes be dwindled down to simply getting children to behave properly in the classroom rather than truly developing this necessary skill set. Hoffman (2009) expresses her concern that at times, SEL programming may be “promoting a shallow, decontextualized, and narrowly instrumentalist approach to emotion in classrooms that promotes measurability and efficiency at the expense of (non-quantifiable) qualities of relatedness” (p. 539). Further, she states that,

When emotions are treated as cognitive information-processing skill sets, behaviors become rational choices, and caring becomes an object lesson in good behavior taught by teachers to students, it behooves us to ask if there is not some disconnect between the ideals of SEL and its practices. (p. 546)

Similarly, Noddings (2006) contends,

It is not simply a matter of teaching students topics and skills associated with social-emotional learning. It is essentially a matter of showing, by our own acts and attitudes, that we care about what students are going through and that we are partners in the search for meaning. . . . Perhaps we have become too

dependent on rules, strategies, and recipes. . . .Some of this work is useful, even necessary. . . .But much of it moves us away from the heart of our concern—the kids and our relationships with them. (p. 240–241)

Many SEL programs are currently implemented with a strong focus on skill development and the measurement of these SEL capacities. With such a strong emphasis on results, perhaps authentic social emotional skills are not being nurtured in a way that is personally meaningful, contextualized, and relevant to students. Hoffman (2009) argues the need for “connecting the language of research more realistically and more humanely with the language and experience of emotion in teaching and learning, and not substituting one for the other” (p. 546).

Fragmented Efforts

Many districts that currently implement SEL programs do not follow the SAFE protocol and are often unsuccessful, since they are fragmented and only target specific issues (Payton et al., 2000). Interventions that target specific problem behaviors (e.g., violence, substance abuse) are often less effective because they are short-lived, lack the continuity between home-life and school, and are not regarded with the same emphasis as core content areas. Multi-year comprehensive programs, on the other hand, have achieved stronger results especially when families and communities have become partners (Payton et al., 2000). Furthermore, the ambiguous nature of the term “social-emotional learning” has resulted in numerous efforts that are not always connected. While one could argue that all of the above-mentioned initiatives have similar theoretical underpinnings, there is a lack of consistency regarding practical goals. All advocate for the balance between nurturing the head (academics), as well as the heart (emotional learning), but there is discontinuity among these efforts, resulting in either the emphasis of certain skills over others or the adoption of too many initiatives resulting in fragmented efforts.

For example, a character education program may never touch on peaceful conflict resolution strategies in the focused manner that a violence prevention program does. Similarly, a violence prevention program may never cover the concept of compassion; and nor may it ever focus on authentic diversity education, building meaningful relationships, or communication skills.

Although all of these efforts have a similar end goal of developing happy, healthy, safe children who are well-balanced, motivated, and compassionate, each program seems to neglect an important area of social emotional growth in order to nurture another. With this, many well-intentioned, committed school leaders realize these gaps exist within their school's selected SEL program and try to address these issues by incorporating lessons from another SEL program or multiple programs. This results in the adoption of too many initiatives, fragmented efforts, and lack of fidelity to the program originally selected. As CASEL (2003) articulated, "Often, the problem is not a lack of SEL...efforts, but too many different efforts in violence prevention, character education, pregnancy prevention, etc. that lack coordination" (p. 23). Well-intentioned school leaders trying to bridge the social emotional gap end up taking on too many initiatives, which become fragmented, and none are done well.

C5 for Action Framework

Although the current frameworks for SEL highlight important areas for advancing a student's social and emotional development, they are lacking in four critical areas. The first problem is that other SEL frameworks experience the "Goldilocks Problem," as none are "just right," in that other models are either extremely broad and vague allowing for a variety of interpretations and applications, thus resulting in the problems outlined above; or too narrowly defined, only focusing on certain aspects of SEL and neglecting other critical areas of social emotional development.

After analyzing the various SEL frameworks, it is clear that social emotional learning can be an exceedingly ambiguous concept. Many schools rightfully express they are engaged in SEL due to their focus on violence prevention and conflict resolution. Likewise, other schools promoting SEL emphasize social skills and pro-social behaviors. Similarly, other schools actively implementing SEL focus on character education. Another school may identify itself as an SEL school due to their anti-bullying curriculum. It would be accurate to identify all of the above-mentioned schools as educational institutions promoting social and emotional competencies given the current SEL frameworks. Hoffman (2009) articulated, “The literature on SEL paints for some a diverse, positive picture of how focusing on social and emotional competencies can benefit students and schools, whereas for others, it is rife with confusion.” (p. 537). SEL is critical, but all aspects of social emotional learning are important, and more clarity is necessary. Wilson et al. (2001) expressed that strategies in isolation will not be successful and there is a need to understand “which combinations or sequences of strategies work best” and “how can schools effectively design comprehensive packages... and implement them in a high-quality fashion?” (p. 269). A more comprehensive and direct model that articulates areas of needed focus to develop specific social emotional competencies may have stronger outcomes socially, emotionally, and academically.

The second problem with current SEL frameworks is that none adequately emphasize the importance of teaching effective communication skills despite its relationship to each and every dimension of social emotional learning. The third problem is that an explicit emphasis on teaching acceptance, celebration, and empowerment through diversity is not included in most programs. Again, this is problematic not only because the appreciation of diversity is a skill necessary in life, but also because, like communication skills, diversity education involving the

appreciation and acceptance of difference is related to all other areas of SEL. Lastly, many current SEL programs do not sufficiently focus on the importance of developing a child's self-esteem and confidence, and teaching students how to put effort into their happiness. Without this emphasis, it is unlikely that progress in other areas will occur, since self-concept is the foundation for social and emotional competency.

Based upon this review, which highlights both the promises and shortcomings of SEL programming, I will next discuss the *C5 for Action Framework*. This framework was developed with the recognition that a more explicit model seems to be necessary to foster a stronger understanding of critical life skills that should be taught to students and the likelihood that teachers embed SEL into daily lessons. The framework addresses the four problems highlighted above, as it provides a clear understanding of specific SEL dimensions to focus on and explicitly emphasizes communication skills, building confidence, and authentic diversity education. Although many current SEL programs have experienced positive outcomes, perhaps this framework would result in even stronger effects due to its clarity and focus on essential areas that are related to other critical dimensions of SEL. With an added emphasis on communication skills and authentic diversity lessons, this framework has the potential to further develop social emotional competencies in students. Some of the major dimensions of the CASEL framework, violence prevention efforts, and diversity curriculum are expanded, and direct instruction regarding character traits like those included in character education programs are excluded.

The *C5 for Action Framework* recognizes that schools are more than academic institutions, they are also social institutions that must focus on more than just academic content skills in order to promote the development of happy, well-rounded individuals. Along this line of thinking, the guiding philosophy of the *C5 for Action Framework* lies in the definition of

success. While it is critical to provide students with adequate skills for academic achievement and equal opportunities after graduation, it is equally important to recognize that these do not necessarily constitute success. The main goal of schooling must go beyond test scores, preparing children for college, or financial “success.” Success also includes life satisfaction, and educators have an influence in helping to produce the kind of contributing citizens that are well rounded and treat others with kindness and dignity.

The goal of education and public schools is to prepare children for adult life. This includes the ability to think critically and master certain academic skills, but it also includes the ability to feel contentedness, communicate well, value various differing perspectives, connect with others, feel confident in oneself, and peacefully resolve conflicts when they arise. These are all necessary skills for any profession and are associated with living in a democracy. The mastery of reading, writing, and math is critical, and as research has confirmed, SEL programs increase academic outcomes. However, these academic outcomes are not enough to ensure lifelong success for our students. A more explicit framework would be helpful to foster a solid understanding of specific life skills to highlight in daily lessons. The C5 Framework is a tool to accomplish this by providing language and dimensions that easily lend themselves to one another. Schools with and without formal SEL programs can use this framework to embed and prioritize all five interrelated dimensions into authentic, contextualized daily lessons from Pre-K onward.

C5 for Action Framework:

1. Confidence & Happiness: confidence, happiness, stress and priority management, balance, self-discipline, attitude, goal setting/attainment, and empowerment
2. Communication & Social Quotient: communication skills, social and relational skills, and adaptability
3. Compassion & Inclusion: compassion, empathy, inclusion of others, specific skills to help make others happy
4. Conflict Resolution & Non-Violence: peaceful conflict resolution, anti-bullying, assertiveness, and non-violence
5. Celebrate Diversity, Authentically: Diversity is more than race, religion, and sexuality; celebrate, not just tolerate, differences; disagree with, but never disrespect others.

Dimension One: Confidence & Happiness

Reducing stress, living in the moment, creating balance, gaining confidence, and finding happiness are all essential life skills. These strategies are the foundation of the first dimension of the C5 Framework. Educators using this model will teach children that it takes work to maintain a positive attitude and strong self-worth and will devote daily lessons to teaching our students how to clear their minds, be present, and embrace gratitude. Additionally, strategies focused on goal attainment and developing and maintaining strong self-esteem and confidence are emphasized so that children feel proud of who they are and take pride in their accomplishments. One of the main goals of this dimension is for students to understand that happiness often requires effort and comes from within.

Dimension Two: Communication Skills & Social Quotient (SQ)

While it is critical that students master literacy and arithmetic, an individual's social quotient, or SQ, is just as critical. One of the most important aspects of SQ is communication. Lessons about how to communicate effectively are crucial. This involves teaching students how to speak so that their message is clearly understood with appropriate volume, eye contact, vocal and facial expression, and how to show (and feel) confidence and empowerment when they are sharing their thoughts, ideas, and words, especially when they are not conforming to oppressive norms. Furthermore, this part of the framework places equal emphasis on listening skills so that students learn to listen effectively so they can learn from, understand, and value the ideas of others.

Social quotient also involves the ability to appropriately respond to others when given certain social cues. Teaching SQ means teaching our kids how to feel empathy, have conversations, introduce themselves to someone, adapt to different situations, make new friends, and put a person who is uncomfortable at ease. Lonely students who learn how to be socially adept will feel more comfortable when approaching others because they have the social skill set necessary to create relationships. By developing SQ, children will be equipped for life.

Throughout their lives, people will have experiences in new situations where they do not know anyone else, where they feel excluded, or where they want to be a part of the group. By developing social quotient in our children, they will be able to actively take control of these situations and change feelings of loneliness and exclusion into feelings of empowerment and confidence.

Dimension Three: Compassion & Inclusion

This dimension involves teaching our children compassion by providing explicit lessons on how to actively seek out others who are excluded, sad, or marginalized in any way. Although some mental health illnesses are genetic, others become more problematic with environmental influences. As noted above, preventative measures might reduce the progression of some mental illnesses. Even for individuals without mental health issues, exclusion is painful: even well-adjusted adults often feel pain over trivial daily occurrences. Teaching compassion and social inclusion means teaching students that their greatest goal every day (apart from learning) is to find a person who has been treated poorly or who seems down and put a smile on their face and try to help them resolve the root of their problem. This dimension involves teaching older students about the realities of depression and suicide and how they, themselves, could be a prevention agent by reaching out to those who seem like they need some joy in their lives. Within the C5 model, conversations about what it feels like to be sad, marginalized, excluded, and angry are emphasized at every grade level with authentic lessons about acting on compassion and empathy and critically analyzing hypothetical situations, as well as using real-life examples as discussion tools. One of the strongest lessons from this dimension focuses on action. Students are taught that it is not sufficient to simply think compassionate thoughts or recognize oppression. The C5 framework emphasizes the crucial importance of being an activist and acting to help others, to fight against oppression, and to respectfully stand up for marginalized groups.

Dimension Four: Conflict Resolution & Non-Violence

Dimension four involves meaningfully engaging students in lessons about non-violence and bullying. Rather than a simple, superficial exposure to Martin Luther King, Jr. or Mohandas

Gandhi, children deeply study these leaders, their ideals, and their reform efforts. Additionally, students are taught explicit methods to resolve conflicts peacefully. Again, effective communication skills are critical with this so that students learn to talk through differences and misunderstandings. Peer mediation groups could also be a critical piece of this effort as they help children develop the skill set necessary to resolve disputes before they escalate into violence. Anti-bullying lessons focused on social responsibility and the dangerous effects of bullying are included here. Students learn that being a witness to bullying without helping is equally as harmful as the act itself, and victims of bullying are taught how to be respectfully assertive. Conflict resolution strategies are explicitly taught through role-playing, discussion, and real-life examples from student experiences. Students are taught to disagree, but never to disrespect.

Dimension Five: Celebrate Diversity, Authentically

“Diversity” and “culturally relevant pedagogy” have become buzzwords in education. While the efforts of those advocating for integrating these perspectives and teaching methods into classrooms are absolutely necessary, these efforts are regularly done in superficial ways. Too often, diversity education is simply a surface-level checklist for teachers usually including race and gender, and sometimes including religion and sexuality. Diversity is more than race, gender, religion, and sexuality, however. Under the C5 Framework, diversity lessons would embrace a more comprehensive conceptualization of diversity to include numerous aspects of human difference including diversity of thought, preferences, personality, beliefs, socio-economic status, physical attributes, habits, background, culture, physical and mental abilities, and language, among others. In order to ensure the authenticity of these lessons, meaningful conversations and context-specific examples would be used as foundational learning opportunities, and activities engaging and interacting with ideas and people from varying

backgrounds will be offered. It is critical for lessons to be conducted in non-superficial ways because, as Ladson-Billings (1998) states, “When these indignities are skimmed over in the classrooms that purport to develop students into citizens, it is no wonder students blow off classroom discourse” (p. 16).

Taking Action

The “Action” component is the foundation of this framework. It is not enough to feel compassionate, be against bullying, or believe in non-violence. Action for each and every dimension of this framework is critical. Students are encouraged to act on what they believe, to stand up for what they believe is right (even when they have to stand alone), to work against oppression of marginalized groups, and to use their confidence, communication, social skills, and non-violence to contribute to society and help those whose voices have been silenced.

Character-building lessons would promote the acceptance and celebration of diversity rather than teaching our children to simply tolerate differences. Lessons would involve substantive conversations regarding the difficulty of celebrating differences that go against personal values and belief systems. Students would learn that it is acceptable (and even encouraged) to disagree with others, but that it is unacceptable to be disrespectful, and that all people, regardless of their beliefs, appearance, lifestyle, ability level, and background always deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, without exception. It is important to note that teaching students this concept is not fundamentally exclusive from critical consciousness. The C5 Framework encourages students to question and take action against oppressive elements of society, but through assertive non-violence.

Introduction to the Study: A Study of Effective SEL Practices

It is clear from the empirical literature that there are compelling reasons for the adoption of social emotional learning into classrooms. Numerous studies outlined above highlight the tremendous emotional, academic, and social benefits of SEL programs. Few question whether or not teaching children to be well-rounded, kind, caring individuals is ideal, but how to best implement this kind of learning is still unclear. Problems with the implementation of SEL programming are common, and few qualitative studies have explored the processes involved in successful implementation. Consequently, the focus of this research is a shift from an emphasis on *what* outcomes result from SEL to *how* it is conducted effectively and under what conditions an SEL program operates best. In addition to highlighting the explicit ways of *how* to effectively implement SEL and what it looks like in the classroom, this research has two other main goals: to understand how teachers adapt SEL lessons to be more context-specific and personally meaningful to students, while maintaining program fidelity and school-wide coherence; and to provide a space for student voices to be heard regarding their perspectives and learning outcomes from SEL lessons.

Many SEL programs do not reflect the individual culture of the school or classroom in order to teach SEL in context-specific ways that resonate with students, and thus feel prescribed and inauthentic (Hoffman, 2009). When SEL is implemented in this manner, results are superficial and limited to students being able to recite a particular character trait or follow a set of rules in class. Successful, authentic SEL implementation goes beyond a teacher reading a script telling students how to behave; rather, it involves students gaining a thorough understanding of SEL concepts as they apply to their own lives, and transferring their knowledge to action in real-life situations. Furthermore, context-specific SEL lessons involve using

examples of students' experiences to teach. Alternatively, other implementation efforts are problematic because they are fragmented and lack fidelity to the program. One of the main aims of this study is to investigate a successful SEL school that has found and maintained the balance necessary for teachers to have the freedom to adapt lessons to be more personally connected to their students while still maintaining program fidelity and school-wide cohesion since school-wide coherence involving the entire school community has been found to be instrumental to the effective implementation of SEL (Greenberg et al., 2003).

Furthermore, there is a lack of student voices in the current literature. Advocates for SEL hope students will increase their abilities to resolve conflicts peacefully, manage their emotions, cooperate with others, and handle stress, among other areas, but conversations to understand the perspectives of students are not occurring in most current research. Instead, studies involve test scores, SEL inventories or quotients, and other decontextualized assessments that do not allow student voices to be heard. Since the ultimate goal of SEL is to influence the thoughts and actions of students, this research will involve talking to children to understand what messages they walk away with after an SEL lesson; how students talk about their friends, emotions, and frustrations; and their attitudes toward diversity, among others. Before putting time, funding, and energy into SEL programming, a stronger understanding of how it impacts children must be established, not just through quantitative research, but also through rigorous qualitative study.

While a focus on the quantitative aspects are helpful in establishing credibility, they are not helpful in bridging the gap that exists between research and classroom practice. More contextual studies are needed to understand how effective SEL programs are being delivered and the conditions in which these practices are occurring. Further, exploration into the C5

Framework is necessary to understand how it may potentially influence the implementation of social emotional learning in schools.

Research Questions & Hypothesis

In order to address these gaps in the current literature, my proposed study aims to address the following research questions:

1. *How is social emotional learning implemented successfully?*
 - 1a. *How is it taught in authentic ways that are personally meaningful and context-specific while maintaining program fidelity and school-wide coherence?*
 - 1b. *How is it integrated and embedded into everyday lessons?*
2. *To what extent does SEL programming reflect the C5 Framework?*
3. *What messages do students from effective SEL programming articulate about SEL?*

My hypothesis was that if Sherman's SEL lessons were reflected by the *C5 for Action Framework*, SEL would be successful and meaningful to students.

Summary of Chapters 1 and 2

In the first two chapters of this dissertation, I have outlined major societal problems in our nation and how Social Emotional Learning can help be a part of the solution. The history and various conceptual frameworks of Social Emotional Learning were presented in addition to problems that currently exist with SEL programming. Last, implications for future research and a new SEL framework were presented.

Chapters one and two are critical for school leaders and educational researchers for six main reasons. The first is to understand the major societal problems including depression and mental health and the importance of social emotional learning as a part of the solution. The second reason is for school leaders and educational researchers to understand the history and various conceptual models of Social Emotional Learning and the problems associated with the ambiguity of the currently used SEL frameworks. The third reason is to highlight the research-

based evidence showing academic, emotional, and social benefits from SEL programming. It is crucial for teachers and educational leaders to understand the outcomes from empirical studies of SEL programs, given that every day, they are faced with extremely complicated decisions regarding priorities. The fourth reason this analysis is important for educational leaders is because it draws attention to problems with implementation and what research says about successful ways of implementing SEL. Fifth, particularly of importance to educational researchers, future research implications were offered including emphasizing the need to understand student perspectives in addition to studying *how* SEL programs are implemented effectively. Last, an alternative, explicit framework with overlapping interrelated dimensions is presented as a model that addresses many of the shortcomings of current SEL frameworks.

Social-emotional learning in schools is not the answer to our nation's problems, but SEL is clearly a part of the solution. If every child received an education in which effectively implemented social emotional learning occurred, school culture could be transformed from one of judgment and insecurity to one where education, acceptance, compassion, and activism are the norm. The benefits would be seen through academic achievement, but more importantly, through the everyday actions of students who are happy. Confident, open-minded, non-violent, empathetic individuals would emerge and undoubtedly make positive contributions to society.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Research design is the key to connecting data to a researcher's original inquiry and eventually to valuable findings and conclusions (Yin, 2003). Simply put, research design is critical because it is the "plan of how to proceed" for the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 58). In this chapter, I present the research design and methodology of this study. I will describe my qualitative, case study approach to addressing my research questions. Further, this section will explain the procedures and instruments used when conducting this study, including case sampling, participant selection, data collection and analysis methods, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and my positionality as researcher.

Qualitative Design

The term "qualitative research" has been interpreted in a variety of ways by different social scientists. Some say that it is simply, "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). Others are more elaborate in their explanation. As Cresswell (1998) put it, qualitative research is:

an inquiry of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and constructs the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) expand on this concept by identifying five features of qualitative research: naturalistic, descriptive data, concern with process, inductive, and meaning. They note that not all qualitative studies cover all five areas and that qualitative research is more of an umbrella term that refers to a number of research strategies that involve rich descriptions of

experiences and individuals that do not lend themselves easily to statistical analysis through the traditional scientific method. This qualitative study will involve rich, descriptive data, a careful consideration of the research process, and inductive reasoning while analyzing data.

Some researchers value qualitative research because of the emphasis on words and descriptions over numbers and the contextualized nature of such explorations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). With this, qualitative data is “a source of well grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1). Similarly, Brantlinger et al. (2005) describe qualitative research as “a systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature of a phenomenon in a particular context” (p. 195). The findings from qualitative data are useful in an entirely different way than traditional quantitative data in that they paint a picture offering a true life story that often “proves far more convincing to a reader—another researcher, a policymaker, a practitioner—than pages of summarized numbers” (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 1).

The above definitions of qualitative research all highlight the decision to use qualitative research methodology in this study. First, only qualitative research provides space for student voices. Since the purpose of social emotional learning initiatives is to impact students, it is imperative that we hear from students themselves and understand their perspectives. Numbers through a quantitative study could never provide this kind of insight.

Additionally, the vast majority of studies on SEL programs have been quantitative in nature, highlighting the answers to “what” questions; what the outcomes and benefits of such programming are, have been addressed. With this, there is a critical need for more qualitative research in order to answer the “how” questions including addressing how effective SEL programs are implemented. Instead of conducting a study to justify SEL programming through

outcomes, qualitative research will allow me to describe the entire, comprehensive picture to provide an understanding of the process and *how* these desirable outcomes are reached.

Furthermore, since my study is concerned with the unique contexts in which SEL programs are implemented with success, the flexible, diverse nature of qualitative research will allow me to incorporate a range of valuable data collection methods. By examining the complex nature of the implementation of an SEL program through interviews, focus groups, field notes, official files, and other document analysis, I will be able to provide a significant contribution to the existing literature by gathering rich, descriptive data to paint a picture of what effective SEL implementation looks like and, more importantly, *how* it is applied to attain positive outcomes.

Case Study

Case studies are described as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 2001, p.21). A case study is most appropriate when attempting to address ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions, when the researcher has minimal control over events, and “when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 1). By using a case study, I will be able to fully examine how successful implementation of social emotional learning occurs. Since I am interested in learning what strong SEL instruction looks like, how it is implemented successfully, and hearing student voices, a case study methodology is fitting. Further, Yin (2003) contends that a single case study is best when it represents a critical case or when a single case is unique or representative. Because I am addressing a ‘how’ question and my study is examining a single exemplar school, a case study is most appropriate; additionally, an interpretive case study is best.

According to Merriam (1998), case studies can be descriptive, interpretive, or evaluative. The intent of a descriptive case study is not to generalize, but instead to simply describe through a detailed account of the area of study (Lijphart, 1971). An evaluative case study involves going

beyond description and attempts to arrive at conclusions and judgments about the area of study. Since this study was not aimed at evaluating a curriculum or simply describing Social Emotional Learning, an interpretive case study was most logical. An interpretive case study includes rich descriptions to “develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering” (Merriam, 2001, p. 197). Given that I am interested in understanding the extent to which successful SEL programming includes dimensions from the C5 Framework, an interpretive case study is a logical fit as opposed to other forms of case study because only an interpretive case study would allow me to interpret, analyze, and theorize about Social Emotional Learning. The flexibility of a case study is also appealing since it allows researchers to reflect, revise, and refine the original design of the study after the proposal stage (Yin, 2003). This will allow me to be thoughtful throughout the process and revisit important pieces after conducting a pilot study. Finally, perhaps the most compelling reason to conduct a qualitative case study is connected to my positionality. I am a practitioner at heart, and I want my research to have practical value in schools. A case study is written in language that may be able to reach a wider audience and has the potential to influence researchers, policy-makers, teachers, and educational leaders. Put simply, a case study has the potential to bridge the gap between research and practice.

Sampling

In order to address my research questions, selecting the case study school was critical, and purposeful sampling was used. Purposeful sampling is deliberately choosing a sample in a non-random manner so that learning can be optimized (Merriam, 2001). Since my aim is to study the implementation of an exemplar social emotional learning program, careful consideration was given to what constitutes a model, exemplar SEL school.

School Selection Criteria

This case study involved a single elementary school because the structure of elementary classrooms allowed me to understand how SEL lessons are implemented formally, and to compare and contrast this with how SEL is embedded into regular content areas. Furthermore, focusing on SEL from a very young age is critical as these skills are fundamental building blocks necessary to develop social and emotional competencies including respecting difference and diversity. There are four main criteria that were used to determine the most appropriate site school for this research: (1) The school has adopted an SEL program that has been recognized by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as an effective program; (2) The school itself has been identified as a model SEL school by experts in the field and by showing academic and social growth; (3) The school has a racially and economically diverse demographic; and (4) The school has been implementing a social emotional learning program for at least 4 years.

The first criterion for school selection was that the school has been using an effective SEL program, a “SElect” program, according to CASEL. As mentioned earlier, this organization is recognized for conducting extensive research on SEL programs and published the “2013 CASEL Guide” highlighting programs that have proven to be effective and are well-designed, classroom-based, offer training and other implementation support, and are based on evidence of effectiveness (CASEL, 2013). All studies on SEL programs have a comparison group, involve pre- and post-test measurements, and both randomized controlled studies as well as quasi-experimental studies are included. The teams of experts involved in considering guide-worthy SEL programs were trained researchers with extensive graduate-level education and experience in social and emotional learning. They coded SEL program materials, examined

outcome evaluations, administered surveys of training techniques, and interviewed SEL program developers. After reviewing SEL programs for over a year, 23 were selected (CASEL, 2013). The school chosen for this study must be implementing one of these 23 evidence-based programs.

The quality of implementation is what determines whether or not a school will benefit from social emotional learning. It is not sufficient to simply adopt one of the 23 SEL programs that have been deemed effective since a program is only as successful as its implementation. With this, the second criterion for school selection was that the individual school must have been identified and recognized as implementing the SEL program exceptionally well. In other words, it must be reputed as a model, an exemplar SEL school by experts in the field, and it must show both social and academic student gains. For the purposes of this study, I define a “model SEL school” as one that has experienced significant gains academically and socially since implementing an SEL program. Academic gains are measured by an increase in state standardized test scores across all demographic groups by at least 2 percentage points. Social gains are more difficult to measure, but for this study, social gains are measured by a decrease in behavior referrals across all demographic groups and an increase in pro-social behaviors and overall school climate as noted by the principal, teachers, and staff members. Further, only schools that have been recommended by experts in the field from organizations like CASEL, Committee for Children, and the Character Education Partnership or from well-known researchers in the field like Dr. Maurice Elias or Dr. Marvin Berkowitz were considered.

The third criterion for school selection was demographics. The school must be urban, diverse, and have a relatively high rate of poverty (as measured by free and reduced lunch data). For this study, this translates to at least 50% students of color and 50% free and reduced lunch.

This demographic requirement was critical for many reasons. One, most current studies on social emotional learning have occurred in schools and districts with a homogeneous, mainly white demographic with middle to high socio-economic status backgrounds. Social emotional learning can benefit all students, and students with less financial resources need SEL just as much as students who are financially privileged. Further, I believe that since SEL has been shown to increase academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011), the achievement gap in our nation can only be addressed if school climate and SEL are included as a part of the solution. With this, it is critical to study SEL programs that have been implemented with diverse demographics.

The fourth and final criterion for selecting a school is that the school has been implementing an SEL program for at least four years and has embedded SEL into other content areas. This requirement is important to my study because it provides an opportunity to analyze the longitudinal growth in academics and social competencies. Further, it generally takes schools three to five years to fully implement SEL school-wide (CASEL, 2013). It is critical for schools to have SEL embedded into core content areas so that social emotional competencies are not viewed as an add-on, but instead, are an integral part of everything that is done at school.

I used purposeful sampling in order to obtain pertinent information on potential site schools since my criteria are so specific. Purposeful sampling involves being selective with choosing which participants to include because of inclinations that they may provide valuable insights (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I started my search by thoroughly examining the CASEL website to identify evidence-based SEL programs that have shown positive academic and social emotional outcomes. Next, I contacted each of the 23 programs directly to inquire if they could provide a list of districts that have purchased their SEL program. From there, I identified which schools have been implementing their program that met my four criteria. I also contacted various

organizations like Education Trust and the What Works Clearinghouse to inquire if their contacts might be able to suggest any schools that meet my four criteria. I waited one month to hear back from these 30 plus organizations. Due to time constraints, after this one month time frame, I used a telephone screener (Appendix C) to verify suggested site schools and to decide which school to study based on which of the recommended schools best meet my four criteria. Since few schools met all of my research criteria, the first criteria requirement, after determining which schools are using a program identified by CASEL as research-based and successful was that schools met my demographic criteria. The next criterion considered were schools that have made academic gains since SEL implementation. I then considered how long the school had been implementing the SEL program and whether or not they had embedded SEL into regular content areas.

Sherman Elementary School met all four of my research criteria. My first research criterion was met because Sherman was using *Second Step*, a research-based Social Emotional Learning curriculum identified as one of the 23 effective SEL programs by CASEL. The organization that created *Second Step*, the Committee for Children, describes *Second Step* as, “A universal prevention program based on research connecting social emotional competence and self-regulation skills to success in school and life. It is developmentally appropriate with skills and concepts built sequentially across all grade levels. It is designed to reinforce skills through both structured and informal practice, and it is based on best practices for teaching elementary school students” (Committee for Children, 2014). It focuses on three major topics: empathy, emotion management, and problem solving. Committee for Children also explains that best practice for implementing *Second Step* involves school-wide adoption, one lesson taught per week, teaching all lessons in sequential order, and making SEL a part of everyday practice by recognizing, reinforcing, and rewarding SEL skills observed. My second research criterion was

met because Sherman was identified by the district's previous Social Emotional Learning Facilitator as a "model SEL school." Further, Sherman had experienced approximately a 5% gain in math standardized test scores and 7% gain in language arts since implementing *Second Step*. My third research criterion was met because Sherman Elementary is an urban, diverse, school with a significant student population coming from low-income backgrounds. 87% of the students at Sherman are students of color, and 94% of students at Sherman receive free or reduced lunch. My last research criterion was met because Sherman Elementary has been using *Second Step* for seven years. Once I had identified that Sherman Elementary had met all four of my research criteria, I stopped my search for a site school since Sherman Elementary agreed to participate if I received permission through the district's IRB process. I went through the district IRB process, presented to the district's research review committee, and was eventually given IRB approval pending UW-Madison's IRB approval.

Interviewee & Classroom Selection

Following IRB approval, I conducted a brief presentation at a staff meeting in order to explain my study and encourage participation. Initially, only four teachers were willing to participate. Being concerned that I would not get an adequate understanding of the implementation of SEL, I asked the principal to suggest which teachers are strongest in implementing SEL successfully. However, the principal told me that he would prefer I just ask for teacher volunteers to further illustrate that participation in this research was completely optional. In the end, I am glad that classroom selection was done in this manner. I was interested in a broad perspective of social emotional learning implementation. Classroom selection without input from the principal allowed me learn important variations in practice and perspectives across these teachers and classrooms. I went back to another staff meeting at Sherman, and I

convinced three additional teachers to participate. In the end, an early childhood teacher, a kindergarten teacher, three first grade teachers, a third grade teacher, and a fifth grade teacher all agreed to participate in my study.

For student interviews, I conducted a random sampling of students who had submitted a parental consent form to participate in this study with hopes that this would provide me with a representative sample of the student population. I randomly selected three students who had returned consent forms to comprise one focus group per classroom. With this, I conducted a total of seven focus groups, one per classroom. This gave me the perspectives of 21 students, as there were three students in each focus group. It should be noted however, that I had several individual conversations with students who submitted consent forms immediately after lessons.

Additionally, anonymous student responses during classroom discussions provided a large amount of valuable data. Only student responses from those who submitted consent forms were included in the data set. In fact, I learned more from individual conversations with students and student contributions to class discussions than the focus groups (see page 69).

Adult professionals, including the principal, professional development coordinator, previous school-based PBIS coordinator, and two district-level leaders were selected as participants for interviews. Each of these individuals would provide a unique perspective regarding the implementation, outcomes, and coherence of SEL in the school and district at large. Data collection that focused on classroom observations, focus groups, individual conversations with students after SEL lessons, interviews, and time at the site school occurred throughout a ten-week time frame in the Fall of 2013.

Procedures

It is critical to be thoughtful about the method in which entry and access to educational institutions are obtained. First, I contacted the district office of the selected school to gain understanding of any district policies regarding outside researchers conducting an educational study and the details of the process that I needed to go through. After the first communication, I learned that this district does not usually allow outside researchers who are on a PhD track to conduct their study. I was told that if I could prove value to the district-wide goals, then the Research Review Committee would consider my proposal. After this communication, I completed the district's application form for conducting research, and I scheduled a visit to the site city to meet with key people within the district who could support my research. One of the requirements from the district is to have a district co-sponsor. Since I did not know anyone within the district, I needed to travel to the site city to convince someone to be my co-sponsor. Since I wanted to make the most of my time, I also scheduled a meeting with a member of the Research Review Committee to make sure I fully understood all the requirements for submitting a proposal, and to share information about my research which would, hopefully, bring early buy-in).

Another requirement from the district's Research Review Committee was to have signed paperwork from the principal of the research site school, which states that he or she fully supports the research that is being proposed and that it will help the school with reform efforts in one way or another. With this, I sent an introductory email to Brent Paulsen, the principal of Sherman Elementary, in order to familiarize him with my study. I explained the purpose and overall rationale and asked if there was a convenient time for me to follow up with a telephone call the following week. During the follow-up phone call, I further explained my project, tried to

connect with Principal Paulsen on a personal level to begin establishing a relationship, and answer any questions he may have. Toward the end of the phone call, Principal Paulsen invited me to stop by the school for a short visit. I was able to meet with him to discuss my research, and it was clear that he was interested in the topic and supportive of my desire to spend time learning in his school. He expressed that Sherman was committed to Social Emotional Learning, and that there was recently a stronger push from the district level to make Social Emotional Learning a priority at all school sites.

In order to understand how SEL is effectively implemented, data were collected in the following ways: observations of classroom SEL lessons; interviews of teachers, school leaders, and district leaders; observations of SEL-related professional development, and a detailed document analysis. Both formal and informal SEL lessons were observed. Formal SEL lessons refer to lessons from the school's Social Emotional Learning curriculum, *Second Step* (described on page 65). Informal SEL lessons involve any lesson that taught a social emotional learning concept outside of *Second Step*. To understand student perspectives and learning outcomes of SEL, I conducted focus groups with students. I discuss each of these data collection strategies next.

Observations

Participant observation was one of my main means of data collection. Atkinson (2005) identifies four types of participant observation: complete observer, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete participant. He further contends that, "All social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social worlds without being a part of it" (p. 249). While I recognize this to be true, I made every effort not to interfere with lessons and to be as unobtrusive as possible. However, it is also true that being in classrooms while

teachers are conducting social emotional learning lessons required my involvement from time to time, depending on the individual teacher's request for my participation or input. With this, I identify as "observer as participant" instead of "complete observer." Due to my participation, students and teachers became more familiar with me and perhaps felt more comfortable sharing with me during interviews.

The majority of data collection was spent observing 21 classroom lessons. I observed a total of seven teachers three different times, making sure that at least one of the three observations was during a non-SEL specific lesson in order to understand how SEL is implemented outside of the SEL-specific curriculum. While observing, I paid special attention to the differences between SEL lessons that are a part of the prescribed program and the ways that teachers embedded SEL into other content areas. Since I observed seven different teachers, I needed to be purposeful with which lessons I was present for. With this, I communicated with teachers before traveling to the site school in order to create an optimal schedule so that my observations were focused and so that time was well spent. I was able to observe approximately 5 hours of classroom instruction per teacher, for a total of approximately 35 hours of classroom observation. During classroom observations, I made a conscientious effort to reserve analysis and any kind of judgment, though this proved to be extremely difficult at times. Although I initially used an observation protocol, I eventually scripted each lesson, including teacher and student talk and actions, and took detailed notes in my field journal about language used, activities, physical environment, interactions, and connections to the *C5 for Action Framework*. I also collected data on the physical environment of the public spaces of the school in order to help determine the extent to which SEL impacts the greater school climate. For example, I looked for examples of messages throughout the school that promote self-esteem, appreciation for diversity,

compassion toward others, nonviolence, and communication skills. As mentioned above, I participated in some SEL lessons that involved whole group participation. For example, I sang along to songs, repeated role-playing scripts when the class was asked to repeat a phrase, and joined the class in following directions to the entire class from the teacher. After each observation, I dedicated at least 20 minutes to finishing observation notes.

Similarly, when I observed professional development at the school, I collected data that emphasized conversations or efforts to promote SEL. I attended one staff meeting and three other professional development opportunities during the time frame of my data collection. These observations greatly assisted in my understanding of the individual school's approach, overall process, and emphasis on developing social and emotional competencies in students. I observed four meetings for a total of approximately eight hours, collecting professional development observational data.

I recorded notes in a field journal that was with me at all times. A combination of both descriptive and interpretive notes were taken during all observations and meetings. Descriptive note-taking involved providing a detailed account of what I saw and heard occurring in the classroom. I noted how many students participated verbally and a word-for-word script of their contributions. Similarly, I scripted lessons and language I heard from the teacher. Additionally, reflective notes were taken to highlight aspects of the observations that could not be recorded directly like tone of voice, facial expressions, hand gestures, and other body language, among others. My interpretive notes included thoughts on students' engagement and enthusiasm, understanding of SEL concepts articulated by students, the teacher's efforts and ability to make SEL lessons personally meaningful to students, and ways that the SEL lessons connected to the *C5 for Action Framework*.

Interviews

Another form of data collection involved interviews of teachers and educational leaders. Interviews have the potential to be extremely insightful as they are a purposeful conversation to help collect “descriptive data in the subjects’ own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p.74). Interviews in qualitative studies range from being highly structured to entirely unstructured. For the purposes of my study, interviews were less structured since less rigidity allows for participants to fully and candidly express their perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Similarly, Yin (2003) highlights the value of interviews in case study research and contends that guided conversations are far more valuable than a structured set of questions. With this, I used semi-structured interview methods. Every interview started with an established list of questions (Appendices E & F), but I adjusted, when needed, by removing questions or adding follow-up questions to further explore perspectives and collect the most valuable data possible. I was mindful to focus on quality over quantity in the interviews. Rather than feeling time pressure to have participants address the entire interview protocol, I allowed interviewees space for offering extended answers. The open-ended nature of my interview protocol allowed for participants to speak freely so that the interview was more of an open, guided conversation. Further, conducting interviews in this manner provided a more comprehensive understanding of perspectives, processes, and impact of social emotional learning. With this, many interviews diverged significantly from the interview protocol.

To schedule interviews, I first contacted the seven teachers who agreed to participate via email to provide the time frame that I would be visiting their school and asked about their preference to find an interview time that is most convenient for them. I also asked each

participating teacher to inform me of the specific time of the day that their *Second Step* lesson (SEL curricular lesson) was taught. Fortunately, each participant responded in a timely manner to my email. Interviews took place inside of the teacher's classroom or, in the case of educational leaders, took place in the interviewee's office. Interviews were scheduled for one hour and were audio recorded using a digital recording device. While conducting interviews, I also took notes in a field journal but was mindful to remain fully engaged with the interview participant while taking notes. Additionally, no back-to-back interviews were scheduled so that I had at least one full hour to add notes to my field journal and make sure to capture any immediate reflections or insights that occurred to me while the interview was fresh in my mind. I submitted nearly all recordings to a professional transcription service within two weeks of conducting interviews. Participants received a personalized thank-you note within three weeks of their interview.

Focus Groups

Student voices have often been neglected in research focused on children because of the belief that children lack verbal abilities, conceptual skills, memory retention, and overall ability to narrate their experiences and perspectives (Faux et al., 1988). I believe it is critical to hear student voices whenever conducting research on students. Students are the best sources of information about themselves (Deatrick et al., 1991), as adults can never truly enter the child's world to understand their worldview (Yamamoto et al., 1987). In order to hear student voices and understand how SEL is taught in authentic ways that students are able to apply to their lives (as opposed to simply being able to define a character trait, for example), I conducted focus groups with students to understand their perspectives of SEL, the ways in which students articulate their learning of SEL, how students apply the learning to their own life experiences,

relate to the concepts, and intrinsically value the lessons. As with interviews, I used a semi-structured interview protocol when conducting focus groups with students. As Docherty and Sandelowski (1999) put it, when interviewing children, "...strict adherence to an a priori format, such as the traditional 'question-and-answer' mode is discouraged" (p.178). In order to fully hear student voices, stories, and perspectives, free recall or unstructured interviews are ideal as opposed to hearing specific responses to questions that were created from adult perspectives (Engel, 1995). Less structure and rigidity was especially important when trying to have meaningful conversations with young students and help children feel comfortable when speaking with an adult that they are unfamiliar with.

I started focus groups with an established list of questions, but they were altered, as necessary, while engaging with young students. I regularly needed to rephrase questions to students depending on their comprehension of what I was asking. I asked each question in more than one way to make sure students truly understood what was being asked. When conducting interviews with young students, it is also imperative to be aware that children often become tired before sharing pertinent information to the study if they have spent too much time and energy sharing unwanted information (Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999). With this, I needed to balance the initial getting-to-know-you questions in order to make students feel comfortable while moving at a rapid enough pace so students did not tire before sharing information related to my research. Docherty and Sandelowski (1999) further explain that if children understand the purpose of the interview and are regularly reminded of it, it will help them articulate their perspectives related to the research.

Since I conducted one focus group per classroom observed, I conducted a total of seven focus groups. Each focus group was composed of three students. One focus group was with Pre-

K students, one was with Kindergarten students, three focus groups were with first grade students, one was with third graders, and one was with fifth graders. Five of the seven focus groups were extremely difficult to yield meaningful data, perhaps because these students were ages six and under. They were often distracted by the other students in the focus group, what was occurring in the hallway (the location of all focus groups), and what I was writing in my field journal. Since it was difficult to gain student perspectives on SEL from this student population, I made modifications to my methodology and focused my descriptive and interpretive notes on student contributions during lessons, individual conversations with students immediately after lessons, and student interactions during group work times. With this, although focus groups did not yield substantial meaningful data, student perspectives were gained through the prioritization and explicit focus on student responses in class lessons, student interactions during group work, and individual conversations with students after lessons.

All focus groups occurred in the hallway right outside of the classroom at a table that I had set up. Focus groups were scheduled for 30 minutes and were recorded by notes in my field journal, as opposed to an audio recording device, to make students feel as comfortable as possible. Although field notes were taken during focus groups, I was mindful to make sure that students felt that their voices were truly being heard. After each of the seven focus groups, I tried my best to have at least 30 minutes to process, reflect, and analyze before collecting any other data. Every student received a verbal thank-you and a token gift (a pencil or stickers).

Document Analysis

Data collected through observations, interviews, and focus groups were supplemented with a collection of relevant documents, which contributed to my understanding of the processes for social emotional learning implementation at the school. Further, document analysis helped

me better understand how SEL is embedded into core content areas; how it continues to be supported in the school; and how SEL relates to the mission, vision, and other major goals of the whole school. I reviewed documents from teachers and school leaders. Official documents included: *Second Step* curricular lessons, strategic priorities, school improvement plan, newsletters, and professional development agendas. Initially, I searched the district and school website for some of this data. I also asked participants for relevant documents after conducting interviews. These documents helped me understand the extent to which social emotional learning is highlighted throughout individual classrooms, the school community, and the district at large. When reviewing the documents, I looked for themes that emerged related to the *C5 for Action Framework* and other ways that social emotional competencies are recognized or prioritized that may fall outside of the framework.

Sherman Elementary School

Located in the northeast area of a large, metropolitan city in the Midwest, Sherman Elementary School serves 648 students from grade levels Pre-K through 5th grade. Although it is technically considered an Arts Magnet school, the principal said it is only an Arts Magnet in name. He explained that if a student would like to attend Sherman, there is no wait list and that it operates like most public schools, so in essence, it is a neighborhood school. However, Sherman does have a history of a strong emphasis in the arts and is currently moving toward more of an integrated arts approach with dance, band, theater, and orchestra. Due to the arts focus and the school's commitment to active learning, students regularly participate in exhibitions and performances. Each fall, approximately 30% of students in first through fifth grade are new to Sherman Elementary. Due to such high mobility, all new students experience a lengthy

orientation to the school policies and behavior expectations, including the requirement of wearing uniforms.

The majority of students who attend Sherman experience poverty, as 94% of the student body receives free or reduced lunch rates. Only 13% of students are Caucasian, as can be seen in the following table:

Demographics at Sherman Elementary School	
African American: 60%	Free/Reduced Lunch: 94%
Asian: 14%	Homeless/Highly Mobile: 10%
Caucasian: 13%	Limited English Proficient: 22%
Hispanic: 8%	Special Education: 18%
Native American: 5%	Total Students: 648

Given the demographics outlined above, Sherman has additional staff to support higher levels of Special Education and special needs including Developmentally and Cognitively Delayed (DCD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), English Language Learners (ELL), and Homeless and Highly Mobile (HHM) students. Additionally, all classroom teachers have a part-time teaching assistant. There are numerous corporations and community organizations that partner with Sherman. These organizations provide a range of services and supports to Sherman students, from donated clothing and groceries to tutoring in reading and math.

Instrumentation

The seven data collection instruments used for this study will be discussed separately in the following sections: email screeners to identify schools; a telephone screener to select a final site school; an observation protocol; an interview protocol for educational leaders; an interview protocol for teachers; a focus group protocol; and a document analysis checklist chart. Field notes supplemented all of my data collection efforts.

Email Screener 1

Finding a model SEL school required connecting with various organizations throughout the nation. First, I used an email screener (Appendix A) to contact the 23 SEL program organizations that have been identified as evidence-based by the Collaborative for Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning (CASEL). The screener essentially included one request: a list of districts that have purchased their program four or more years ago.

Email Screener 2

In order to further aid my search for a truly exemplary SEL school, I attempted to connect with various national organizations that are committed to SEL work like CASEL, Character Education Partnership, and Committee for Children, among others. Additionally, I reached out to experts in the field like Dr. Marvin Berkowitz and Dr. Maurice Elias. My second email screener (Appendix B) asked for direction and connections with finding a school or district that they considered to be an exemplary model of SEL implementation.

Telephone Screener

After obtaining lists of districts that had purchased various evidence-based SEL programs in addition to getting recommendations from SEL-related organizations and SEL experts, I used a telephone screener (Appendix C) to inquire if the suggested schools met my four research criteria and to find out about any formal district procedures necessary to complete for conducting research in the district. Since only two districts met my research criteria, my final decision was based on the district that had a more racially and economically diverse student population.

Observation Protocol

In order to focus my observations of classroom lessons, I created an observation protocol (Appendix D) that was created using the *C5 for Action Framework*. This tool helped me concentrate on areas of classroom lessons (both formal and informal) and professional development trainings that incorporated dimensions from the framework. This protocol also shed light on areas that were lacking in the *C5 for Action Framework* by highlighting other important ways that social and emotional competencies are developed. One of many observation protocol items included the recognition of conversations about social inclusion and acting compassionately toward others. Another included visual representations of materials that promote social emotional learning.

It is important to note that this observation protocol was helpful only with understanding how meetings and lessons aligned with the *C5 for Action Framework*. Since I am also interested in the successful implementation of SEL programming overall, quality field notes were absolutely critical. In addition to using the observation protocol, I took copious field notes to describe classroom and meeting observations. In a qualitative study, field notes are a written record of what the researcher sees, hears, experiences, and thinks while collecting data, and the accuracy and detail of these field notes are critical for participant observation to be successful (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I included both descriptive and reflective field notes, and my field journal was kept with me at all times. Notes were taken throughout all observations, interviews, and focus groups, and additional time was allocated to allow for deep reflection each day.

Interview Protocol

I used an interview protocol (Appendix E and Appendix F) when conducting interviews with various individuals including the principal, previous school-based PBIS coordinator, and

teachers. Using interview protocols helped me address my research questions regarding the processes, perspectives, and complications involved with implementing an SEL program. These protocols also aided my understanding regarding which aspects of the C5 Framework were viewed as most important by educators and which aspects of the framework were addressed by the SEL curriculum, *Second Step*.

The beginning of the interview protocol included a few minutes of introducing myself, and attempts to set a comfortable tone for the conversation. I shared some personal information with interviewees like mentioning my baby girl, my educational and my teaching background in order to create an environment in which participants felt comfortable and so that the interview felt more like a relaxed, casual conversation rather than a formal interview. Next, I discussed the purpose of this study, IRB protections, consent, and answered any questions participants may have. I then asked interviewees to share some background information professionally as well as personally to learn about participants and make them feel comfortable with talking to me. One of the questions I asked was about the interviewee's favorite childhood teacher. Many adults remembered a teacher from their childhood and enjoyed sharing about them. Further, it was interesting to learn what specifically about that teacher was so special. Many times, it was because that teacher emphasized some aspect of social emotional learning. Although time was scarce, I tried not to rush through this portion of the interview, as I strongly believed that building a good rapport with participants would yield stronger, more elaborate, genuine, honest responses to the interview questions regarding SEL.

There were three categories of inquiry to address my research questions. The first category of questions focused on processes that contributed to achieving successful SEL implementation. The second set of questions was about the impact of SEL on students. The third

group of questions was geared toward understanding which elements of the *C5 for Action Framework* were emphasized with the SEL lessons. The closing questions asked participants to reflect on challenges of SEL, offer advice to other educators thinking about implementing SEL, and anything else they would like to share regarding what it takes to successfully implement social emotional learning.

Focus Group Protocol

The focus group protocol (Appendix G) was used to interview small groups of three students. This protocol was used as a loose guide for our conversation. I wanted to focus dialogue with students on their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives. My goal was to hear their voices come through strong and allow students to guide the conversation. That being said, I was interested in particular perspectives, so I needed to use the protocol as an overall focus for our discussion.

Like the interview protocol, I began the dialogue by putting effort into creating a relaxed environment through casual conversation. I recognized that students were likely to feel uncomfortable sitting in a room with a stranger, so some time would be necessary to be dedicated to getting to know one another. I began by sharing about myself and then asking students to do the same by talking about favorite foods and hobbies, among other things. The first set of questions that addressed my research inquiry required students to articulate their understanding of the SEL lesson they just participated in. These reflections were critical to understanding what messages students immediately walked away with from SEL lessons. Next, I asked students how they might apply these lessons to their lives in real situations. The last set of questions was related to the *C5 for Action Framework* and asked students a variety of questions involving each of the framework dimensions with particular emphasis on diversity.

Document Analysis

In order to analyze documents that were related to social emotional learning and its implementation, I created an artifact review document analysis checklist (Appendix H). I used this as a guide to ensure that the necessary documents were collected and to analyze which aspects of the *C5 for Action Framework* were addressed and what other areas of SEL were emphasized that were not included in the framework (if any). I collected a variety of documents including teacher lesson plans, professional development materials, newsletters, memos, school improvement plans, mission and vision statements, student writing samples, and staff meeting agendas, among others.

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study in September of 2013 to test the interview and focus group protocols for this study. I have a principal acquaintance who was interested in my study and was easily accessible. Further, she currently works in a school with a somewhat diverse racial and economic demographic and has been using an SEL program for two years. The school is 58% white, 6.29% two or more races, 18.88% Hispanic/Latino, 8.86% Black or African American, 7.23% Asian, and .70% American Indian or Alaskan Native. Approximately 46% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Although this demographic does not meet my research criteria, it would be sufficient for a pilot study.

I asked my principal acquaintance to connect me with a teacher in her building that she feels has been implementing SEL strongly. Additionally, I worked with the principal to ensure that liability and any other formalities related to conducting a pilot study were addressed and that parents were informed of my interaction with students. My pilot study involved observing a classroom SEL lesson, conducting a focus group with three students immediately after the lesson

utilizing my focus group protocol, and later, interviewing the teacher using my interview protocol. Throughout the pilot study, I took copious notes so that I was able to carefully analyze how my protocols could be adjusted to better reach my research aims during my actual study. I found that quite a few revisions needed to be made to my focus group protocols, especially the beginning questions. Students took quite a bit of time answering the “getting to know you” questions, and this resulted in significantly less time to address the questions that I was interested in for my research. Additionally, I realized that due to time constraints, it would be best for me to conduct focus groups relatively near the classroom itself, like in the hallway immediately outside of the classroom. This pilot study also helped me reflect on revisions to make to my adult interview protocols. I reduced the number of questions at the beginning that were aimed at creating a relationship with the interviewee. While it was difficult for me to do that, because I was committed to creating a comfortable environment to converse, I realized that time was limited and these changes were necessary.

Analysis

Although case study research provides numerous valuable insights, analyzing data of case studies is often considered extremely difficult and not yet fully developed (Yin, 2003). Bogdan and Biklan (2007) attribute some of these complexities to developing theory and formally analyzing data toward the end of the research project. Due to these concerns, I utilized the constant comparative method of data analysis, which addressed these issues by allowing for the systematic exploration of emerging themes to be nearly completed by the time data collection is finished (Bogdan & Biklan, 2007). This form of data analysis allowed me to search constantly for major themes, issues, and relationships throughout my investigation. I utilized the six

simultaneous aspects of the constant comparative on-going method of data analysis as explained by Glaser and Strauss (1994):

1. Begin collecting data.
2. Look for key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that become categories of focus.
3. Collect data that provide many incidents of the categories of focus, with an eye to seeing the diversity of the dimensions under the categories.
4. Write about the categories you are exploring, attempting to describe and account for all the incidents you have in your data while continually searching for new incidents.
5. Work with the data and emerging model to discover basic social processes and relationships.
6. Engage in sampling, coding, and writing as the analysis focuses on the core categories. (p. 75)

Data was analyzed initially using the *C5 for Action Framework*. The following categories were used to code data during the beginning stages of data analysis: confidence and happiness; communication and social quotient; compassion and inclusion; conflict resolution and non-violence; and celebrate diversity, authentically. After coding data using those categories, I further coded within each category using the *C5 for Action Framework* to identify which areas, if any, emphasized taking action. Not all data fit in the *C5 for Action Framework*. With this, while going through the data analysis process, I made a conscious effort to look for other themes with the development of social emotional competencies that fell outside of this framework, and I conducted open coding with outside themes that surfaced, including positive behavior

management, teacher-student relationships, integrating SEL throughout the school day, and making SEL lessons more personally meaningful and authentic to students.

I purposely scheduled at least one hour of time for analysis in between each interview and focus group. I asked the school office staff to suggest a quiet space that might be optimal for reflection. Further, I made a strong effort to schedule at least 30 minutes in between classroom lesson observations for this same purpose of thoughtful reflection and data analysis. Making sense of interviews, observations, focus groups, and professional development meetings requires strong organization and the ability to grasp emerging themes. As Glesne (1999) put it,

Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with the data, you describe, create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories. To do so, you must categorize, synthesize, search for patterns, and interpret the data that you have collected. (p. 130)

Most evenings after data collection, I continued the above-outlined process of data analysis by adding to my notes, reflecting, coding, and analyzing for themes, processes, and areas of focus in order to tell this story properly. Further, I reflected specifically on any adjustments made to my protocols that may help me better understand the implementation, complications, and student perspectives of social emotional learning. In order to further emphasize common themes and patterns, the process of analyzing interview transcripts started during the time frame of data collection. Miles and Huberman (2002) contend that this is a critical aspect of the analysis process. Student responses were evaluated with a focus on similar thoughts, messages, and ideas. Particular attention was placed on strategies students used to peacefully resolve conflict, deal with negative emotions, and demonstrate compassionate

behaviors. Although coding with the *C5 for Action Framework* allowed for a more direct and accurate analysis, several outside themes that emerged forced a more open and comprehensive analysis.

Trustworthiness & Validity

Qualitative research methods have been the center of numerous debates regarding credibility and validity (Maxwell, 1992). With this, they are critical to address before a qualitative study is conducted. These issues should be considered during the design stage, throughout the data collection (Glesne, 1999), and after the study during the analysis stage. In order to address these issues, Glesne explains eight ways to increase research trustworthiness:

- 1) prolonged engagement and persistent observation
- 2) triangulation
- 3) peer review and debriefing
- 4) negative case analysis
- 5) clarification of research bias
- 6) member checking
- 7) rich thick description
- 8) external auditing (p. 32)

Given that Glesne contends that not all eight processes are necessary in a single study, I attempted to employ three: triangulation, rich thick description, and clarification of research bias.

Qualitative researchers regularly use triangulation because obtaining data through more than one source can offer a more complete understanding of the topic being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The accuracy and validity of findings from this study will be higher since data will be triangulated through multiple data collection efforts including interviews, focus groups,

observations, and document analysis. It is important to note that this study yielded meaningful data from interviews, observations, and document analysis, but focus groups, as mentioned earlier, proved to be challenging with young students, and the physical space given. Findings that highlight student perspectives are still trustworthy due to an explicit focus on prioritizing student voices through triangulated efforts including: student responses during class discussions, student interactions during group work, and individual conversations with students after lessons.

Rich, thick descriptions are one of the reasons qualitative research methodology appealed to me most. My goal was to paint a picture using words so that an educational practitioner could gain a strong enough understanding of successful SEL implementation to be able to apply some of the concepts to their own practice. This is only possible through detailed, deep, rich descriptions of my observations and following interviews and focus groups. In order to ensure validity and offer the most accurate description of SEL processes and perspectives at this school, it was critical for me to prioritize thick description in all avenues of data collection.

Clarifying one's research bias is critical to trustworthiness in qualitative research. Schofield (2002) highlights problems associated with purposeful sampling when searching for a site school based on a specific framework or perspective. Skepticism toward qualitative research often arises because of researchers whose analysis is influenced by their commitment to a certain viewpoint (Schofield, 2002). With this, the purpose of this study was not to prove or disprove a framework or theory. I fully embraced the importance of recognizing one's own bias as a researcher, and I conducted external auditing with my academic advisor, Bruce King, to be sure of this. My advisor, someone who was not involved in the research process, was able to examine both the process and product of my study and provide insights regarding the level to which my findings and interpretations were supported by my data. He challenged me regularly to consider

alternative possibilities for my findings and also to consider my positionality, which I will be transparent about in the next section.

Ethical Considerations

When conducting any kind of research with human participants, it is critical to ensure the protection and well-being of the subjects and to do no harm (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Consent forms (Appendices I-J) helped participants be informed about the purpose of my study, what their involvement would entail, and what risks and benefits they may incur. The forms clearly articulated the risks involved with participation of this study. They mentioned that there are risks associated with participation since sensitive information may be shared during interviews. To protect and ensure confidentiality, there were numerous safeguards in place including conducting the interview in a private, yet safe, location and using pseudonyms so that the participant's name never appears anywhere in the dissertation. The name of the district, school, and all participants were changed to pseudonyms in my study, in transcripts, and in the analysis categorization process to ensure protection of privacy for all involved. I will keep data on a secure database in a digital format filing system for seven years before it is destroyed.

Although there were no direct benefits to participants, the potential benefits to participants include the pride in knowing that they contributed to the field of educational research regarding effective ways to implement social emotional learning in classrooms. Further, by meeting with teachers and school leadership to discuss my research findings, hopefully this research provided the school itself and the district at large with insights that they can consider in future improvement plans. I also ensured that ethical considerations had been made by abiding to the requirements made by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Research Bias & Positionality

In order to further emphasize trustworthiness, validity, and ethical considerations, it is important to be transparent about my positionality and bias as a researcher. I must first be upfront about my role in the district. Although I was not connected professionally to the district while writing my research proposal, by the time I began collecting data, I was employed as the district-wide Social Emotional Learning Facilitator. By serving in this role, I certainly had my own bias as an advocate for increasing meaningful SEL throughout the district.

I must also be up front about my personal beliefs toward social emotional learning: I am passionate about integrating these skills into classrooms, and I strongly believe that the promotion of social and emotional competencies are just as important as, if not more important, than core academic subjects. I taught middle and elementary school for seven years in both private and public schools, and I emphasized the importance of compassion, inclusion, and social responsibility regularly. Still, as I learn more about SEL, I realize that I should have done more. I was also an educator with very high academic standards, and looking back, I regret the intense emphasis that I placed on core academics at the expense of nurturing the whole child because I realize now that SEL is just as important as (if not more important than) core content skills for students to lead successful lives. When I was in the classroom, I felt I had a moral obligation to prepare students to compete in our global economy and that success meant getting solid test scores, going to college, getting a “good” job, and making money. I realize now, more than ever, that true success has a different definition. While I believe it is critical for all students to have the opportunity to achieve educational and financial goals as outlined above, I also believe that true success is inner happiness, which money could never purchase. To prioritize preparing my students for standardized tests, my public speaking lessons, community building activities, and

lessons about confidence and self-esteem were the first to go. I am not proud of this, and I hope this study will provide insights to teachers so that they do not make the same mistakes I did.

Although I knew the value of SEL while teaching, my real journey into social emotional learning began after the horrific school shooting that killed 20 children and 6 adult staff members at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut on December 14, 2012. Like the rest of the nation, I was devastated, and I wanted answers. How could something like this happen? What could be done to prevent future mass shootings? Most conversations in the news and with friends centered around gun control, school safety, and media violence. While I strongly believe that those discussions are necessary, as a graduate student in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, I had to question my role and the role of my friends who are teachers. Although I do not think that SEL is a cure-all for society's problems, I do believe that teachers and educational leaders are a part of the solution. Schools are not only educational institutions, but social institutions as well. Life skills need to be added to our traditional curriculum and emphasized with as much rigor as the core subject areas of reading, writing, and math. With this, I started talking with other classmates, friends, and family about these ideas.

My older brother encouraged me to write an op-ed piece and submit it to a number of local and national newspapers. I worked on articulating my thoughts for weeks to make sure that my message was portrayed exactly as I intended. Within the essay, dimensions of the *C5 for Action Framework* that I used for this study began to emerge. The "Action" addition came after a thought-provoking discussion around oppression that I had with my advisor. We discussed the need for students to learn to stand up to oppressive forces and to act on their beliefs rather than simply believing them. In order to guard against simply affirming the *C5 for Action Framework*,

I made an active effort to search for themes that exist outside of, or contradict, this framework by noting the other ways that social and emotional competencies are developed in classrooms and I was open to the possibility that my framework may need revision.

After my essay was published in a local Madison newspaper, my brother further encouraged me to make this my dissertation topic. Until this point, I thought my ideas were unique and that my op-ed piece was a real contribution to society. After committing to this topic for my dissertation work, and starting to conduct my literature review, I realized that this is a topic that has been written about at great length for centuries. While this realization was humbling, it was also extremely encouraging to know that there are a number of organizations and individuals working diligently on an issue that I believe has the potential to dramatically change society for the better.

The implications of this kind of research for educational practice could be influential and may result in more teachers incorporating the skill development of social emotional competencies into any core academic subject in authentic, context-specific ways. Additionally, it is critical to understand student perspectives regarding SEL so that educators can have a stronger understanding of what messages students walk away with after learning social and emotional skills. This insight will help teachers adjust lessons to better meet learning goals and student needs.

Further, this research has the potential to provide meaningful insights to staff members and the district, at large. Since I strongly believe in contributing to the site school and district rather than simply conducting research for the sake of research, I made every effort to bridge the gap between research and practice. With this, conversations with staff members included insights regarding how to continue to implement SEL effectively or possibly how to change certain

practices to better implement SEL. Further, various district leaders were able to take some insights found from this study into other schools to more effectively develop the social and emotional competencies in students.

As the district-wide Social Emotional Learning Facilitator, I was able to make significant large-scale decisions based on the findings from this study. For example, the district was attempting to create a district-wide plan for making Social Emotional Learning a mandatory part of schedules for K-5 classrooms. Due to this study's impact, I was able to work with other district officials to understand that simply purchasing *Second Step* is not enough to promote SEL competencies in students. Rather, my team was able to urge district officials to prioritize professional development for teachers around classroom management, positive behavioral supports, and building meaningful relationships. This study was able to shift the focus on simply purchasing more *Second Step* kits to a more comprehensive approach including the areas mentioned above.

Chapter 4: Effective Social Emotional Learning Beyond the Curriculum

As discussed in Chapter 3, data were collected through a variety of means. Classroom observations, professional development observations, teacher and educational leader interviews, document analysis, and student contributions during lessons, focus groups, and individual conversations after lessons all contributed to five major findings. The first three findings (described in Chapter 4) illustrate what constitutes effective Social Emotional Learning at Sherman Elementary School. The final two findings are presented in Chapter 5 and focus on why Social Emotional Learning was effective in some classrooms and the conditions in which these effective practices were occurring. Chapter 6 will compare this study's findings to my original hypothesis, analyze each finding as it relates to my original research questions, and will conclude with future implication for research and practice.

Findings

Chapters 4 and 5 will highlight five major findings from my research:

Finding 1: At Sherman Elementary, SEL is regularly embedded into formal and informal lessons throughout the school day in classrooms in which relationships are valued and classroom management is strong.

Finding 2: At Sherman Elementary, some teachers were able to adapt SEL curricular lessons to be more authentic to their classroom culture, while maintaining fidelity to the program.

Finding 3: At Sherman Elementary, the *C5 for Action Framework* was reflected in both formal and informal SEL lessons. This finding will be illustrated throughout the lesson descriptions in Findings sections 1-4. Seven out of seven teachers observed taught Social Emotional Lessons (both *Second Step* lessons as well as embedded SEL lessons) which corresponded to at least one

aspect of the *C5 for Action Framework*. As I discuss findings, SEL lessons that focused on one or more of the C5 components will be denoted as follows:

C5 for Action Framework:

1. confidence and happiness^{C5-1}
2. communication and social quotient^{C5-2}
3. compassion and inclusion^{C5-3}
4. conflict resolution and non-violence^{C5-4}
5. celebrating diversity authentically^{C5-5}.

Finding 4: At Sherman Elementary, SEL is more effective in classrooms that have consistent classroom management that is focused on positive behavior.

Finding 5: At Sherman Elementary, SEL is more effective in classrooms in which relationships are valued.

Of the seven teachers involved in this study, all seven were female, five were white, one was African American, and one was Native American. Two had Masters degrees, and six of the teachers had over five years of teaching experience. Three of the seven teachers had taught in this district their entire professional careers, and one of them taught only at Sherman her entire career, others at Sherman. The gender and demographic makeup of each classroom is highlighted in the table below.

Teacher & Grade	Female Students	Male Students	Black Students	White Students	Native American Students	Hispanic Students	Asian Students	Total Students
Ms. Lee, Pre-K	10	9	10	5	1	1	2	19
Ms. Liz, Kindergarten	10	12	11	7	3	1	1	23
Ms. Rhonda, 1 st grade	10	12	19	1	0	1	1	22
Ms. Day, 1 st grade	14	9	14	5	3	1	0	23
Ms. Reen,	13	9	11	9	0	0	2	22

1 st grade								
Ms. Jane, 3 rd grade	14	8	15	3	2	1	1	22
Ms. Dorothy, 5 th grade	11	14	14	4	4	2	1	25

Social Emotional Learning was most effective in four of the seven classrooms: Ms. Lee, Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Jane, and Ms. Dorothy’s classrooms. In these classrooms, student participation, engagement, and internalization of SEL messages was significantly stronger than in Ms. Liz, Ms. Day, or Ms. Reen’s classrooms.

Finding 1: At Sherman Elementary, SEL is regularly embedded into lessons throughout the school day in classrooms in which relationships are given high priority and classroom management is consistent.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) was regularly embedded into both formal and informal lessons throughout the school day in Ms. Dorothy’s, Ms. Lee’s, Ms. Jane’s and Ms. Rhonda’s classrooms. These are the same classrooms in which relationships were emphasized and where consistent classroom management was present. All four of these teachers incorporated SEL into their Morning Meetings, and transition times. Three of the four teachers out of this group embedded SEL into core content areas including math, science, and literacy.

Morning Meetings & SEL

Social Emotional Learning was most easily incorporated into Morning Meetings. In all four of these classrooms, Morning Meeting was a time to go over the day’s agenda, review the calendar and the weather, and participate in small brain-builder activities as a warm-up to a full day of learning. In Ms. Lee’s pre-kindergarten class, the Morning Meeting started with the “Knock-Knock” name greeting activity as described earlier. Ms. Lee then explained to the class why they take time to do the name activity. She incorporated SEL by discussing the importance of social inclusion^{5C-3}.

Our morning greeting is really a special time for us all to be included and for us all to have our names said out loud. Remember what we talked about last week? Remember we shared times that we have been left out? It hurts to be left out. Since we are in the same class together, we are like a family. We want to make sure everyone is happy and everyone is included.

The review lesson continued with Ms. Lee asking the class if they remembered ways that they could make sure to include friends who looked like they were left out. Examples included scenarios from recess, lunchtime, and in the classroom. There were several students who were actively participating in the discussion, providing ideas for how to be more inclusive and actively seek out students who needed a friend. A four-year-old named Madison said, “I could go give Makayla a hug if she’s sad at recess. I could ask her to play with me.” Another Pre-K student, Jordan, said, “I could look around and see if everybody have a friend to play with. Then ask ‘em if they wanna play with me and my friends if they don’t have nobody to play with and I can put my arm around ‘em.” Another student, Dani, said, “If we workin’ in groups, then I can look for somebody who don’t got nobody to be in a group with. Then I can ask ‘em to be in my group too and work on math together.” When I spoke to Ms. Lee after the lesson, she talked about diverging from the lesson.

Well, I didn’t plan for that discussion to go as long as it did so I hardly got to any of the stuff I planned for, like calendar, but I’m glad we talked about it. All that inclusion stuff is important for my class to hear and talk about—again and again. That happens a lot in Morning Meeting. It’s hard to plan for because you never know how the discussion will go. Today was great ‘cuz the kids were really thinking about the ideas we talked about before.

Communication and interpersonal skills,^{5C-2} essential aspects of both CASEL’s Social Emotional Learning framework and the *C5 for Action Framework*, were developed in students during Ms. Lee’s Morning Meeting through a game called “Kitty Kitty, Where’s Your Mouse?” All students sat in a circle with one student in the center. The student in the center pretended to be a kitty sleeping and had to close his or her eyes. The rest of the class watched as Ms. Lee hid a small toy mouse with one of the students, Damien, in the outer circle. When Damien, the “kitty” woke up, he had three chances to guess who had taken his mouse. Damien had to address students by name and ask if they had his mouse: “Ayanna, you got my mouse?” Damien asked, mumbling. Ms. Lee interjected:

Damien, nice job remembering to ask Ayanna by using her name. That was great! Try again though and this time, remember to make eye contact with her and use louder volume. Look in her eyes and ask her real loud. Give her a smile too! You can say, ‘Ayanna, do you have my mouse?’ Remember—you gotta have fun with this!

Damien tried again, this time louder and with eye contact. Ayanna replied, “I’m sorry, Damien, I don’t got your mouse.” After this exchange, Ms. Lee spoke to the class:

Did you all notice how nice Damien and Ayanna spoke to each other? They had great eye contact and volume, and did you notice they smiled too? That was great, you guys. Let’s see if we can do it again.

The game continued in a similar fashion with Damien having similar interactions with two other students, then three other students playing the role of “kitty.” Ms. Lee coached along the way to encourage strong communication skills^{C5-2} including using a friendly expression and using a “loud and proud” voice to encourage confidence.^{C5-1}

In Ms. Rhonda’s class, the incorporation of SEL was often a purposeful part of her Morning Meeting planning, as she told me during her interview. During one observation, Ms. Rhonda reminded the class about a community program called “Meals for Minds” and used it as a starting place for a conversation about diversity. First, she encouraged the whole class to bring their backpacks and fill them with groceries. “Remember, we can’t learn unless our bodies have fuel—make sure to remind your families to come get food tonight!” Next, she talked a bit about how every family is different and has different things and the importance of having pride in oneself.^{C5-1, C5-5}

Some families have lots of food, some families have little food. Some families have lots of toys, other families have none or just a few. Some families live in big houses, some don’t live in a house at all. Like me—I live in an apartment, you know? No matter what, you should be proud of who you are. If your family needs food, please come tonight. I will be there too, waiting to give you and your family a great big hug! Who’s planning on coming tonight? Who do I get to see tonight?

Another Morning Meeting in Ms. Rhonda’s class included song and dance to the song, “The Noble Duke of York.” Students lined up across from their “row partners” and Ms. Rhonda asked each student to announce who their row partner was. This served to accomplish two purposes—to remind students who they would be dancing with and to serve as the Morning Greeting.^{C5-2, C5-3}

Good Morning, Martin! I’m glad you’re my row partner!

Good Morning, Taylor! I’m glad you’re my row partner!

After all students had the opportunity to share who their row partner was, Ms. Rhonda reminded the class about dancing with a partner.

Remember, class. When we dance, it takes teamwork. You have to work with your partner to go in the right direction. You have to make an effort to smile at your partner to let them know you are their friend. I'm so impressed by the way everyone seems happy with their row partners. I think everyone is remembering our chat the other day that there is no bad partner. We are a community of learners and we're so lucky to work with anyone in this class! ^{C5-2, C5-3}

After this, Ms. Rhonda played the guitar while students square danced with their assigned partners. Each and every student was smiling, laughing, or giggling at some point during the song. After the lesson, Ms. Rhonda said the following to me in the hallway:

Any chance we get to sing and dance together is so important. It really helps the kids develop their social skills. Dancing, especially any kind of dance with a partner like square dancing, requires the kids to work together and get along. It wasn't always as smooth as you just saw it. Sometimes kids would complain about who their partner was or sometimes they would argue about dancing the wrong way and messing up the dance. We've had several talks about the importance of being a partner, a friend, when we're dancing or doing anything with a partner or group.

At the very end of this Morning Meeting, SEL was incorporated by a simple message about non-violence through a poem by Shel Silverstein called "Hug of War." The class had memorized the entire poem and collectively recited it:

Hug of War, by Shel Silverstein!

I will not play at tug o' war. I'd rather play at hug o' war,

Where everyone hugs, instead of tugs.

Where everyone giggles, and rolls on the rug.

Where everyone kisses, and everyone grins.

And everyone cuddles, and everyone wins.^{C5-4}

Later, during a focus group, I asked students to tell me what that poem means. A first grader named Tiana explained:

It means it's more fun to be friends than to fight. If you fight, you lose. If you be friends, you win, and you-

Maurice interrupted:

Yeah, it's like it better to hug and laugh —it don't feel good to fight and have war all the time.

The third student in my focus group, Tyler, said:

When people fight, nobody never wins and everybody sad. My step daddy used to fight people and my mama always sad. I used to fight, but that don't make nobody happy. Nobody never happy fight'n all time.

Friday Morning Meetings in Ms. Rhonda's class were full of song and dance, and SEL. While other Morning Meetings had one song and/or dance, on "Fantastic Fridays," nearly the entire Morning Meeting was consumed by songs played by Ms. Rhonda on her guitar—some with dances. On the particular Friday I observed, the class was about to do the "P-"P-Pollyanna" song and dance. Ms. Rhonda instructed the group to form a circle and hold hands with the person next to them. She stopped the activity for a brief SEL lesson:

You know what I don't see, boys and girls? I don't see anyone making faces about holding hands with the person next to them.^{C5-3} I love this about you. I love that you are understanding that we are a community of learners, that we can be different and still be

best friends.^{C5-5} Do you know how wonderful Minnesota would be if everyone was as nice as you? We wouldn't need policemen if everyone was as nice as you!

“P-P Pollyanna” involved the class in a circle formation while one student (Jermaine) walked around the inside of the circle while the group was singing the song. After the first verse of the song, Jermaine stopped and stood opposite another student named Tiana. At this point, Ms. Rhonda interjected a reminder, “Now remember, boys and girls, when you do the actions with someone, you first have to greet them by looking in their eyes and giving them a smile,” she said while smiling herself. Jermaine looked at Tiana, gave her a big smile, then they both did some actions to the song including interlocking their arms, giving each other a high five with both hands, and dancing together. Next, both Tiana and Jermaine walked around the circle and found new partners at the appropriate part of the song. Ms. Rhonda coached along the way reminding students to greet each person with a smile and eye contact.^{C5-2} By the end of the activity, all students in the group had an opportunity to participate.

Math & SEL

Ms. Lee, Ms. Rhonda, and Ms. Jane all incorporated SEL into their math lessons. Ms. Lee weaved both SEL and literacy into her Pre-K math lessons. She started her math lessons by asking the class who was absent from school that day. Students shared the names of four students who were absent while Ms. Lee wrote their names on the board. Next, she asked the class to turn to their math partners and collectively count how many students were gone. Students spoke quietly with their math partners and counted the four names on the board. Ms. Lee then counted with the class, one through four, and said, “We will miss them today. What will we miss about Damien?” Ms. Lee proceeded to ask the class about things that would be missed about each of the absent students. On a corner of the dry-erase board, there was already a box with the words,

“We missed you!” written at the top. Under it, she wrote the four sentences that the class collectively contributed.

Damien, we missed your big, happy smile.

Mariah, we missed your help during spelling time.

Asad, we missed your funny jokes at snack time.

Jasmine, we missed your contagious laugh.

Ms. Lee reminded the class how important it is to find the good in people and share compliments as often as possible. “Kindness is easy,” she told the class. In our interview, she explained the purpose of the “We missed you!” activity:

It’s important for my kids to think of positive things about their classmates. Also, it’s really important for my absent kids to come back to class and feel welcome. A lot of these kids feel lost after being gone a day or two and it can be hard to come back to school. This way, my class learns that kindness is easy and important.^{C5-3}

After the 10 minute “We Missed You” activity, Ms. Lee continued with the math lesson by using the number chart to collectively determine how many students were in class. “If we know that we have 23 students in this class and four are missing, how many students are here today? Watch me use the number chart to get the answer.”

Ms. Jane also started her math lesson with SEL. In their desks, students had a piece of paper taped inside with a clock on it. Each number had a student’s name written by it. Ms. Jane used this as a tool to have students work with different partners.

Find your three-o-clock partner! Give them 3 x 2 handshakes —go! You can use whatever tools you need to figure out what 3 times 2 is!

Students took some time to determine who their 3 o'clock partner was. Then, many needed to use manipulatives or their multiplication chart to figure out the answer to 3×2 . Soon, though, students were giving their partners six handshakes.^{C5-2} Ms. Jane was not finished with the SEL portion of math.

Now look at your 3 o'clock partner. This is your math partner for today. Tell them 1 x 2 reasons you are glad they are your partner or why you are glad to have them in this class. Go!^{C5-2, C5-3}

At this point, Ms. Jane circulated throughout the room, coaching students to make eye contact and smile while they spoke to their partner. She also reminded them to be genuine:

Remember, don't say it if you don't mean it! If you can't think of something, maybe you could say one of the reasons you are glad they are your partner because sometimes math is more fun when you work together.

Next, Ms. Jane explained the math activity for the day. Since the class would be working with partners, she reminded the class of how to work effectively with others. She reminded the class that it is normal to have different ideas and understandings,^{C5-5} but to speak respectfully if disagreements arise.^{C5-4}

It's okay to disagree, it's not okay to speak unkindly. Any time you work with a partner whether it's in math class or in life, like your husband or wife or co-worker, you have to learn to talk through differences and disagreements.

She then publically praised two students for previously handling a disagreement well during math group time.

That's what it means to collaborate. It's a chance to share ideas that are the same but also share ideas that are different. You will do that a lot in life. Just always remember to talk nicely when you do it.

When I asked if the two students that Ms. Jane referred to had submitted consent forms for this study, she showed me that one student, Tatiana, had. I spoke with Tatiana and asked her to explain to me what Ms. Jane was referring to. Tatiana explained that she and her partner, Xavier, had a disagreement about a word problem involving money. Both had solved the problem independently, then discussed what their answer was and how they arrived at it. Even after explaining how they got their answers, there was disagreement between the two. Tatiana said:

We was both mad. Xavier couldn't get what I was tellin' him, and I didn't get what he was sayin'. Then I start to get mad and Xavier tell me to remember about talkin' nice and workin' as a team like Ms. Jane say we gotta do so we start talkin' nice and quiet and slow and then I get what Xavier tryin to tell me and he get what I tryin' to tell too.

In Ms. Rhonda's first grade class, SEL was a part of every math lesson that I observed. Specifically, she incorporated the development of communication skills and confidence.

Okay! It's Geometric Shapes With Maurice time! Remember, Maurice, you are the speaker! You need to speak with loud volume, look at your audience, and be confident, okay?^{C5-2}

Maurice took the basket, then pulled one shape out. "This is a rhombus," he said quietly while looking at the floor. Ms. Rhonda coached him and encouraged him to try again saying it 'loud and proud' with confidence.^{C5-1} Maurice tried again and spoke much louder while looking at the class. Ms. Rhonda congratulated him and told him he was a great speaker. Maurice then

asked the first shape question. “How many shapes does a rhombus have?” he asked loudly. When students answered Maurice’s questions, Ms. Rhonda would loudly praise those who spoke with loud volume or who seemed confident while speaking. She would occasionally go beyond simply focusing on the speaking skills alone.

That’s right, Veronica! Say it loud and proud! Did you notice that, class? When she spoke, she was so sure of herself. It’s so, so important to have confidence in yourself. If you don’t believe in yourself, why should anyone else? You have to be proud of who you are, proud of what you say, and proud to be you!^{C5-1}

Later that day, I asked focus group participants why Ms. Rhonda asks them to say it “loud and proud.” Tiana said, “Ms. Rhonda wants us to use our best speaking voices and be proud about what we want to say.” Maurice said, “Yeah, it’s like, if you don’t be proud of yourself, nobody gonna listen to you.” Last, Tyler explained, “You gotta say it like you mean it and be proud when you say it loud like you mean it and when you say something, you gotta believe in yourself and think you is smart.”

During another math lesson, Ms. Rhonda asked the class to look at the ‘Question of the Day’ from Morning Meeting. On the large chart paper, students had already responded to the question, “What do you like on your ice cream sundae?” Four choices were offered: strawberries, hot fudge, hot caramel, and none of these. At this point, Ms. Rhonda led the class through a math activity counting how many students preferred which sundae topping and how many more of a particular topping was preferred than another, working on addition and subtraction skills. Different students had the opportunity to come to the front of the class and use the microphone to contribute their answer while Ms. Rhonda encouraged them to use their best speaking voices focusing on eye contact, volume, and expression.^{C5-2}

After all the results were tallied and the math problems were answered, Ms. Rhonda led the class through a discussion regarding the idea that people can have different feelings toward the same thing, that it is okay to have differing feelings and preferences, and that the world would be boring if we all felt the same way or believed the same thing. She offered examples beyond the ice cream sundae and mentioned believing in different Gods or no God or liking a different person for President of the United States or not wanting to vote at all. She spoke at length about the idea of being friends with people who have different beliefs and preferences and how great it is to have friends who are different.^{C5-5} She also complimented two students in the class for choosing “none” as their answer to the sundae-topping question:

It’s not always easy to be different. When you hear everyone saying they like having hot fudge, hot caramel, or strawberries on their ice cream, maybe it made you want to say you liked one of those things too. But if you don’t really like any of those things, or maybe you don’t like ice cream, you shouldn’t just say you like one of those things just because everyone else is saying it. You have to be true to who you are and be honest about what you like, what you don’t like, what you believe in, even if it’s different from everyone else.^{C5-1}

The lesson continued with a calendar activity where students added a bead to a string to signify that it was the 52nd day of school. Students counted from 0 to 52, then backward from 52 to 0 using a number chart. Students were then asked to get together with their math groups to work on the next math activity. As students were settling with their math groups, Ms. Rhonda led the class in a discussion about what it means to be a strong group member. She referred to a classroom poster that had the acronym “GROUPS” written:

Give thoughtful feedback

Respect others and their thoughts

On task all the time

Use soft voices

Participate actively

Stay with your group

Ms. Rhonda particularly focused on the “R” of respecting others and their thoughts.

Remember that in math, and in life actually, we might have different ways of arriving at the same answer so we need to respect others and their ways of doing math might be different from how you do it. If you think your group members are doing it wrong, we don’t just yell and tell them it’s wrong. We first make sure that we understand what they’re saying then see if we can show our way of doing it, then we talk about it together as a group.^{C5-4, C5-5}

On another day when I observed Ms. Rhonda’s math class, the class engaged in a meaningful discussion about diversity.^{5C-5} Similar to the previous math lesson I observed, the class tallied up the responses and did some adding and subtracting collectively to determine how many more students preferred chocolate pie to pumpkin pie. Ms. Rhonda again facilitated a discussion about valuing differences. She asked the class to respond to several questions related to this topic. “So class, if Renee loves chocolate pie, and I just really don’t like pumpkin pie at all, can I still be best friends with someone who loves pumpkin pie?” she asked the class. A student named Taylor raised her hand and said:

Yes, we can be best friends with anybody. You said it’s good being different and fun if your best friends be different from you. It’s boring if everybody is the same.

A few other students responded similarly. Anthony raised his hand and said:

My buddy Brandon come to my house and don’t like to play my video games. He don’t like video games. I love to play video games, but he don’t like to play so it’s okay, he’s

still my best friend even though he don't like 'em. We just watch a movie instead. Plus, it's like, if you don't like the same kinda pie as me, it's good because then we don't gotta fight 'bout who gets more!

Ms. Rhonda then turned the conversation to a more serious tone:

Great answers, class. But I want to ask what you think about differences when it's something more than just pie. You're right, Brandon. It's true that if we like different kinds of pie, maybe it's a good thing—we each get more! But what if it's something like your friend doesn't believe in Santa and doesn't have a Christmas tree and you do? Can you still be best friends with that person?

Anthony spoke without raising his hand:

Well, yeah. It's like, I'm friends with Brandon and he don't love Jesus. My mama don't think I should play with Brandon no more cuz he don't love Jesus, but he my friend. And he aint gonna put up no Christmas tree.

The discussion continued with additional examples of religious differences and differences of ability (both academic and physical). Ms. Rhonda concluded the lesson with a powerful message about diversity. She told the class that diversity is a beautiful thing that sometimes makes adults get into disagreements about “who they want to vote for president or what name they call God.” She continued:

Remember, that diversity is like the pumpkin or chocolate pie. It's like the ice cream sundae toppings. It's good to be different, and it's even better to be best friends with people who are different from us. We should go try to make friends with people who are different from us. We can learn from each other and we can find some things that are the same, and some things that are different. ^{C5-5}

While students were walking back to their desks, I heard Taylor say to Anisha, “I have brown hair, you have black hair! We’re still best friends.”

Literacy & SEL

Among all academic subjects, literacy was the subject area that most SEL lessons were woven into. Five of the seven teachers observed used SEL concepts and skills while teaching literacy. All five teachers incorporated SEL during read-aloud book discussions, two included SEL during vocabulary lessons, and two teachers had students writing about SEL-related topics.

SEL in Read-Aloud Book Discussions

In Ms. Lee’s Pre-K class, the book, *Chrysanthemum* was read to the class, then followed by a class discussion about Social Emotional Learning. Before reading the book to the class, Ms. Lee asked students to sit on the rug in a circle. Ms. Lee held a small stuffed animal bunny rabbit and reminded the class of listening and speaking rules. The rule that she emphasized was that the only person who could speak was the person holding the “Be Calm Bunny.” She asked the class two questions:

1. What do you like or dislike about your name?
2. Do you know why you were given this name or the story behind your name?

Students took turns holding the bunny and sharing their responses while Ms. Lee coached along the way, reminding students what respectful listeners look like and what strong speakers look and sound like.^{C5-2} Next, Ms. Lee read the book. The story of *Chrysanthemum* was about a little mouse named Chrysanthemum who loved her name until she started going to school. Chrysanthemum’s classmates teased her about the length of her name, the fact that she was named after a flower, and the way that her name sounded. Naturally, Chrysanthemum felt crushed about the way she was being treated at school and also started to dislike her name.

However, with the support of her parents and music teacher, she learned to love her name and school again.

Ms. Lee guided the class through a conversation about the book; first comprehension questions about what happened, then she progressed into questions about friendship, jealousy, and the positive effects of kindness.^{C5-3} The class engaged in a lively discussion about the transition of Chrysanthemum's feelings about her name, what caused this change, and ways that Chrysanthemum's parents supported her. Ms. Lee asked the class to think about why Chrysanthemum's classmates teased her about her name, how she may have felt, and what would they do if they were in a similar situation. Several students contributed to the conversation. "I woulda felt sad if everybody teased me at school," said one student. "Maybe they teased her cuz other kids were teasing her," said another. One boy said, "If I were her, I would just tell the teacher." Another said, "I would just ignore them." One little girl said softly, "I would cry." Ms. Lee addressed each contribution to the discussion and extended it to the larger group.

Next, Ms. Lee shifted the conversation and asked the class how they would respond if they were in the classroom and saw Chrysanthemum being teased. Collectively, the class discussed the importance of standing up to bullying and teasing.^{C5-4} Ms. Lee explained that, "If you see someone being bullied or teased and you don't take action, it's almost like you are a bully too." Students contributed a variety of answers regarding how they could help if they witnessed Chrysanthemum being teased. One boy, named Remmy, said, "I'd tell them to stop making fun of her. I'd say her name is beautiful." A girl named Asia said, "I could talk to Chrysanthemum and tell her I love her name and give her a hug. People sometimes make fun of my name but I just ignore it cuz my Mama gave me my name." Another student named

Alejandro, said, “I be Chrysanthemum’s friend and tell everybody to leave her alone ‘cuz it’s no nice to tease somebody.”

Ms. Lee praised each student for their meaningful contributions, then ended the lesson with a message about kindness. She reminded the class that they should not tease others for any reason—not for their name, how they look, what they like or don’t like, among others. She reminded the class to think about how they would feel if they were the ones being teased and to remember how badly it hurts.

It makes some people want to cry; makes some people really sad, and makes other people mad. When you see someone who is being teased, you need to think of all the things you can do. You can tell a teacher, you can be that person’s friend, you can nicely ask the people teasing to stop, but you shouldn’t just watch them being teased. That’s being a part of the problem.^{C5-3, C5-4}

Ms. Rhonda also incorporated SEL into literacy during read-aloud time. She used *The Sneetches*, a book by Dr. Seuss, to teach explicitly about diversity.^{C5-5} First, she read the story. *The Sneetches* is about two groups of creatures, one group with stars on their bellies, the other group without. The “Star-Belly” Sneetches think they are better than the “Plain-Belly” Sneetches and don’t talk to or interact with them. Then, someone comes with a machine that can put stars on bellies and take stars off. Plain-Belly Sneetches get stars so they can fit in with the elite Star-Belly Sneetches, but the Star-Belly Sneetches are upset that they are no longer special so they get their stars removed. Because of this, those with stars no longer want stars, and the cycle continues with the Sneetches having stars put on their bellies and removed again and again until no one can remember which Sneetch was originally a Star-Belly or Plain-Belly. All the

Sneetches realize that it doesn't really matter who has a star, they are the same and they can all be friends.

After reading the story to the class, she asked several questions to get the group to think about how this applies to real life, specifically, how it applies to the treatment of groups that are different from them.^{C5-5} She asked the students if they thought it was fair to treat the Star-Belly Sneetches better just because they had stars on their bellies.

Martin was called upon first. "It ain't fair cuz just cuz you have a star don't make you better," he said. Maurice spoke next, "It's like they thought they better just cuz they had a star. That don't make them better—just different."

Next, Ms. Rhonda asked, "Have you ever treated someone differently because you thought you were better than they were?" No one raised their hand to this question, so Ms. Rhonda told a story about a time that she was ashamed of. She told the class a story about a time when she was a little girl when she thought she was better than her neighbor, Sara, because she had a new backpack and Sara had a backpack that was ripped up. "I am so ashamed, friends. I don't know why I thought I was better just because of a silly backpack, but I did, and I now know that was wrong." She asked the same question again, but again, no students raised their hands. She changed the question. "Well, have any of you been treated differently because someone else thought they were better than you?" This question resulted in several students raising their hands. Students shared about times that their friends had treated them differently because the friend something materialistic that they didn't have (toy, bike, new shoes) and how it made them feel (wished they had it, felt like they were no good).

After a lengthy discussion, Ms. Rhonda moved on to her last question: "Have you ever felt like you wanted to look like someone else?" Ms. Rhonda facilitated a ten-minute discussion

about this topic. Some students were honest about things they didn't like about themselves, how they wished they looked like someone else, and how it sometimes made them feel bad. Ms. Rhonda responded by talking about the importance of self-esteem, feeling pride in oneself, and the importance of being confident and happy with how you look and who you are. She also added the words "self-esteem" and "confidence" to the class word wall^{C5-1}.

During a third grade literacy lesson, Ms. Jane used the read aloud book, *Because of Winn-Dixie*. First, Ms. Jane reminded the class where they left off, and gave a quick refresher of the story. They were near the end of the book. Since I was in the room, Ms. Jane was kind enough to quickly fill me in on the story.

This story is about a ten-year-old girl called Opal whose mother left when she was three. She had just moved to a new small town in Florida with her father and met a dog that she named "Winn-Dixie". Opal convinced her father to let her keep the dog, and Opal made new friends and reflected on her life with her new dog and new friends in this new town. Next, Ms. Jane read another chapter that described a growing friendship between Opal and various characters in the book. She asked the class to explain to me how Opal used to feel about some of the characters. A student named Shamaiya explained that, initially, Opal did not want to become friends with two brothers named Dunlap and Stevie because she thought they were annoying. Shamaiya also explained that Opal did not want to become friends with a girl named Amanda Wilkinson because she is mean. After this, Ms. Jane incorporated SEL into the discussion by asking the group to consider how Opal made a lot of quick judgments about people she met and how after she got to know them better, she changed her mind about how she felt about them. She facilitated a class discussion asking students to think about a time they were too quick to judge someone and if their opinion ever changed about that person. She asked students to reflect on what made

them change their feelings and why it's important not to judge a book by its cover^{C5-2, C5-5}.

Several students contributed to the discussion with examples of times they met a new friend at the park or at a friend's house and decided right away they didn't like them for one reason or another; then after playing with them, talking to them, and getting to know them, they realized that they actually liked them and wanted to be their friend. Throughout the dialogue, Ms. Jane encouraged students to speak with confidence, eye contact, and volume^{C5-2}. She also encouraged the class to think about how important this kind of a lesson is in life.

Friends, it's natural to have judgments, but you have to take control of your mind and try your best to realize that you never know who could be a friend. By taking time to get to know someone, you'll never know who might be a new friend. If you decide you don't like someone before you even get to know them, that's not really the best decision.

Ms. Jane added the word "judgment" to the class word wall before dismissing for lunch.

During one of my observations of Ms. Dorothy's fifth grade class, the literacy lesson was being co-taught with a Neighborhood Bridges community partnership teacher named Lawrence. Lawrence and Ms. Dorothy were sitting in a circle with the class telling a story called, "The Boy Who Wanted to Fight with the Dragon." The story was about a boy who had aggression problems and wanted to grow up and kill dragons. He also wanted to kill all French people "like the Germans killed the French in the German-French war." Ms. Dorothy and Lawrence told the story in a captivating, theatrical manner. The story proceeded to show how ridiculous the boy was and how unhappy his aggression and violence were making him. Toward the end of the story, he sees a friend teaching and feeding poor children and he drops his sword because he realizes that he no longer needs it anymore because kindness is more rewarding.^{C5-3, C5-4}

The class engaged in a discussion about the story's major lessons. Out of the entire class of 24 students, only three students did not participate in the discussion. Students talked about violence in the story and violence in their lives, in current events, etc. One student named Sariyah said:

It's never going to do nobody any good to use violence. It's just going to make the person miserable and all the other people miserable. And that lady was way happier by being kind and helping those kids at the end.

Another student named Brenton said:

Well, that boy was just goin' down a bad path. He gonna end up in jail actin' like that and hurt somebody. Look at anybody you know who actin like that—they end up in jail like my uncle, 'cuz he be fightin' like a fool.

Later in the discussion, when Ms. Dorothy asked the class if it is okay to kill people in war, there were mixed responses from students. A student named Orlando said:

If you're a soldier serving your country in a time of war, you have to serve your country. I'm not saying killing people is a good thing, but you're not going to win a war by tickling people.

The class laughed at this remark, but Lawrence then asked the class if soldiers are the only ones who die during wartime. Students discussed that several others are harmed including innocent bystanders, children, hostages, and accidental killings.

Next, Ms. Dorothy and Lawrence told another "peace tale" in a similar theatrical manner. The next story was about a royal king who sat in his palace looking out of colored windows upon the people in his kingdom. In one window, he saw other royalty—healthy, with plenty of rights and privileges that he, as king, had given them. In another, he saw the poor—unhealthy, weak

peasant people who he, as king, gave no rights or privileges to. One day, a fly landed on the king's head, and while he was trying to swat it, he broke both of the windows. When he looked out on the royalty, he did not see elegant royalty, but instead saw sick-looking, stuck up, conceited people. When he looked out on the peasants, he did not see weak people, he saw strong, hard-working people who looked quite similar to him. Ms. Dorothy and Lawrence led the class in a dialogue about judging groups of people, fairness and equity, and the meaning of the word "justice."^{C5-4, C5-5}

After a lengthy conversation, Ms. Dorothy asked students to get in their Bridges groups and take a seat on the rug. At the front of the room, there were four seats. Ms. Dorothy modeled the next activity with three additional student volunteers. They sat in the chairs, and Ms. Dorothy started by retelling the introduction of the first peace tale about the boy who wanted to kill others. The student sitting next to Ms. Dorothy continued by telling the next part of the story, and the cycle continued until the student sitting in the fourth chair told what happened at the end. Ms. Dorothy told the class that today they were going to retell both peace tales with their groups, then decide on which story they would like to select a scene from to do a skit in front of the class.^{C5-2} She reminded students of group work rules and pointed to the same poster that was in Ms. Dorothy's class.

GROUPS:

- Give thoughtful feedback
- Respect others and their thoughts
- On task all the time
- Use soft voices
- Participate actively
- Stay with your group

The class discussed the poster agreements, and Ms. Dorothy reminded the class that it's normal to want to do different scenes of the story, and it's normal to have different ideas about how to do the skit, but it's important to negotiate, compromise, and be respectful. "Remember your peaceful conflict resolution strategies!"^{C5-4} she said.

At this point, students got into their groups and started the re-tell chair activity before planning their skits. During the skit practice, conflicts arose between two of the groups. Ms. Dorothy approached these groups and calmly asked questions as she referred to the "GROUPS" poster. "Is everyone being respectful of others and their thoughts?" she asked one group. To another she asked, "Is everyone participating actively? Is everyone on task?" This kind of coaching seemed to resolve the issues,^{C5-4} and students resolved their conflicts independent of any additional help from Ms. Dorothy. The last 30 minutes of the class were spent with students acting out their skits. Ms. Dorothy went over effective speaking skills including volume, eye contact, vocal expression, and facial expressions before students started.^{C5-2}

SEL in Vocabulary

In Ms. Rhonda's first grade class, SEL was also incorporated into literacy through the class word wall. During the vocabulary portion of literacy time, she first asked if there was anyone who wanted to add a word to the wall. Ms. Rhonda later explained that she usually gave two students an opportunity to add a word to the word wall that they had heard or read but didn't know the meaning of. For each word that was added to the word wall, Ms. Rhonda wrote the word on an index card, stapled it to the word wall, explained the definition, gave examples, and asked students to use the words in sentences. At this point, a girl named Shoveya raised her hand and asked about the word "uplifting." To this, Ms. Rhonda explained:

Today, Shoveya came into class with a huge smile on her face like she always does. I told her she was uplifting. Sometimes when I feel sad, I want to listen to an uplifting song like our “Proud” song or be around an uplifting person like Shoveya. Even uplifting posters can help like that one. Let me read that uplifting poster to you. It says ‘I think I can. I think I can. No—I KNOW I can!’ What an uplifting poster! Uplifting means it makes you feel good. Songs can be uplifting and put you in a good mood, some poems can be uplifting and lift your spirits. Get it? Up-lift-ing! It lifts your spirits UP! People can be uplifting too. If you see someone who is sad, you can be uplifting and find a way to lift their spirits and make them smile. If you are sad yourself, you have to take control and find something that is uplifting to you- something to lift your own spirits! ^{C5-1, C5-3}

Next, Ms. Rhonda asked the class to use the word “uplifting” in a sentence about how to help a friend who is sad. Several students contributed to the conversation. Ms. Rhonda helped some reconstruct some of their sentences to make sense.

I can be uplifting by giving a hug to a sad friend.

I can be uplifting by telling a joke if a friend is sad.

Uplifting is when you make someone sad happy again.

It’s uplifting when it makes you feel better.

My mom’s hugs are uplifting.

The rest of the vocabulary lesson involved Ms. Rhonda’s selected words for the word wall: furious, energetic, and concerned were the words. With each word, Ms. Rhonda facilitated a similar discussion as outlined above. Students discussed times they had felt furious, what they do to calm down, and how they can help friends who are feeling angry, frustrated, upset, and furious. ^{C5-4} Similarly, the class also talked about times they felt energetic and concerned and how

to express those emotions in productive, appropriate ways. After the lesson, Ms. Rhonda told me that some teachers on her team think that the vocabulary words she uses are too hard for first graders. She disagreed though. Ms. Rhonda told me:

They can totally handle it. These kids hear these words all the time. I see nothing wrong in exposing them to the vocabulary that is used in their lives. Emotions and feelings are a part of everyday for kids. Why not teach them what these words actually mean and how to deal with these emotions?

Like Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Jane also used vocabulary time to facilitate SEL discussions. During my observations, two vocabulary words related to SEL were discussed: compassion^{C5-3} and perseverance.^{C5-1} Ms. Jane added these words to the word wall, asked students to copy the words into their vocabulary notebooks, read the class the dictionary definition of each word, then engaged the class in a discussion to come up with a “classroom definition” of the words. As a class, the group decided that compassion meant “caring deeply for others in a rough spot” and that perseverance meant “trying hard until it’s accomplished, no matter what.”

Students wrote these classroom definitions in their notebooks, then drew a small picture next to it to show its meaning. Ms. Jane gave a drawing example that showed a stick-figure boy helping his friend who fell down. Students could draw their own picture or just copy what Ms. Jane had drawn. Next, Ms. Jane asked students to share times that they had been compassionate or times when they had persevered. She regularly reminded students to use the vocabulary words when speaking. Students actively participated, providing numerous examples including giving a friend their winter hat on a cold day at recess, sharing part of their lunch with a friend who forgot theirs, and sharpening pencils for a friend who had a broken leg and was on crutches. With regard to perseverance, students shared a number of examples including working hard on their

multiplication math facts, practicing basketball, and learning how to do a cartwheel. While students were sharing, Ms. Jane was writing down each example that students provided on the whiteboard.

Next, Ms. Jane explained the class writing assignment. Students were to write about a time that they had experienced compassion (either someone was compassionate toward them or a time in which they were compassionate toward a friend) or a time in which they had persevered. She went over the writing rubric and reminded the class that they already did a group brainstorm on the white board. “If you get stuck, brainstorm using a brain web on the back of the rubric! Remember, you have to use our vocabulary words in your writing!” she said.

SEL in Music, Transition Times, & Recess

Music, transition times, and recess were also places where SEL was embedded regularly throughout the school day. The music teacher, Judy, and orchestra teacher, Ken, both feel passionately toward embedding SEL into their lessons. When I spoke to them, they explained that when PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) was prioritized and funded (prior to this school year), a program called “Music for Success” was integrated into all music lessons and provided for additional time in the school day for music. Students sang and learned to play the *Second Step* songs in music and orchestra classes and had discussions around the meaning and real-life application of these songs. Judy expressed her frustration with losing PBIS and specifically, losing Sherman’s PBIS coach, Ms. Laura.

Now with Laura gone, there just isn’t the capacity to keep this thing going. It’s just back to normal Music ed. There’s a big difference between the past five years here at Sherman and this year, and it’s no mystery that it’s because we lost PBIS.

Ken spoke similarly about orchestra:

I still teach my students that being in an ensemble is like being in a family, or classroom, or community—everyone has to work together to make it work well. When even one member of the ensemble isn't contributing to the betterment of the whole, everyone suffers.^{C5-2} I still talk to my students about that here and there, but not in the depth that I was able to before, with Laura's support.

Ms. Rhonda regularly used music to embed SEL lessons. While she strummed her guitar and sang, students worked collectively on group dances or singing together. Ms. Rhonda routinely integrated brief SEL lessons on working well with groups for dancing. Additionally, many of the songs that Ms. Rhonda's class sang were about SEL themes like "Proud," a song that encourages students to be proud of who they are, and proud of their individuality.^{C5-1} The main chorus of the song:

Oh I am proud of who I am, proud of what I am, proud of where I'm going, proud of what I'm doing. My life is my life, I have the power to be! I can reach my own brass ring and pull it for me.

Throughout the school day during transition times, Ms. Rhonda, and Ms. Lee often played the *Second Step* Sing-Along song CD that has numerous songs that relate to the lessons.

In the interview with Ms. Jane, she explained that she sometimes uses music to lift the spirits of the class if someone appears to be feeling down and there is not time in the moment to have a one-on-one conversation with that student. Ms. Jane explained that she does a brief, three minute "dance party clean up" where students get to dance around the room to upbeat music while they clean up the floor and/or their desks. "It doesn't always work, but a lot of times, people, who maybe looked a little unhappy, are smiling by the end of it." At the end of the dance party clean up, Ms. Jane explained that she reminds the class that music is a great strategy to

change a sad or angry mood into a happy mood.^{C5-1} She also tells her students to be careful with music because sometimes it can have the opposite effect too, if they listen to a sad song.

Transition Times

Some teachers used transition times to include a short SEL lesson within the school day. While students lined up for recess, Ms. Leah reminded the class of their previous discussion.

Remember guys—it's actually cool to reach out to someone who looks like they might be lonely. When you're at recess today and you see someone standing alone, be the cool one and ask them if they want to join you. Or ask them their name if you don't know them. That's your challenge for this recess today. Go out there and see if you can put a smile on someone's face who looks like they're bummed out.^{C5-3}

Similarly, Ms. Rhonda used recess as an opportunity for students to practice their SEL skills. During the transition time while students lined up for recess, she reminded them of their recess homework.

Boys and girls, you have homework for recess today. You need to find a way that you're different from a friend. We can be friends with people who are different from us. It's great to have friends who are different from us. How are you different from your friends? What's great about that? Go find out right now!^{C5-5}

Ms. Jane used a transition time when students were putting their books away and getting ready for math to include a short SEL lesson by reading a story about kindness and compassion from *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. It was a short story, and she followed it with a simple message before moving into the math lesson.

Kindness is one of the most powerful, beautiful things in this world. It is stronger than anything and can move mountains. Wasn't this story inspiring? I know I am going to

think of a random act of kindness to do for someone else today, and I'm not just going to think it, I'm going to do it! Who else is going to do a random act of kindness today? ^{C5-3}

During another transition time, Ms. Jane read a poem about the power of having a positive attitude. Like she did before, after reading it, she gave a brief lesson to the class.

If you have a positive attitude in life, I promise you that you'll always be happy. There is nothing greater than kindness and having a positive attitude. If you have a positive attitude and you're optimistic, you'll always find a way to be grateful and full of happiness. You can become more optimistic by thinking about why you're so lucky! Make a list, think of reasons you're lucky, think of things you're excited about. We'll do our next writing prompt on this, actually. ^{C5-1}

Ms. Rhonda used transition times to encourage her students to help one another.

Remember friends, if you're done cleaning up, find a friend who needs some help! We are a classroom community. We have to help each other in whatever way we can. Plus, it just feels good to help each other, doesn't it? ^{C5-3}

In conclusion, in classrooms where relationships were prioritized and classroom management was strong, SEL was regularly embedded into lessons throughout the school day through Morning Meetings, math, literacy, music, and transition times. Although the incorporation of SEL into Morning Meetings and Literacy was most prevalent, teachers also found ways to embed SEL into music, math, and transition times quite frequently.

Finding 2: At Sherman Elementary, teachers were able to adapt SEL curricular lessons to be more authentic to their classroom culture while maintaining fidelity to the program.

In the context of this study, authentic learning involves the construction of knowledge and developing a deep understanding of major SEL concepts that are connected to real world personal and community situations (see Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007). *Second Step*, the SEL curriculum used at Sherman Elementary, was regularly adapted to be more culturally relevant to individual classroom communities by four of the seven teachers observed. These four teachers were able to make lessons more authentic by incorporating their own personal life stories into SEL lessons, changing scenarios within the *Second Step* lesson to be more realistic and personalized to their students' lives, and using real-life student experiences and situations within the classroom as examples during the *Second Step* lesson. I also noticed that these four teachers did not read from the lesson script, like the other three teachers did. Lessons were put into their own words, and it was clear that some level of preparation occurred before teaching *Second Step* lessons in these classrooms. Alternatively, in three of the classrooms observed, teachers read the script directly from the lesson card and did not alter the lesson in any way. In these classrooms, student engagement and participation in *Second Step* lessons was minimal.

Personal Life Stories

The basic structure of a *Second Step* lesson involves an introduction to an SEL skill or concept, a story and discussion about an SEL-related topic, an activity to practice the skill, and finally, a concluding conversation on the topic. Ms. Lee, Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Jane, and Ms. Dorothy interjected stories from their own lives and the lives of their students during the introduction, story, or concluding part of the *Second Step* lesson. While they shared their personal life stories, engagement and overall attentiveness from the classes were extremely high.

Many students who had been looking elsewhere throughout the room or seemingly distracted in some way, almost immediately regained attention as soon as their teacher started to tell a story from their own life. Additionally, student participation in the discussion portion of the lesson increased in classrooms where teachers shared first. Students were able to either relate to the teacher's personal story or think of a similar personal story from their own lives to share.

My first observation of a *Second Step* lesson in Ms. Lee's Pre-K class was focused on teaching students to identify facial expressions and emotions. Students looked at various pictures of children's faces as Ms. Lee asked questions like: How does this child feel? Why do you think she/he feels happy/scared/sad/excited/angry? What do you think makes him/her feel happy/scared/sad/excited/angry?^{C5-2} After talking about the students on the lesson picture cards, Ms. Lee focused the remainder of the lesson on how to help someone when they look sad.^{C5-3}

"How could you help a friend who looked like this?" she asked as she held up the lesson picture card of a boy who was frowning and looking down. Only three students offered ideas including: give a hug, tell a teacher, and tell a joke. Ms. Lee tried encouraging more participation, although students were attentive, no one else raised their hand. At this point, Ms. Lee shared a personal story from her own life about a time she helped someone who was sad when she was in second grade. She always noticed a little boy from her class named Ethan who stood by the door every day at recess looking sad. Ms. Lee spoke seriously as she described Ethan and how he never played with anyone during recess. The class listened attentively as Ms. Lee described the day that she decided to befriend him and put a smile on his face. She explained explicitly how she reached out to him, how the simple act of smiling and asking this boy to play completely changed his experience at school, and how from that day forward, Ethan was her

recess friend. At the end of the story, she asked, “Do you see how you can help people who look sad by doing simple things like talking for a few minutes and trying to be their friend?”^{C5-3}

After this story was shared, several other students had their own examples and ideas of how to help when someone looks sad. Ms. Lee brainstormed with the class, and they collectively came up with the following ideas: inviting a friend to play with their group, asking if they want to talk about their problem, telling a funny joke, trying to show that person that you understand how they are feeling, trying to distract the person from what is bothering them and helping them focus on something that makes them feel happy, and asking a teacher to help.

Later in the lesson, Ms. Lee asked students to share their feelings. She asked questions like: What makes you feel sad/scared/angry? Several students contributed to this part of the discussion with responses ranging from being scared of dragons, bugs, and the dark, to feeling angry, “...when my brother plays with my toys” or “...my mom doesn’t let me go to the park.” When Ms. Lee tried to extend the conversation to dealing with emotions, fewer students contributed.

She asked, “If you are feeling scared, angry or sad, what should you do about it?”^{C5-4} Only two students raised their hands, and both said to tell an adult. Ms. Lee affirmed their responses, saying that telling a trusted adult is always a great idea. At this point, Ms. Lee shared a personal story from her own life about being angry with her husband for not helping around the house while their baby boy was crying. The entire class was captivated as she told the story about her son’s dirty diaper, and how she was trying to wash his clothes while getting his dinner prepared. Ms. Lee described her frustration with her husband as he watched television the entire time she was frantically trying to take care of diapering and feeding her child. Ms. Lee honestly

told the students that she felt like screaming at her husband, but as soon as she realized her anger had reached that level, she knew “it was time for me to calm down.”

I remembered that it doesn't really help to scream when you are angry and it usually makes things worse, so I took five deep breaths like this... [shows students deep breathing].^{C5-4} After I took those breaths, I felt a little better, not totally better. I was still mad, but I didn't feel like screaming anymore. So then I asked him in a nice voice if he could please put Connor in his high chair, get his sippy cup, and start feeding him. And you know what, boys and girls? He did! Right away!

After this personal story, when Ms. Lee asked the class if they could share a time from their own experiences when they were angry or sad and how they handled it,^{C5-4} several students contributed to the discussion and overall engagement and participation was high from the entire class. Students had a variety of tools for dealing with being sad or angry. “Sometimes I just draw when I'm sad,” said a little girl named Makayla. “When I git mad, I just think of my ma when I mad cuz she make me happy,” said Jordan as he pointed to a “Happy Strategy” poster in the classroom.

“When I'm sad, I just cry then I'm done crying, I feel better a little bit then I tell my mama,” Quinton said. “Some good music makes me feel better when I'm sad so I just ask if we can turn on the music and sometimes I dance, then feel better,” Cammy said. Likewise, several students shared.

In Ms. Rhonda's first grade class, one of the *Second Step* lessons was focused on being confident in oneself.^{C5-1}

You have to remember to use your self-talk, remember the little engine that could? You have to stay positive with yourself. You tell yourself you can do this. You ask questions,

we work together. We have to say, ‘I can do this!’ Look at our poster over there —it says ‘I think I can. I think I can. No, I KNOW I can!’ What a great poster. You have to believe in yourself.

At this point in the discussion, Ms. Rhonda interjected a personal story about self-confidence. She told about the time she had to give a presentation at an all-staff meeting to her colleagues. Ms. Rhonda explained how nervous she was to talk in front of everyone, but then she used self-talk to remember all the reasons to belief in herself.

I told myself, you can do this, Rhonda! I reminded myself of why I am great. I told myself, you are smart, Rhonda! You’re a great speaker, people think you’re funny, you can do this! Then when it was time for the meeting, I got right up there, and yeah, my heart was beating real fast still, but I got right up there and I did a great job. Do you see how positive self-talk can really help?

In another SEL lesson in Ms. Rhonda’s class, students were reviewing the various *Second Step* concepts that had been covered thus far. One was about being a respectful listener.^{C5-2} Ms. Rhonda shared another personal story.

Let me tell you a story about my dad. Oh, class, he was a phenomenal listener.

Phenomenal is a word we should add to our word wall later. Phenomenal means amazing. It means my dad was a really, really good listener. Whenever anyone was talking, he just got this look on his face that made you feel like he was really listening. He would look right at your eyes, his hands would be folded, he could tell you everything you said when you were done talking. Boys and girls, sometimes when I look at you, some of you are as good of listeners as my dad was. That’s pretty special.

Altering Second Step Scenarios

Every *Second Step* lesson includes various scenarios for students to consider for the large group discussion, role-play, and/or skill practice. Ms. Jane, Ms. Rhonda, and Ms. Dorothy rarely used the scripted situations provided by the *Second Step* curriculum. Instead, they altered the scenarios to more accurately reflect the lives of the students in their classrooms. For example, Ms. Jane was teaching a *Second Step* lesson about how to express concern for others.^{C5-2, C5-3} During the skill practice portion of the lesson, students got into pairs. One student had to pretend to have a problem and tell their partner who would then decide what to do and say to show they care. Some of the scripted scenarios included: *You're on the playground and see a kid fall off the jungle gym; You're walking with a friend, and his homework papers blow all over the sidewalk; and Your grandfather has come to visit, but he has a hard time walking up the front porch stairs.* Ms. Jane explained that she altered the situations to be more appropriate to her classroom population because they don't have a jungle gym on their playground, sidewalks on their streets, or porches on their homes since many live in apartments. Instead, Ms. Jane simply changed the situations to: *You're on the playground and see a friend get hurt; You're walking with a friend in the cafeteria, and they drop their lunch; and Your grandma (or grandpa or uncle or aunt or friend) comes to visit and they are having a hard time carrying all their things inside.* Ms. Jane explained that changing this language helps keep students engaged and understand how these kinds of situations might relate to their real lives. Ms. Rhonda and Ms. Dorothy altered their lessons similarly.

Teachable Moments & Student Experiences

Four out of seven teachers made SEL curricular lessons more relevant and authentic to students by using situations and examples that students had already experienced and/or that

surfaced within the classroom or school day. This was sometimes done throughout the school day, “in the moment,” and it was sometimes extended into the *Second Step* lesson by referring to previous student experiences. Ms. Jane, Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Lee, and Ms. Dorothy regularly connected *Second Step* lessons to real-life student examples.

During a lesson on diversity, Ms. Dorothy reminded the class how diverse their own class was. She led a class discussion about personality differences within their own group.^{C5-5} The class recognized that some students are shy, some are less shy, and others are more outgoing. As students were about to start group work, Ms. Dorothy offered a brief lesson on compassion and social inclusion.^{C5-3}

Remember, some of us are shy. The cool thing to do is reach out to people who are shy and try to include them in your small group. You guys have done a great job of this in the past—that’s why I’m letting you choose your own groups today—because I know you can handle it, because I know you are kind enough to make an effort to find people who don’t have a group yet. Remember that it’s actually cool to be that person who includes someone.

During another *Second Step* lesson about fairness, Ms. Dorothy was asking students to talk to their group members to consider various situations and share their thoughts on whether or not the outcome was fair. At one point during the lesson, a boy named Brogan got up and started leaving the class while raising his hand. When Ms. Dorothy called on him, he was near the door on his way out. “Oh, you gonna let me get my sweater that I left in music?” Brogan asked with one foot outside of the door. Ms. Dorothy responded by telling Brogan that she would have said yes, if he had asked her respectfully rather than nearly walking out the door without speaking with her. She reminded him (and the class) of their *Second Step* lesson on respect and

communication.^{C5-2} “It really sometimes just comes down to the way you ask. Again, buddy, if you would have asked me in a different way, I would have probably let you go,” Ms. Dorothy explained. Next, Ms. Dorothy asked the class to consider the fairness of this classroom example:

Okay, class, with your groups, I want you to talk about whether or not my decision not to let Brogan go get his sweater was fair. There’s no right or wrong answer—everyone has a different perspective, but I want you to share your ideas on fairness with each other. It’s perfectly okay to disagree, but it’s not okay to argue about it—just remember to disagree respectfully and intelligently.

During a lesson about identifying others’ feelings based on facial expressions, Ms. Lee facilitated a discussion about how to help others when you notice they are feeling sad.^{C5-3} She showed a photo card from a *Second Step* lesson and asked questions like: How do you think this girl is feeling? Why do you think she is sad? What do you think you could do to make this girl feel better? What would you do if Leila was your friend and you wanted to make her feel happy? As the class began to brainstorm a number of ways to help a sad friend, the classroom door opened and one of their classmates, Jayden, entered the room crying. A teacher’s assistant entered the room and explained what happened to Ms. Lee. At this point, Ms. Lee addressed the class:

Oh, class. Our good friend, Jayden, is sad. What could we do to help him feel happy? He saw his sister in the hall and he was so excited that he ran to give her a hug, but they both fell down. Now he’s sad and crying—what can we do to help him?

Several students started raising their hand to contribute ideas while two students got out of their seats to comfort Jayden. One gave him a hug, and the other sat next to him and helped him clean off his desk. Ms. Lee led a discussion around various ways that might help Jayden feel

better. She affirmed some of the answers that students came up with and encouraged students to approach Jayden and try their “happy strategy.”^{C5-3} By the end of this exercise, several students had the opportunity to make Jayden smile through hugs, jokes, and stories from students who shared similar experiences. It was clear that Jayden was feeling much better, as he was no longer crying and instead, laughing and smiling. Ms. Lee praised the class for “making learning real” and using what they learned in class in their real lives.

In one of Ms. Rhonda’s first grade *Second Step* lessons, students were learning that people could have different feelings about the same thing.^{C5-5} Ms. Rhonda asked the class to think back to the first day of school. She asked the class to remember how they felt that first day of school and then asked students to raise their hands if they felt scared or nervous like Sally (a girl from the lesson card). Then she asked the class to raise their hands if they felt excited or happy about the first day of school like Louisha (another girl from the lesson card). Ms. Rhonda explained again that many people have different feelings toward the same thing. She pointed out the names of the students who were nervous and scared about the first day of school and how this group shared similar feelings, but then pointed out students who were excited and happy about the beginning of school and how this group had different feelings than the first group. “Sometimes we have different feelings about the same thing. Who remembers a time when you were happy but someone with you was not feeling the same way?” Ms. Rhonda asked. The class contributed various examples of times when they were happy but a sibling or friend was not. One student mentioned feeling happy when they were selected to be the line leader, but their friend was not happy because they wanted to be chosen. Similarly, students shared other examples about when they were given an opportunity or experience that another friend was not given. Another student shared an example of the time she came home from school and she was happy

because she had a great day, but her brother was unhappy because he had gotten in trouble at school.

At this point in her lesson, she said, “I need one volunteer to be my special helper and hold up this picture. Who’s going to be my special helper?” She pulled a name stick out of a cup and said, “Ooh! Aniyah is the lucky one!” Aniyah came to the front with a huge smile on her face and held up the poster, beaming. Several students appeared to be disappointed by this. Ms. Rhonda had made her point.

Friends, I just did this to show you an example right here, right now, in our own class of how different people can have different feelings about the exact same thing. How many of you feel happy that Aniyah is the one that gets to hold this poster? [a few students raised their hand] How many of you aren’t very happy and kind of wish it was you? [several students raised their hands] See? The same thing caused different feelings in our class.

She finished the lesson by reminding students to be “good detectives” and read the clues on people’s faces to help understand how people are feeling since not everyone feels the same way about things.

During one of Ms. Jane’s *Second Step* lessons, Ms. Jane used an example of a conflict that had arisen between two students earlier that day while they were lining up for recess. Although the majority of the class had seen what had happened, she reminded the class of the dispute. Damien and Michael were arguing about who was first in line. Ms. Jane had approached them, reminded them to use a peaceful conflict resolution strategy, then walked away and observed as the boys resolved the conflict on their own.^{C5-4} After retelling the situation that had occurred earlier in the day, Ms. Jane asked the class to think about why she had stepped away to

allow the boys to solve the problem independently. Several students explained that this is necessary to help third graders develop these skills since, “Ms. Jane won’t always be there to help us solve problems,” as one student put it.

Next, Ms. Jane complimented Damien and Michael for the way they handled the problem and asked them how the problem was resolved. Damien said he looked at the “calm down” poster and took three deep breaths before talking. Michael said he tried to think of something in his mind that made him happy—he thought of his dog. Next, the boys explained how they calmed their voices and tried to talk in a nice tone about how they thought they were the first one in line. “Then I just decided it ain’t no big deal. I did them deep breaths and I don’t care no more who in the front of the line,” Damien explained. “Yeah, then we both knew it don’t matter who in front so be both just get to the back of the line to get a basketball from the basket,” Michael said. At this point, Ms. Jane asked the class to clap three times for Michael and Damien for resolving their conflict so well. Next, she led the class in a discussion about additional ways the problem could have been resolved.^{C5-4}

In conclusion, teachers at Sherman were able to make *Second Step* lessons more relevant to their classroom culture by incorporating personal life stories, altering the “pretend and practice” scenarios in *Second Step* lessons, using student experiences as examples, and teaching in the moment when an SEL skill could be utilized. These teachers did not read the *Second Step* lessons directly from the scripted lesson card. Instead, it was clear there was some level of preparation and the messages were put into their own words.

*Finding 3:
At Sherman Elementary, the C5 for Action Framework was reflected
in both formal and informal SEL lessons.*

All Social Emotional lessons observed focused on one or more component from the *C5 for Action Framework*, as denoted throughout the findings sections above. Students were taught lessons on self-confidence, optimism, communication skills, friendship-building, compassion, inclusion, peaceful conflict resolution, and appreciation of diversity.

· Confidence and Happiness ^{C5-1}

The first component, *Confidence and Happiness* was taught to students through a variety of ways. Students were regularly told to use their “loud and proud” voice in some of the classrooms. Their teachers reminded them to be proud of who they are and what they have to say. Ms. Rhonda regularly reminded her students of this. During one lesson, she explained the importance of a classroom poster that read, *I think I can. I think I can. No—I KNOW I can!*

Boys and girls, when you have that kind of a positive attitude, when you really believe you can do it, guess what? You can! If you keep telling yourself you can do it, I promise you, the chances are that you will do it. And guess what, you keep telling yourself ‘I can’t do it’ - same thing. You won’t be able to do it. It’s called being confident. It’s your ticket in life! I think I can. I think I can. No! I KNOW I can! Let’s say that out loud, boys and girls. ‘I know I can!’ I know I can! I know I can!’

During another lesson, Ms. Rhonda further expanded on the importance of being confident in oneself.

If you don’t believe in yourself, why should anyone else? You have to be proud of who you are, proud of what you say, and proud to be you!

Similarly, Ms. Jane regularly reminded her students to “take pride” in their work. During her interview, Ms. Jane told me that she regularly handed student work back to students if she felt it was not their best effort.

My students know that it’s better to get a B on an assignment if they honestly tried their best than an A on an assignment that they just slopped together and didn’t care. I tell my students that I don’t want them to get the best grade. I want them to do their personal best. There’s a difference. I just ask them, ‘Do you feel proud of this? Can you take pride in this work?’ That’s more important, and I want my students to know that.

Students were also taught specific skills and strategies to find happiness. Ms. Jane regularly emphasized the importance of having a positive attitude. One of her lessons focused on how to develop optimism through gratitude. She asked students to brainstorm a list of reasons they are fortunate and things they are looking forward to in their life. After students made their lists, Ms. Jane led a class discussion on how, just by simply focusing one’s thoughts on what they are grateful for, one’s mood can change to be more positive and happy. She asked students to put their heads on their desks and raise their hand if they felt happier after thinking of all they are grateful for and excited about. The entire class raised their hands. Ms. Jane encouraged students to take a few minutes each day to think about what they are thankful for and excited about.

Additional aspects of the first component of the *C5 for Action Framework* are stress management, self-discipline, and goal-setting/attainment. These skills were incorporated into many of Ms. Dorothy’s SEL lessons. During one group activity, a student named Brent put his head down on their desk. Ms. Dorothy approached Brent and asked him what was on his mind.

Brent explained he felt overwhelmed by the task and that it was “just too much work.” Ms. Dorothy stopped the group work and addressed the class.

Class, I know this is a big project. It might feel overwhelming. Let’s talk about ways to deal with something that might seem stressful. What can we do? Who remembers what we talked about last week in circle time?

The class participated in a discussion about making a list of things that need to be accomplished, taking deep breaths, and thinking about things that make them feel happy like family and friends. Ms. Dorothy then modeled how to make a list for this particular project. She encouraged the class to only focus on the first task on the list and cover the remaining tasks until the first was accomplished. She then gave a brief pep talk about stress:

Stress is real, guys. Your parents feel it at times, teachers feel it, everybody has stress. We have to find ways to deal with it in a positive way, otherwise it will make you miserable. Whenever I’m overwhelmed and stressed out, I do exactly what we just talked about. I make a list, and I only focus on one thing at a time, nothing else. Then when I accomplish that one thing, that one task, I reward myself somehow. Maybe it’s a piece of candy, maybe it’s a little break from working, but just a small reward and a bit of a break before continuing on the list. We need to keep talking about this, guys. I don’t want anyone stressing in here. So try this today, okay?

Later in the day, Ms. Dorothy also reviewed some deep breathing techniques and reminded students that breathing exercises are another way to help reduce stress.

Communication & Social Quotient ^{C5-2}
 The second component of the *C5 for Action Framework, Communication & Social Quotient* seemed easiest to incorporate in every content area. Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Lee, Ms. Jane, and Ms. Dorothy were constantly reminding their students to be respectful listeners and exactly

what that meant: eyes on the speaker, body still, and mouths shut. Similarly, three of these teachers regularly encouraged students to speak with appropriate volume, eye contact, expression, and confidence. Lessons of this nature were incorporated throughout *Second Step* lessons, math, literacy, science, social studies, and all other content areas. When I asked Ms. Jane about a handmade classroom poster entitled, “Effective Communication,” she explained that having the poster up reminded her to incorporate communication skills into every one of her lessons.

It’s easy. Any time a student speaks, I just look at that poster and remind them to look at it too and speak with volume, expression, eye contact, clarity, pace, no “ums” or “likes” and confidence. We talked about the poster at the beginning of the year. My students know exactly what each number means. When I introduced the poster at the beginning of the year, we talked about how important communication skills are. I told them that they are just as important as reading and math. You can have the best grades in the world, but if you don’t know how to talk to someone and communicate well, you aren’t going to get very far in life.

Students “social quotient” was also developed in several SEL lessons at Sherman.

Students were taught how to relate and connect to one another, how to get along with others, and how to participate in group/teamwork. Ms. Lee and Ms. Rhonda both regularly emphasized the importance of being able to look at others’ faces and “be detectives” and use “clues” to determine how others are feeling. Similarly, Ms. Dorothy taught her students the value of connecting with others. In one lesson during Morning Meeting, she led the class in a discussion about how to relate to others and find similarities. She told the class that it is important to recognize and value differences, but when forming friendships, it’s important for others to feel as

though they connect and relate to you. Ms. Dorothy explained that this does not mean changing one's beliefs or personality to match another's. Rather, she emphasized the importance of finding something somewhat in common to talk about and relate to one another. Toward the end of the lesson, she explained that sometimes it's difficult to find ways to connect, and if you cannot find a similarity, the best thing to do is to at least try to understand and empathize with whoever is speaking so that at least you are trying to "put yourself in their shoes."

· Compassion & Inclusion ^{C5-3}

The third component of the *C5 for Action Framework, Compassion & Inclusion* was perhaps the most heavily emphasized compared to other components of the framework. All four teachers regularly taught lessons that involved discussions about including others who seem left out or lonely, finding ways to help friends who are sad, and performing acts of kindness. All four teachers facilitated discussions about specific strategies to help make others happy. In the *Second Step* curriculum, "Empathy" is the first unit, so all students learned about the importance of empathizing with others. Ms. Dorothy told her students that it was "cool" to be the one to reach out to someone who is left out. Ms. Lee actually gave her students an opportunity to use strategies to help a sad friend in class when a student was feeling down. Then, she facilitated a discussion around the example. Ms. Rhonda regularly told her students that "it just feels good" to help others and encouraged students to help each other for simple tasks like cleaning up to more involved situations when students appeared to be in low spirits. She also asked an optimistic, happy student to "go out of her way" to put a smile on another student's face when a student came to class upset. One of Ms. Jane's lessons focused on the importance of treating others with kindness even if you don't like the person.

Class, I want you to think of a time that you felt left out and how awful it felt. Now think of how amazing it is to make someone else feel good, to put a smile on someone else's

face and make them feel a part of the group. It's normal to not like everyone. I am not going to tell you that you're going to like every single person you meet, but I am going to tell you that it's important to make everyone you meet feel good and to be kind to everyone. You don't have to like someone to be kind to them. Of course I hope you find ways to like everyone, especially in our class, but you absolutely need to find ways to be kind and respectful and make everyone feel welcome.

· Conflict Resolution & Non-Violence ^{C5-4}

All four teachers emphasized the fourth component of the framework, *Conflict Resolution & Non-Violence*. Ms. Rhonda and Ms. Dorothy used read-alouds to focus on the value of non-violence. Ms. Rhonda's class memorized a peace poem called "Hug of War" by Shel Silverstein in the beginning of the school year. Each morning at the end of Morning Meeting, students collectively recite the poem. Ms. Rhonda explained why she has her students recite the poem daily. She first explained that she wants her students to grow to be strong presenters so memorizing and reciting poems daily helps develop that skill set. She continued with explaining the value of the poem's message.

I have my kids learn this poem by heart because it's got such an important message: let's hug instead of fight. These kids need that message. A lot of them come from homes where they get the opposite message. We talk about how much better it is to hug than fight; how much easier it is to solve our problems with our words than our fists. We have to talk about this all the time because these kids see something different when they leave school.

Ms. Dorothy's class discussed a story about a boy who wanted to commit violent acts and how he eventually determined that kindness was more rewarding than hurting others and how much pain violence brought the perpetrator. Ms. Dorothy extended the discussion on violence to

real-world examples and students expressed conflicting feelings toward the concept of war and if and when violence is justified. Peaceful conflict resolution was also a major theme of SEL lessons in Ms. Dorothy's class, especially prior to starting group work. She reminded students that it is perfectly natural to have differences of opinions among the group regarding how to do certain projects and activities, but that it is critical for students to remember group agreements and that "it's okay to have different ideas, but it's not okay to be disrespectful."

During one of Ms. Rhonda's vocabulary lessons, students learned the meaning of the words "furious," "energetic," and "concerned." Ms. Rhonda then facilitated a discussion around how to deal with various negative emotions in positive, productive ways. The class shared times they felt angry, frustrated, afraid, and worried, then talked about ways to handle those emotions. Various strategies including deep breathing, distracting oneself, positive thinking, and having an "attitude of gratitude" were explored. Ms. Lee had a nearly identical lesson in which students brainstormed ways to handle angry, scared, and sad emotions.

Two of Ms. Jane's students used peaceful conflict resolution strategies to solve a problem that surfaced when lining up for recess. Ms. Jane asked the students to share their experience and how they peacefully resolved the problem. The students involved were able to articulate the specific strategies they used: deep breathing, positive thinking, and using a calm voice to talk it out.

· Celebrate Diversity, Authentically ^{C5-5}
 The last component of the *C5 for Action Framework, Celebrate Diversity, Authentically*, was most prevalent in Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Dorothy, and Ms. Jane's classrooms. Several of Ms. Rhonda's lessons focused on accepting and celebrating difference, and some focused on more complicated conversations with regard to poverty. During one Morning Meeting, Ms. Rhonda tried to encourage students to attend *Meals for Minds*, a community program that provided

groceries to families in need at Sherman. During this talk, she explained that every family is different and has different things and different needs. She continued and told students to be proud of themselves regardless of their situation.

During another lesson, Ms. Rhonda praised students for being comfortable working with other peers that were pre-selected. She complimented the group for not complaining and for “understanding that we can be different and still be best friends.” In fact, the idea of being “different and still being best friends” was regularly incorporated into Ms. Rhonda’s lessons, especially before recess and group work times. Prior to a math group work time, Ms. Rhonda reminded the class that everyone thinks differently and likely has a different way of doing math. Prior to recess, Ms. Rhonda encouraged students to play with friends who have different interests than their own.

Diversity was a major theme in Ms. Rhonda’s first grade class. She went beyond a superficial explanation of the concept when discussing ice cream sundae toppings preferences. Ms. Rhonda led a discussion about how different people have different feelings about the same thing and extended it to larger real-world examples including religion and politics, using simpler language for first graders to comprehend. Ms. Rhonda also encouraged students to be comfortable being different, to be confident and proud of their differences, and being “true to who you are and be honest about what you like, what you don’t like, what you believe in, even if it’s different from everyone else.” Ms. Rhonda also taught an in-depth lesson about diversity using the book *The Sneetches* as described in Finding 1.

Ms. Dorothy included diversity conversations prior to group work time to encourage students to reach out to others who are shy when selecting groups. She explained the importance of valuing all personality types and that everyone has different personalities, some are outgoing,

some are more reserved and may have a difficult time asking to join a group. She encouraged students to look around the room and make sure that everyone is included in a group. Ms. Jane facilitated a discussion related to this component of the framework while teaching from a read aloud called *Because of Winn Dixie*. The lesson focused on the importance of getting to know someone before judging them and “not judging a book by its cover.”

Taking Action

The “Action” component of the framework was emphasized in several SEL lessons in the classrooms observed. Students were not simply taught that it is not enough to feel compassionate, be against bullying, or believe in non-violence. Students in Ms. Lee, Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Jane, and Ms. Dorothy’s classrooms were encouraged to take action in one way or another in every SEL lesson. Instead of simply offering students strategies, teachers facilitated discussions that involved real world situations and asked students to collectively brainstorm strategies that could be put to use. Students were encouraged to act on what they believe, to stand up for what they believe is right, to work against oppression of marginalized groups, and to use their confidence, communication, social skills, and non-violence to contribute to helping themselves and others.

Taking Action in Ms. Lee’s Class

Ms. Lee encouraged her class to come up with ideas for how to be more inclusive and actively seek out students who need a friend. She explicitly told her students that it was not enough to know how to help someone who is sad if they don’t actually put the ideas to use.

These are great ideas, friends, but if you don’t actually do any of these things when you see a sad friend, they are only ideas and they aren’t any good. You have to do something when you see a sad friend, okay? Now you have some ideas of what you could do.

During another SEL lessons, students in Ms. Lee’s class were given an opportunity to take action on this very topic when a student entered the classroom crying. Ms. Lee asked students to remember the various strategies they had discussed previously to help a friend who is sad, and during the discussion, Ms. Lee encouraged students to approach the student and try their “happiness strategy.” The boy who was originally down was given numerous hugs, jokes, and comforting words from the class who had a chance to put their ideas into action.

Similarly, one of Ms. Lee’s lessons focused on actions students can take when they themselves are experiencing a negative emotion like anger, fear, or sadness. “What should you do about it?” she asked. Students came up with several actions they could take to address and deal with these emotions. Ms. Lee again reminded students that it is not helpful to just know of how to deal with these emotions if they do not actually use the strategies when they are experiencing those emotions.

Another SEL lesson in Ms. Lee’s class focused on writing kind comments about students who were absent. At the end of the lesson, Ms. Lee reminded students that “kindness is easy,” but “it’s not enough to think kind thoughts, we have to put our kind thoughts into action!” Similarly, during a literacy SEL lesson about bullying, Ms. Lee facilitated a discussion with her students to come up with ways to stand up to bullying. After the group came up with various ways to help and intervene, Ms. Lee reminded students of the value of taking action: “If you see someone being bullied or teased and you don’t take action, it’s almost like you’re a bully too.”

Taking Action in Ms. Rhonda’s Class

Several of Ms. Rhonda’s lessons focused on taking action. In one of Ms. Rhonda’s SEL diversity lessons, she encouraged students to take action to find friends who are different from

them and try to learn from them. She gave them “recess homework” as an opportunity to put this skill into practical experience.

Boys and girls, you have homework for recess today. You need to find a way that you’re different from a friend. We can be friends with people who are different from us. It’s great to have friends who are different from us. How are you different from your friends? What’s great about that? Go find out right now!

In another SEL lesson, Ms. Rhonda reminded students to take action in having confidence in themselves and to be “proud of who you are ... what you say, and proud to be you!” During another SEL lesson, Ms. Rhonda taught students the value of self-esteem, feeling pride in oneself, and being happy with how you look and who you are. She told students that it’s not enough to simply know the importance of these things.

You have to put effort into it. You have to tell yourself ‘I love myself! I love being me!’ when you look in the mirror. You have to think of the reasons you’re proud to be you. You can’t just say ‘I’m proud of me.’ Why? Why are you proud to be you? Why do you love yourself? You have to answer those questions, then feel good about yourself.

You have to remember to use your self-talk. Remember the little engine that could? You have to stay positive with yourself. You tell yourself you can do this. We have to say, ‘I can do this!’ ‘I think I can. I think I can. No, I KNOW I can!’ You have to believe in yourself.

Ms. Rhonda also encouraged her students to take action when they themselves are sad. After an SEL vocabulary lesson focused on the word “uplifting,” Ms. Rhonda encouraged

students to know the things that lift their own spirits and to “take control” when they are sad and “find something that is uplifting to you, something to lift your own spirits.”

Taking Action in Ms. Jane’s Class

Similarly, Ms. Jane told her students to become familiar with uplifting music that makes them feel happy. In her interview, Ms. Jane said she reminds the class that music is a great strategy to change a sad or angry mood into a happy mood. In another SEL lesson, Ms. Jane reminded her third graders of the value of getting to know a person before placing judgment upon them. She encouraged her students to take action, to “take control of your mind and try your best to realize that you never know who could be a friend...”

Ms. Jane also encouraged students to take action when she spoke about kindness during a transition time. She told students that it is not enough to think of kind deeds to do for others if those deeds do not become action. “I’m not just going to think it. I’m going to do it! Who else is going to do a random act of kindness today?” Students in Ms. Jane’s class were forced to take action when she instructed them to make a list of all the reasons they are fortunate and all of the things they are excited about. This exercise was an effort to show students that they can actively increase their optimism and positive outlook by actively thinking of things that they are lucky for and things they are looking forward to. When students in Ms. Jane’s class got into conflict, she asked them to take action by using a peaceful conflict resolution strategy. This simple reminder was enough for the students to resolve the conflict independently by using the “calm down” poster and thinking of positive thoughts, two of the strategies they had learned in class.

Taking Action in Ms. Dorothy’s Class

Ms. Dorothy encouraged her students to take action before recess by telling them that “It’s actually cool to reach out to someone who looks like they might be lonely” and they should

ask them to join in, find out their name, make them a friend. She gave her students “recess homework” and told students to “go out there and see if you can put a smile on someone’s face who looks like they’re bummed out.” In other SEL lessons, prior to group work time, Ms. Dorothy encouraged her students to take action and actively seek out people within the class who seemed left out and who, perhaps, did not have a group to work with. “Remember that it’s actually cool to be the person who includes someone.”

In a lesson on fairness and justice, Ms. Dorothy encouraged students to take action, stand up for what they believe is right, and to put effort to work against powers that oppress marginalized groups. After students heard a story about a king who had oppressed the peasants in his kingdom, Ms. Dorothy asked her students to consider how this example might be relevant to their lives and how they could actively help individuals and groups who are being oppressed.

In conclusion, SEL lessons emphasized taking action at Sherman Elementary. Teachers highlighted the importance of doing, rather than simply thinking or believing alone. Students were given practical strategies and hypothetical situations to consider, then were encouraged to use the SEL skills in their lives outside of the classroom.

Chapter 4 Summary

In chapter four, I highlighted the various ways that teachers effectively implemented Social Emotional Learning in certain classrooms. The first finding was that SEL was regularly embedded into math, literacy, music, transition times, and Morning Meetings. The second finding was that teachers at Sherman adapted SEL curricular lessons to be more authentic to their classroom culture by sharing personal stories, altering *Second Step* scenarios, taking advantage of “teachable moments,” and using student experiences as examples for discussion and learning activities. Social Emotional Learning was not limited to the *Second Step* curriculum in classrooms in which SEL was effective. The third finding was that all SEL lessons at Sherman were reflected by the *C5 for Action Framework*, as each lesson focused on any one of the following components: confidence and happiness; communication and social quotient; compassion and inclusion; conflict resolution and non-violence; and celebrating diversity authentically. While Chapter Four illustrated *what* effective Social Emotional Learning is at Sherman, the following chapter will provide insight into *why* it is effective in certain classrooms.

Chapter 5: Conditions for Effective Social Emotional Learning

In this chapter, I present two findings that highlight practices that occur beyond formal and informal SEL lessons, which support effective Social Emotional Learning. These practices include effective classroom management strategies, a focus on positive behavior, and an intentional emphasis on nurturing student-teacher relationships.

Finding 4: At Sherman Elementary, SEL is effective in classrooms that have solid classroom management, focused on positive behavior.

From the first week of conducting observations in seven different classrooms, a very clear discrepancy surfaced between five of the classrooms with consistent classroom management, compared to the two without. In classrooms with regular routines, transitions, and rules that were positive, predictable, and orderly, there was greater student participation, engagement, and articulation of lessons from students. Additionally, instructional time in these classrooms was maximized to the fullest with hardly any time wasted. Teachers in these classrooms regularly used attention-grabbers before and during the lesson, circulated around the room, and routinely checked for student understanding throughout the lesson. Some of these teachers gave students responsibilities to help with classroom management.

Effective SEL instruction was present in classrooms with solid classroom management, combined with the implementation of a positive behavioral system as student participation and engagement was increased. In four of the observed classrooms, positive reinforcement was used as the primary method of dealing with behavior issues. Students regularly received praise for following rules and doing kind deeds. Additionally, positive reinforcement was used to elicit desirable behaviors. There were immediate consequences for students who behaved undesirably, but the teachers made a clear distinction between the behavior and the individual. Last, small

problems and disruptions were handled quickly and positively with limited instructional time lost. Next, I provide a detailed discussion of the following aspects of classroom management: consistent routines, expectations, and maximizing instructional time; circulating and checking for student understanding; and effective strategies to gain attention and regularly reviewing rules. Additionally, a specific classroom management system focused on positive behavior is described.

Routines, Expectations, & Maximizing Instructional Time

Students were engaged and most attentive to SEL lessons in five of the seven classrooms (Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Lee, Ms. Reen, Ms. Ashley, and Ms. Jane's classrooms) that had classroom management that involved consistent routines, smooth transitions, and clear rules. In two of the classrooms where this kind of management was not present (Ms. Day's and Ms. Liz's classrooms), students were either disengaged from the SEL lessons or distracted by various behavior issues that were occurring during the lesson. In four of the seven classrooms observed, instructional time was maximized, and SEL lessons began and ended promptly or near the scheduled time. Conversely, in the two classrooms where strong classroom management was not present, the entire lesson schedule was altered due to the amount of time spent addressing behavioral concerns.

In Ms. Rhonda's first grade class, when students were asked to sit at the rug for Morning Meeting or their *Second Step* lesson, nearly all students quietly pushed in their chairs, cleared their desks, and sat on the rug. All students had already completed their "Morning Checklist" which was displayed on a large poster board in front of the class. The checklist showed four pictures: a backpack, a coat, a pencil, and a folder. Later, a student explained the poster to me. Students were asked to do four things every morning immediately upon entering the class: hang

their backpack and coat, get a sharp pencil from the basket, and empty their homework folder. It was clear that all students understood the routine because each student immediately started on these tasks upon entering the classroom, with only two students needing friendly reminders from Ms. Rhonda.

As soon as the class was seated on the rug, Ms. Rhonda spent less than one minute quickly assessing if where students were sitting on the rug was going to be problematic, and she rearranged students' seating as necessary. She also reminded students of the classroom behaviors that support student learning during lesson time, including, "eyes watching, ears listening, sitting criss-cross-applesauce, and we are only talking when it's our turn."^{C5-2} When I asked Ms. Rhonda about her morning routines and classroom management, she said:

Oh, it's worth every second. When kids come in and start the day organized, they feel more calm and ready to learn. By reviewing our listening rules and classroom expectations every single day, kids have it fresh in their minds and know exactly what behaviors are expected of them during lesson time. It doesn't take a lot of time to do, but it goes a long way for the kids.

Ms. Reen, a third grade teacher, started mornings similarly. Students had a "Morning Jobs" poster that involved turning in homework, putting handouts in their "take home" folder, putting homework in their "bring back" folder, sharpening three pencils, writing down their homework assignments in an assignment notebook, and silently reading until it was time for Morning Meeting. Immediately upon entering the class, students began their Morning Jobs. When it was time to start a lesson on the rug, she would start a timer and challenge students to beat their previous "getting ready to learn" time. She reminded students that if they were rushing

and bumped into another student, the timer would start all over again. Students would quickly and quietly move expeditiously to their assigned seats on the rug to begin the lesson.

Alternatively, when students were asked to sit at the rug for Morning Meeting in Ms. Day's class, three students were playing under desks, five other students were still hanging up their coats and backpacks, three students were engaged in a disagreement about who a pencil belonged to, four students were still in the hallway, and the rest of the class was on the rug waiting for the lesson to begin. Ms. Day spent the first ten minutes in the hallway trying to encourage the students in the hallway to come inside the classroom, but was unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the disagreement between students about the pencil escalated into aggressive language, and the students who were playing under the desks appeared to also have a disagreement. At one point, since Ms. Day was not in the classroom, I had to intervene and ask students to speak nicely to one another, give me the pencil, and come out from under the desks before someone got hurt. I peeked into the hallway to try to communicate with Ms. Day. She looked exasperated as she re-entered the classroom with only one of the four students joining her. She called the office to inform them that three of her students were still in the hallway. Ms. Day then attempted to start the Morning Meeting by asking the group to sit on the rug, but only seven students were seated. Ms. Day started the lesson anyway, but only got four minutes into the lesson before the students under the table started loudly arguing. At this point, she said:

Who remembers what happens when I am taking a break? I can't answer questions because I am refocusing myself—I am taking three deep breaths, and I am taking a break now. I am very frustrated with this group already.

Each time I observed Ms. Day's lessons, the experience was similar to that described above. There was little time spent on instruction, and the majority of the time was spent dealing

with behavior issues and classroom management. When I spoke to Ms. Day, she was open about her frustrations.

There's just nothing I can do to get these kids to listen. There's at least four or five times that I have to stop the lesson to deal with kids not following rules, not paying attention, or causing mischief. I love these kids, I love my job, but I just can't teach like this. Every year, I swear I get the toughest kids.

Circulating & Checking for Understanding

In Ms. Day's and Ms. Liz's classrooms, the majority of time was spent on behavior issues and unrelated management concerns throughout the lesson. In these classrooms, whatever time that was spent on the SEL lesson was mainly dominated by direct instruction delivered from one spot in the classroom, without pausing to check for student understanding or interacting with students in any positive way. Nearly all interactions between the teacher and students in these classrooms were to address a behavioral concern.

On the other hand, in four of the five classrooms, classroom management involved teachers regularly circulating throughout the class during lessons, while interacting with students to check for student understanding. Students in these classes were called upon regularly to articulate their interpretation of the lesson at hand or were given opportunities to contribute to small groups to share their comprehension of the lesson. In Ms. Dorothy and Ms. Jane's classrooms, students were talking just as much as the teacher was. Ms. Dorothy's fifth graders were regularly asked to restate the learning. She asked students to remind the group of the definition of empathy, what the previous lesson was about, and why any of this learning was important to students' lives.

Ms. Dorothy, Ms. Lee, and Ms. Jane spent the majority of the lesson moving around the classroom asking questions about the content of the lesson to different students throughout the room. Ms. Dorothy, Ms. Reen, and Ms. Jane would regularly stand near students who seemed disengaged or distracted. This resulted in those students sitting up in their seats and trying to focus on the lesson at hand. Ms. Jane took this a step further and would focus her next several interactions only with students who originally seemed distracted or disengaged. She started with asking these students simple questions about the topic and then progressed to more challenging questions. This process of proximal control through circulating the room, standing near students who needed to regain focus, and then asking those students questions in order to regain interest, had a major impact on engagement and participation from these students. When I asked Ms. Jane about this process, she explained:

Oh, it's critical. In order to engage all students, it's important for me to spend time interacting with each student in every lesson. That's not always possible, but I try my best. I find that my students with behavior issues can really turn it around when they feel like their input matters. When students aren't paying attention, I try to get them interested by asking questions that they are sure to get right. Then, they're more likely to be engaged. You know, when students are interested and engaged, they're less likely to get in trouble.

Gaining Attention & Reviewing Rules Regularly

In all five of the classrooms with sound classroom management, teachers had an effective way of gaining the attention of their students. All five teachers had a specific method to start instruction, and all had a variety of ways to gain and keep the attention of their students throughout the lesson. When these teachers used attention-getters, the majority of students would

immediately become quiet, stop moving, and look at their teacher. Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Reen, and Ms. Dorothy clapped their hands in a sequence that students repeated to gain their attention. Ms. Lee rang a bell, and Ms. Jane used a call-and-respond chant in which she would say, “Hey Hey!” and students would respond, “Ho! Ho!” When Ms. Jane, Ms. Lee, and Ms. Rhonda used their attention-grabbers, they would remind the class of the listening rules^{C5-2} before starting the lesson. With regard to this practice, Ms. Lee said:

It’s the best way to start the first lesson of the day. Just by going through our classroom rules poster and reminding my students of what it means to be a good listener, goes a long way. By the time winter break rolls around, most of my class can recite the class rules by heart. There are days that I forget to go over our class listening rules, and I instantly am reminded by the kind of behavior that I get. I usually stop the lesson and just go over the listening rules right then and there.

Ms. Dorothy maintained a similar practice. Once she had her students’ attention, she reminded them of both listening rules, as well as overall general class rules before starting lessons. By contrast, in Ms. Liz and Ms. Day’s classrooms, lessons did not start with any kind of attention-grabber or reminder of class rules. In both classes, lessons started with students being scolded for not following directions or addressing another behavioral concern. When the lessons officially started, there was no introduction or review, to get students interested in the topic.

SEL-Related Student Responsibilities

In three of the five classrooms, classroom management involved students having SEL-related classroom jobs that supported the management efforts of the teacher. In Ms. Jane’s class, there was a “Star Catcher” whose sole job was to “catch” students being good. The Star Catcher complimented students loudly the same way that Ms. Jane did. During one of my

observations, Shantel was the Star Catcher of the day. She “caught” numerous students being good throughout my observation. First, Shantel would confirm with Ms. Jane that the acts she observed were “star worthy,” then, she would loudly praise students. “Wow! I see three people lined up ready to go! Damien, Wyatt, and Landon, you get a star!” Another time, “Elijah, you get a star for helping Jada when she spilled her milk. That was so nice of you!” At Shantel’s table group, “Angel, I saw you helping Michael with that math problem. You get a star for helping someone.”^{C5-3}

In Ms. Rhonda’s class, one classroom job was “Desk Organizer.” The Desk Organizer’s job was to check all desks once a week to see if they were organized using a picture checklist that Ms. Rhonda had created. If a student’s desk was not organized, the Desk Organizer would gently remind that student to stay inside for recess to clean their desk and would also sacrifice their own recess to help the student get organized using the picture checklist.^{C5-3}

In Ms. Dorothy’s fifth grade class, there was a buddy system. The responsibility of a buddy was to make sure that their partner was focused, organized, learning, and happy. When a student was not following directions, Ms. Dorothy said:

Okay, buddies. I need your help. Check in with your buddy to make sure they know what they need to be doing. Gently remind your buddy to really pay attention right now so they don’t miss out.

Likewise, when another student appeared to be feeling down, Ms. Dorothy said:

Class, remember that your job as a Buddy is to be the best friend you can possibly be to your buddy. We have snack in two minutes. During snack time today, your job is to check in with your buddy. See how they are doing. If they are sad, what are some ways you can help them out? Remember, buddy means friend!^{C5-3}

Ms. Dorothy mentioned classroom jobs during her interview.

I just can't do it all on my own. Class jobs allow me to get more done, let kids feel a sense of accomplishment and responsibility, and show that we all can contribute to a healthy class environment. I have classroom jobs because it helps me, but it obviously helps the kiddos too.

Focus on Positive Behavior

In four of the seven classrooms, positive behavior systems were used as the primary method of handling student behavior. In these four classrooms, student participation, engagement, and articulation of SEL lessons was greatest. There were a variety of effective approaches that teachers used for positive classroom management systems. Each was uniquely implemented to match the personalities and teaching styles of the teachers. The focus in these classes was on positive behaviors that students elicited. When problem behaviors surfaced, the teachers in these classrooms were gentle in their approach and actively sought out ways to compliment the child in an authentic way, either immediately after the behavior problem or as a way to coax the child into exhibiting the desired behavior. In all four of these classrooms (Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Dorothy, Ms. Lee, and Ms. Jane), students were regularly praised individually and had an opportunity to earn rewards for their positive behavior. Ms. Lee and Ms. Dorothy offered material rewards, while Ms. Rhonda and Ms. Jane's rewards were not physical things. In three of these classrooms (Ms. Dorothy, Ms. Rhonda, and Ms. Jane), students were praised individually but also collectively as a class.

The focus on positive behaviors was instrumental to transforming negative behaviors in these classrooms. Students who were initially struggling to exhibit desired behaviors, changed their behavior after being given an uplifting compliment or positive direction by praising other

students around them. When one of Ms. Rhonda's students, Jermaine was not cooperating, she loudly praised students who were following directions. Then, she complimented Jermaine, trying to encourage him along.

Wow, I see Taylor following directions! I see Ishan following directions! Thank you, Shoveya! You are sitting on the rug ready to learn! Thank you, Martin—you are sitting so nicely. Wow, Jermaine—looks like you're about to make the right choice and join the group. I knew I could count on you.

Ms. Rhonda complimented Jermaine even though he was not following directions at all. He was the only student still sitting at his desk, and he was drawing a picture. However, as soon as Ms. Rhonda complimented him in this manner, he smiled, put his pencil down, and quickly joined the group. Ms. Rhonda did not always respond in such a soft manner, however. During another observation, Jermaine was not joining the group for Morning Meeting because he was drawing at his desk again. "Jermaine, is there a reason you are still not sitting with us for Morning Meeting?" Ms. Rhonda asked using a firm tone. "Just wanna finish my picture," he responded without looking up. Ms. Rhonda's tone was even firmer now.

Jermaine, you need to put that away by the time I count to five. I'll give you another five seconds to be seated at the rug and ready to learn. You know what you are here for. We are in school to learn. You are a talented artist. You should definitely finish that beautiful picture during free choice this afternoon, but we have a lot to learn and we don't have enough time. If I have to talk to you about this again today, there will be a consequence. You will lose your free choice time. But I don't think I'll have to remind you again, you usually make great choices cuz you're so smart. One, two...

By the time Ms. Rhonda counted to six, Jermaine was seated on the rug.

Ms. Rhonda regularly used positive reinforcement to change undesirable behaviors. When she was teaching the class an important lesson about valuing diversity, one of her students named Ishan, was sitting under a table, not actively participating with the majority of the class. As soon as Ms. Rhonda noticed, she said:

Class, oh my goodness! Look at Nyree! His hands are in his lap, his legs are crossed, and he is looking at me! He is ready for our busy day of learning, and he's ready to have important talks like this one! Nyree, you must feel so proud of yourself!

The minute that Ms. Rhonda publicly praised Nyree, the remainder of the class started to sit up straight, cross their legs, and look at Ms. Rhonda. At this point, Ms. Rhonda said:

Oh—class—wait! I see three other students who also look like strong learners like Nyree! Veronica, Maurice, and Anthony are ready to learn too!

Ishan quietly crawled out from under the desk, sat down on the rug, and crossed his legs while looking at Ms. Rhonda. To this, Ms. Rhonda said loudly:

Friends, take a look at your friend, Ishan. I think today he is going to be our role-model. Look at how nicely he is sitting and how he looks like he really wants to learn! He turned his behavior around pretty fast. He was sitting under that table over there, but then he knew that he is capable of being a better listener. What a great way to turn it around. It's going to be a great day for you, Ishan!

Super Stars Positive Classroom Management System

Positive behavioral supports were also regularly used in Ms. Jane's classroom. Ms. Jane used a classroom management system called, "Super Stars." Ms. Jane learned about this classroom management system at a professional development workshop that was conducted at Sherman by the district. "It's the most effective system that I've ever used with my students,"

she told me in our interview. She explained that the system is entirely based on positive reinforcement and involves non-materialistic individual rewards, class rewards, and “reminders.” Each student in her class receives a star chart, a simple, small piece of paper with 25 squares on it. Students put their name on it and tape it inside their desks. She explained that it’s important for these charts not to be visible to peers, as receiving stars is not a competition. When students exhibit any kind of desirable behavior, Ms. Jane compliments the student and asks them to draw a star on their star chart as a reward. They can write two stars in each box, with a goal of earning 50 stars. When a student earns 50 stars, they can submit the chart for a non-materialistic reward like: being a line leader, being Ms. Jane’s “Star Catcher,” choosing the read-aloud book of the day, sitting on the “magic carpet” for the day, switching desks for the day (sitting near a friend), picking the song to sing at the end of the day, or staying inside for recess to read a book. After describing the list of rewards, Ms. Jane said:

You wouldn’t think that things like this would motivate students, but they really do. My students really love to be caught being good, and they love these kind of rewards, especially being Star Catcher. The whole system makes for a happy, positive classroom climate, and I hear the students talking in the halls about how many more stars they have to earn before they get to 50.

Students in Ms. Jane’s class received stars constantly for a variety of behaviors. One student received a star for having an organized cubby area. Another got a star for having their pencil out and ready the minute they were given directions to do so. Two students received stars for helping a friend who had spilled during snack time. Similarly, throughout the day, students received star after star for following directions, coming into the classroom quietly after recess,

doing kind deeds like holding the door for a friend, speaking well, and listening respectfully during lessons.

Ms. Jane explained that she appreciates this system because there is no additional paper work or chart-keeping on her part since students keep track of their own stars; but of course, this necessitates an honesty conversation. She explained that she talks to the class about honesty at the beginning of the school year, but rarely deals with issues after that talk. During this discussion, Ms. Jane tells the class a story about what happened to one of her students last year who was dishonest about writing themselves stars, and how she lost trust for them. She continued:

That is usually enough to deter my students from lying about stars, but even if students lie and write down more stars than they earned, is it so terrible to let them choose which song we sing at the end of the day or let them stay inside for recess to read? I hardly have any dishonesty issues, but if I do, I just figure that these guys need a little extra positive energy, you know?

Class-wide Reward System

Ms. Jane also established a class-wide reward system for collective, positive behavior. When the entire class was sitting at their desks with math books out after lunch, she wrote the letter “S” on the board. Next, students were all listening attentively during the lesson. She asked Shantel, the “Star Catcher,” to write a “U” on the board. When the class spelled out “SUPER,” they received a class star. When this happened, students did a small, 30 second cheer because this meant they would receive an additional 5 minutes of read-aloud time. Ms. Jane explained that when the class earns 10 stars, there would be a bigger cheer with one of the following rewards: an additional 10 minutes of reading time, free choice literacy time, math on the “magic

carpet,” Dance Party Clean Up, or embarrassing stories share time, where Ms. Jane would share an embarrassing moment of her life with the class.

Some of the teachers on my team don’t understand why this is a reward, but the kids love it. Plus, it gives me a chance to share something personal about my life with my students. It gives us a chance to connect and laugh together. It shows the kids that I am okay with laughing at myself.

Ms. Jane continued to explain the class-wide reward system and said that when the class earned 50 stars, there would be a huge celebration, including one of the following class rewards: lunch in the classroom with Ms. Jane, dress up day (pajama day, hat day, etc.), educational games, or a class party with a movie related to their literacy unit. About this part of her positive classroom management system, Ms. Jane said:

It makes a difference for all of us. It just feels good to be in this classroom. The students are happier. I’m happier. On days that I’m upset for things unrelated to my students, or when I’m in a bad mood, I don’t give out as many [individual] stars [to students] or [class-earned] letters. It changes the climate in my classroom. You can tell right away that something is different. When I am having a great day, I give out tons of stars and letters. My students are more upbeat and excited about learning—everyone is happier. I have to check my attitude at the door some days because it really can make a difference to my students.

Reminders

Ms. Jane’s classroom did not only involve positive reinforcement, however. Students received consequences for negative behavior as well. Ms. Jane calls it a “reminder system.” Students receive three reminders for any kind of negative behavior before a more serious

conversation or a “fix-it” plan. Ms. Jane emphasized that reminders are not to be given out as punishment, but truly as a friendly reminder. “We all need reminders, right?” Ms. Jane said with a smile. Students are asked to write themselves a reminder for a variety of reasons. Ms. Jane explained that she tries her best to use a gentle tone with students when asking them to write themselves a reminder.

You know, buddy, I noticed that you were playing with that toy in your desk instead of focusing on the board. I know you’ll be able to turn it around after you write yourself a reminder.

Marcus, that’s not the kind of language we use in school. I am sure you’ll remember to choose other words if you write yourself a reminder.

Ms. Jane said she felt reminders were a perfect way to help students understand that “Everybody needs reminders, everyone makes mistakes,” but she felt it was important for students to have immediate consequences for negative behaviors as well. When students got three reminders, Ms. Jane spoke to them about the issues and tried to come up with a detailed plan to “fix” the behavior(s) in the future.

Alternatively, in Ms. Day’s classroom, when students misbehaved, she loudly reprimanded the students involved, threatened them with calling home, and in some cases, isolated students from the rest of the group. Similarly, Ms. Liz scolded students harshly and quickly sent students out of the classroom for any negative behavior ranging from a minor disruption and not paying attention, to using profane language. I heard several interactions similar to the following from Ms. Liz:

Shawn, I've really had it up to here with you. If I have to ask you to sit down one more time, we're calling home. You know, you need to just leave the classroom. Clearly you're not here to learn.

During interviews, some teachers and educational leaders mentioned how disappointing it was that Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) was no longer being supported at Sherman. Ms. Rhonda said that in previous years, Sherman's PBIS coach, Ms. Laura, worked exclusively on both PBIS and SEL-related efforts. She said that the entire school climate was different, and it felt like all teachers prioritized SEL.

This year is just different without Laura manning those efforts. Some teachers do *Second Step* every week like we're supposed to, and others don't because there is no Laura to make sure it's happening. Plus, a lot of teachers aren't using positive behavior to manage their classrooms. When Laura was here, she helped teachers do that.

Ms. Dorothy felt similarly.

I don't know why we lost Laura. She was all about the social emotional stuff. We had systems in place here that we just don't have anymore. A lot of teachers here need help with the PBIS stuff. Laura was dedicated to all of that.

One of the educational leaders within the administrative team agreed.

It was a shame to lose Laura. We need someone whose sole job is to think about this stuff. That's what Laura did. She was always thinking about the PBIS angle and reminding me to think about it too. All these posters [SEL-related posters throughout the building] that's all Laura, the anti-bullying day, that was Laura too. School climate was different here when we had someone dedicated to these efforts.

In conclusion, several components contributed to strong classroom management at Sherman including: routines, clear expectations, maximizing instructional time, circulating to check for student understanding, and effective attention-getting strategies. When effective classroom management was integrated with a positive behavior system, student participation and engagement in SEL lessons increased significantly.

*Finding 5: At Sherman Elementary,
SEL is effective in classrooms in which relationships are valued.*

Four out of seven teachers actively prioritized relationships through a variety of efforts including: greeting students in the morning by name, spending time one-on-one with students, reminding students they are loved, showing interest in students' personal lives, showing empathy and compassion for their students, and helping students create positive identities.

Morning Greetings & Connecting with Students

Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Dorothy, Ms. Lee, and Ms. Jane all greeted their students every morning by name. Ms. Lee did morning greetings during the Morning Meeting circle time. Students sat in a circle, then did a circle-morning greeting where each student had a chance to share their first and last names:

Student: Knock, Knock

Class: Who's there?

Student shares their first name: Himanee!

Class: Himanee who?

Student shares their last name: Abukar

Whole class: Himanee Abukar!

In addition to greeting each student by name at the door, Ms. Jane also had students greet each other during Morning Meeting. Ms. Rhonda greeted students at the door and also had a

good morning song that she played every morning on her guitar, which required the entire class to sing each person's name.^{C5-3, C5-2}

Good Morning—how are you? It's so good to see you! Be happy because we're all together again!" "There's Anisha! There's Marcus! There's Fredrick! And we're all back together again!"

The song continued until each student's name was sung.

Ms. Jane, Ms. Rhonda, and Ms. Dorothy stood by their classroom doors as students entered to greet each student by name. In addition to welcoming students for the day, they also took this time to try to connect to their students' personal lives.

Ms. Jane stood by the classroom door and gave students a choice to receive a high-five, handshake, or hug from her. Most students chose a hug. When Ms. Jane was hugging several students, she would quietly say something personal to them.

Dimante, you'll be happy, we get to read another chapter of *Winn-Dixie* today!

Rhinna, how did everything go last night with your brother? Did you guys make up after that disagreement?

Kaleb, are you coming to Family Night tonight? I'll be there. Hope to see you and your mom!

Ms. Rhonda had a similar approach. As she stood with a large, toothy grin at the door and welcomed each student by name as they entered the class, she would also often add a personal greeting in addition to simply stating each name. For example, when Marcus entered the classroom, she said:

Marcus, are you nearly as excited for our day as I am? Today, we are going to talk more about the solar system —isn't the book you're reading about the solar system? I bet you're excited!

To another student, Ms. Rhonda smiled and said:

Shoveya! You're walk'n in here with a smile on your face!^{C5-1} That tells me you're ready to have a fantastic day—I know you'll find a way to make someone else smile today!^{C5-3}

When a student named Martin walked in through the door, his eyes were red and puffy. He was hanging his head low, looking at the ground, and walking slowly. Ms. Rhonda crouched down next to him as he entered the classroom and she quietly said:

Hey buddy. It looks like you could use a friend today. Can I give you a hug? How can I help you feel better?^{C5-3}

Martin wiped his eyes and slowly looked up at Ms. Rhonda. He said, "My mama says we gotta move again. Don't wanna leave, and go to new school 'gain." Ms. Rhonda wrapped her arms around Martin and both shared a hug. She said:

I'm so sorry, Martin. Sometimes things in life seem so unfair. It's hard to understand why some things happen in life. Can we talk about this more together during lunchtime —just you and me?

Martin nodded and proceeded to his desk. After greeting the rest of the students, some in a similar manner, others just with a smile and greeting them by name, Ms. Rhonda asked Shoveya to come to her desk. In a voice slightly louder than a whisper, Ms. Rhonda quietly asked her to reach out to Martin and be a supportive friend.

Hey Shoveya, it seems like you are already having such a great day, walking into the classroom with a smile like you always do! You are such a positive, uplifting person, you

know that? Can I count on you to help a friend today? Our friend Martin could really use some of your positive energy. Can you make sure that you put a smile on your friend Martin's face today? He could really use it.^{C5-3}

Shoveya's smile only got bigger. "Yeah, I do that, Ms. Rhonda, but what's alifting mean?" Ms. Rhonda laughed and said, "Oh! Uplifting! That's a great word for our word wall! Let's talk about it today. Don't let me forget, okay?"

During their interviews, both Ms. Rhonda and Ms. Jane mentioned the importance of greeting students in the morning. Ms. Rhonda said:

The morning greeting song helps all my students feel welcome and gives them a chance to hear their name. That's important. It helps us feel like a community, and helps my kiddos feel valued.

Similarly, Ms. Jane said:

One of the best ways for me to get students' days off to the right start is right when they come in the door. If I can put a smile on their face right away, we're probably going to have a better day together. Plus, sometimes it's the only time of the day that I can really connect with them and check-in.

By contrast, Ms. Day and Ms. Liz did not greet students or have any kind of morning greeting routine. Many students in Ms. Day's class lingered in the hallways when the bell rang during the four mornings I observed. During two of these morning observations, Ms. Day was in the classroom on her computer preparing for lessons. During one of the observations, she was trying to resolve a disagreement between two of her students. In the last morning observation, Ms. Day was trying to encourage students to come into the classroom.

Octavio, get in here right now. The bell rang, and it's time to go. Let's move. Now! I don't want to have to call home today, Octavio, and I will if I have to.

Positively Shaping Student Identities

Ms. Rhonda and Ms. Jane had numerous positive interactions with their students that not only improved their relationship but also involved positively shaping student identities. A boy named Dimante, in Ms. Jane's class, regularly needed direction in order to stay focused and make appropriate choices in the classroom. Ms. Jane gave Dimante stars for his star chart at every opportunity possible and would make praising comments about Dimante's identity. When Dimante was joking around with another student instead of taking out his math book, Ms. Jane said:

Dimante, please write yourself a star for smiling right now. You are just such a happy, positive person. When you smile, I want to smile. That's one of the reasons everybody wants to be your friend, Dimante. You make people happy. You're an optimist. A lot of adults wish they had the kind of positive attitude that you do. Now I hope you keep that smile as big as you can for our math lesson. Go grab your math notebook quickly and keep that positive attitude.^{C5-1}

Immediately, Dimante opened his desk and took out his math materials, while smiling.

In Ms. Rhonda's class, a boy named Ishan had issues with aggression and paying attention. Ms. Rhonda told me that she made an active effort to build Ishan into something positive, and actively looked for chances to do so.

Ishan, you know what I love about you? You are such a helper. You just love helping people, don't you? That's just a part of who you are, isn't it? Just a kind and helpful

person. I saw the way you helped Martin when he dropped his papers. You are just such a caring person.^{C5-3}

One-on-One Time

Ms. Jane, Ms. Rhonda, and Ms. Dorothy all made an active effort to schedule one-on-one time with students. Once a week, Ms. Jane had lunch with one student. Ms. Rhonda had a “fun chat” meeting with three students each week during free choice time. Ms. Dorothy scheduled lunch meetings with students every week where students had the option of bringing another friend from the class. They all spoke of the importance of one-on-one time with students during interviews. Ms. Jane explained:

I wish I could have lunch with my students every day, but I just can't. I need to spend time grading and prepping, and some days, I just need a little break, but I am so glad I get to have lunch with one student every week. It gives me a chance to really connect with them and talk to them in a way that's different than the teacher talking to them. When I am giving a lesson, I'm their teacher. When I have lunch with my students, I can be their friend.

Ms. Rhonda talked about her “fun chats” as:

...a chance for me to really get to know the kids. With how busy our days are, sometimes I feel like I hardly get a chance to really talk to the kiddos alone. These fun chats are great because we don't talk about anything related to school. We just talk about what interests them, how things with their family are going, what they are excited about, what they are scared of, whatever they want to share. I share too. The kids get to know me better too, which is really important.

During a focus group, a first grader named Veronica, said:

Fun chats are just time with me and Ms. Rhonda to talk, but we don't really talk about school. She always says she cares about me and asks me questions about my friends and how my brother is doing and wants to see my drawings cuz I'm a good artist.

Love

Four of the seven teachers regularly implied they deeply cared for their students, and two explicitly said, "I love you" to the class numerous times throughout the day. Ms. Rhonda noticed students listening attentively to one of her lessons, and she stopped teaching to say:

Table Three, do you have any idea how much I love you? Does Table One know how much I love you? I love Table Four, I love Table Two, I just love this class. I love you kiddos. I love you. Do you know that? You are such great listeners. You make being a teacher the best job in the world. I love my job. Do you know that there are so many adults that get sad on Sunday nights because they have to go to their job on Monday? I'm the opposite! Since you guys are such great kids, I can't wait to come to school. I get excited on Sundays. I just love you.

Similarly, Ms. Jane called students' attention after giving one of her students, Dimante, a reminder.

Class, does it mean that I don't love you if you get a reminder? Of course not. I love you no matter what. You could get a hundred reminders and I would still love you. I will love you whether or not you want me to. How much I love you has nothing to do with your behavior. I just love you. It's that simple. Plus, you guys are the best students a teacher could ever ask for. I'm the luckiest teacher in the world, no matter how many reminders you get.

Ms. Jane explained during her interview:

Students have to know that I love them unconditionally. In the same way I love my own children unconditionally, I want my students to know that I love them, no matter what. I want them to know that. A lot of these kids never hear anyone tell them they are loved. I want my students to hear it every day and know that I mean it, because I do. I really truly love them, all of them, even my Marcuses and my Dimantes, especially my Marcuses and Dimantes. I love them so much.

During a focus group, students shared a similar sentiment. Destiny said this about being in Ms. Jane's class:

Love Ms. Jane. She love us too. She tell us all the time. And she love us even when we be bad and get reminders, she love us still. She givin' us stars all the time 'cuz she love us and we the best class she ever had.

When I asked Ms. Day and Ms. Liz about building relationships, Ms. Liz responded:

You know, I love teaching, I love kids, but it's unrealistic to think I'm going to connect with all of my students. You always have one or two that drive you crazy, you know? Besides, with the amount that we have on our plates, it's hard to find time to really build relationships and that's really a huge part of the problem. We just don't have time.

In conclusion, several consistent actions by four of the teachers in this study contributed to developing meaningful relationships between teachers and students at Sherman Elementary including: morning greetings and connecting with students, positively shaping student identities, and one-on-one time with students to discuss non-academic topics. In classrooms where these kinds of meaningful relationships were prioritized, SEL was effective, as student participation

and engagement was increased and many articulated messages from SEL lessons with great clarity.

Chapter 5 Summary

The remaining two findings from my research were highlighted in Chapter Five. Findings four and five illustrate the conditions in which effective Social Emotional Learning occurred. The fourth finding was that SEL was most effective in classrooms with consistent classroom management focused on positive behavior. In these classrooms, there were regular routines, clear transitions, rules that were predictable, and maximized classroom instruction time. Furthermore, in these classrooms, attention-getting strategies were explicit, checking for student understanding was done throughout the entire lesson, often while circulating the classroom, and students were often given classroom management responsibilities. Last, these teachers all used positive behavioral supports as the primary method of controlling and dealing with behavior issues and creating a warm, welcoming classroom environment. The fifth and last finding was that SEL was effective in classrooms in which student-teacher relationships were valued and prioritized. Teachers built relationships through a variety of ways, including greeting students by name in the morning upon arrival, spending one-on-one time with students, explicitly reminding students they are loved and cared for, showing interest, compassion, and empathy in students' lives, and helping students create positive identities.

Chapter 6: Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

This chapter will begin with reviewing the findings of this study and how they relate to my original hypothesis. Next, I will analyze each finding as they relate to my research questions. This chapter will conclude with implications for future practice in both the school and district in which the research occurred, in addition to future implications for educational reform in general. Finally, implications for future research will be suggested.

Summary of Findings

Due to a lack of qualitative studies that describe what effective SEL looks like in practice, this study began as a quest to understand how Social Emotional Learning lessons are delivered and integrated effectively, as well as the challenges that are involved. Additionally, I wanted to explore student perspectives to understand the impact of SEL lessons and learn how teachers adapted SEL programming to be more authentic, yet still maintain fidelity to the curriculum. Prior to any data collection, my hypothesis was that if Sherman's SEL lessons were reflected by the *C5 for Action Framework*, SEL would be successful and meaningful to students.

After conducting my research, I realize my hypothesis was incorrect. Although all SEL lessons at Sherman were reflected by the *C5 for Action Framework*, this alone did not result in quality SEL instruction. I found that classroom management focused on positive behavior and the prioritization of teacher-student relationships are essential foundational elements that contribute to the successful implementation Social Emotional Learning. The current literature does not, however, include research on the outcomes of adapting SEL lessons to be more authentic and personally meaningful to individual classroom cultures or the importance of embedding SEL throughout the school day. In this study, I found that students were significantly more engaged and were able to articulate their understanding of SEL lessons when teachers were

adapting SEL lessons to be more authentic to their individual classroom culture and when SEL was embedded throughout the school day.

Answering the Research Questions

This section will focus on answering my three original research questions:

1. *How is social emotional learning implemented successfully?*
 - 1a. *How is it taught in authentic ways that are personally meaningful and context-specific, while maintaining program fidelity and school-wide coherence?*
 - 1b. *How is it integrated and embedded into everyday lessons?*
 2. *To what extent does SEL programming reflect the C5 Framework?*
 3. *What messages do students from an effective SEL school articulate about SEL?*
- Research Question 1: How is social emotional learning implemented successfully?*

Contrary to my hypothesis, simply incorporating SEL skills from each component of the *C5 for Action Framework* through an SEL curriculum is not sufficient for the successful implementation of Social Emotional Learning. Certain conditions and practices allow for SEL lessons to be taught in an optimal manner. These conditions involve systems and structures that create a foundation upon which SEL lessons can be internalized and more meaningful to students and which participation and engagement are increased. This study revealed that the practices and conditions in which effective SEL practices were occurring included three elements: (1) consistent classroom management; (2) positive behavioral supports; and (3) an emphasis on student-teacher relationships.

Consistent Classroom Management:

Routines, Expectations, & Maximizing Instructional Time

Strong participation, focus, and enthusiasm toward SEL lessons were evident in classrooms with clear and consistent management systems. This finding may suggest that strong classroom management including consistent routines, known expectations, and clear, regularly discussed classroom rules may result in less disruptive, distracting behaviors from students. Fewer disruptions and distractions result in increased instructional time and may result in higher

engagement and focus during lessons. When instructional time is maximized, there are limited opportunities for students to engage in undesirable behaviors. With this, when instructional time is not maximized, some students may become disinterested in the lesson and may find other things to do, including disruptive behaviors. In classrooms where solid classroom management is not present, even if the SEL lesson is excellent, the teacher might not have an opportunity to teach it fully because of needing to deal with behavior issues.

These points are illustrated by comparing the morning arrival times in Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Jane, Ms. Day, and Ms. Liz's classrooms. Ms. Rhonda and Ms. Jane had specific morning duties for their students. Expectations were clear, as students knew exactly what they were meant to do upon entering the classroom in the morning. Students were able to quickly accomplish morning tasks so they could move on to learning. Alternatively, in classrooms where these kinds of structures were not in place, like in Ms. Day and Ms. Liz's classrooms, there was chaos and problems in the morning, resulting in decreased time for SEL (and other) lessons.

Circulating & Checking for Understanding

SEL was effective in classrooms with management systems that included circulating throughout the classroom and checking for student understanding. Perhaps by regularly circulating throughout the classroom and engaging students in conversation, teachers are able to alter their lessons to focus on areas of the SEL lesson that students are having a difficult time grasping and the teacher can extend on areas that they have a clear understanding of. This kind of practice results in richer learning that is more authentic and differentiated for the group. Students are also more engaged and participate in SEL lessons more when the teacher is regularly moving around the room asking questions and initiating conversations about the lesson, as this creates immediate accountability for learning. The practice of checking for student understanding also

might suggest that student voices are heard instead of only the teacher's voice in the classroom. When this happens, other students in the classroom are more interested and therefore are more attentive since the lesson becomes an exchange of ideas rather than direct instruction. Additionally, when students hear their peers contributing, they may be more likely to feel comfortable to also contribute their thoughts, thus continuing the cycle. This is especially important for SEL lessons, which are often enhanced when students can share ways that they can relate to the skill or story.

When Ms. Jane stood near students, who appeared less interested, and asked them basic questions about the lesson, their focus, interest, and overall enthusiasm toward the lesson increased dramatically. Perhaps the reason for this is because those students were given an opportunity to experience success and feel smart by answering questions correctly. Additionally, those students did not become involved in problematic behaviors. Again, perhaps this is due to their increased attention to the lesson that they were now interested in.

Perhaps the reason that teachers in classrooms with poorer management did not circulate the classroom and check for student understanding is because they were spending so much time dealing with behavior issues and had such limited time for the SEL lesson itself. Teachers like Ms. Day and Ms. Liz were so burdened with classroom management issues that they were unable to get to the more critical component of checking for student understanding.

Gaining Attention & Reviewing Rules Regularly

In classrooms with strong management systems, teachers reviewed classroom rules regularly and had effective ways of gaining the attention of their students. By having a routinized way of getting students' attention, less time was wasted, there was more time for the SEL lesson, and there was increased interest in the SEL lesson. It is possible that when students saw their

peers respecting the teacher and listening well together, the class collectively was able to engage in the lesson. Additionally, by reviewing rules daily, students were reminded of what is expected and what is appropriate behavior during all lessons, including SEL lessons. In order to internalize rules and expectations, students need to be reminded several times. The practice of reviewing listening rules was perhaps especially important before SEL lessons since there were so many opportunities for students to share their personal thoughts and experiences.

Student Responsibilities

Some of the classrooms with strong classroom management involved giving students responsibilities in the classroom. Many of these “classroom jobs” were focused on SEL skills in one way or another. In general, giving students responsibilities within the classroom creates a stronger classroom community as each student feels they contribute to the betterment of the group. Students likely feel like valued members of the classroom and this may both enhance the classroom climate and increase students’ self-esteem by making them feel important. With Ms. Jane’s Star Catcher, students learn the value of finding the good in others and focusing on the positive. When students are actively trying to “catch” their peers doing the right thing, an extremely positive climate is developed, and students likely want to be in this kind of environment with their teacher and classmates. In Ms. Rhonda’s class, students learned SEL through the value of helping each other with the desk organizer job. Students with this job sacrificed their own recess to help another student get organized without feeling cheated, and instead, feeling honored to be the desk organizer. Ms. Dorothy’s Buddy System helped students see the value of being a friend to one another. It emphasized kindness and friendship as a responsibility as a member of the classroom community. There was an expectation that if you are a member of the classroom, you are a friend to one another. Each of these examples illustrates

the value of having student jobs with an SEL focus incorporated into a classroom management system. Students feel like contributing members of the classroom community and also learn valuable SEL skills.

Positive Behavioral Supports: Focus on Positive Behavior

Social Emotional Learning was effective in classrooms that had emphasized positive behaviors and used positive reinforcement as the primary method to deal with behavior issues within the classroom. Most children want to feel loved, valued, and important. It is possible that the positive behavior systems implemented in these classrooms resulted in making students feel this way. Furthermore, most children want attention. When they are given attention for positive, desirable behaviors, they are likely to continue to elicit those behaviors in order to continue getting attention. Likewise, when students are given attention for negative behaviors, it is likely that they will continue to exhibit those undesirable behaviors to continue gaining that same attention. The bottom line is that kids want attention. They want to feel loved, valued, and important (Fay & Funk, 1995; Hektner, Brennan, & Brotherson, 2013). If positive behaviors get them attention or negative behaviors get them attention, then they will demonstrate either to get the same end result: attention. For example, if students feel important and get attention by crawling under a desk during a lesson like the example in Ms. Day's class, this kind of behavior is likely to continue. Conversely, if students are given importance and attention for even the smallest positive behavior, like in Ms. Rhonda and Ms. Jane's classes, they will likely be inclined to continue that positive behavior.

This result suggests that by focusing on positive behaviors, more students demonstrated desirable actions throughout the school day. Naturally, when more students are demonstrating desirable behaviors, there are fewer interruptions, distractions, and problematic behaviors, and

therefore more time is focused on SEL lessons and positive relationship building. In classrooms that used positive behavior systems, it is possible that most students believed they were “good” since their teachers were constantly trying to find ways to tell them why they are valued and loved. Just as important, it is also likely that teachers who used positive behavior supports began to genuinely believe that all of their students were “good,” as well.

In positive behavior classrooms, teachers used positive attention to influence students who were making undesirable choices. When Ms. Rhonda and Ms. Jane noticed negative behaviors, they would often praise the students who were following directions, purposely trying to influence those making alternative choices. Again, since it was known that attention in these classrooms is achieved through positive behaviors, the praising reminded students who were demonstrating undesirable behaviors how to get the attention that they desire. Additionally, when problem behaviors surfaced that were unable to be remedied through positive reinforcement, teachers in these classrooms distinguished between the child and the negative behavior. A clear message was given to students that although their choice of behavior was not desirable, they are still a good person who is loved and valued. Ms. Jane’s reminder system helped students understand that everyone needs reminders, no one is perfect, and again, that the behavior is different than the individual. Further, by working with the child to fix the problem, perhaps it helps the student see that she genuinely cares for them and wants to help them be better and avoid that kind of behavior in the future. Overall, Ms. Jane’s classroom management system resulted in students focusing better in the classroom but also doing acts of kindness for one another and infusing the SEL learning into their daily actions.

The goal of SEL lessons is to have students transfer their learning to real-life situations. If a child learns how to be more socially inclusive through an SEL lesson and then actively finds

someone at recess who looks lonely and asks him/her to play, transfer of learning has occurred. Positive behavior systems, like that described in Ms. Jane's class, can serve as a powerful motivator for students to repeat desired SEL behaviors. It is possible that this kind of repeated positive reinforcement would result in students transferring this learning to their lives outside of the classroom.

In all of the classrooms that used consistent classroom management and positive behavior systems, a structured, focused, encouraging classroom climate was established. Regular routines, known expectations, circulating the room to check for student understanding, effective tools to gain student attention, reviewing rules daily, offering students SEL-related responsibilities, and implementing a positive behavior system, all contributed to an increase in SEL instructional time and student participation due to reduced time spent on behavior issues.

Emphasis on Student-Teacher Relationships

Morning Greeting & Connecting with Students

Greeting students at the door provided teachers an opportunity to connect with their students immediately as they entered the classroom. Teachers were able to attempt to connect to students' personal lives through a quick check-in, comment, or question. Greeting students is a chance to make each child feel valued as they hear their name, they are welcomed into the classroom, and they are made to feel like their teacher is glad they are at school. This simple act is enough to let the child know they are cared for and wanted in the classroom. Ms. Jane offered students high fives, handshakes, or hugs as they entered, again, as an effort to make each child feel valued and loved. In addition to contributing to a warm, welcoming classroom environment, the practice of greeting students in the morning also provided teachers with an opportunity to see which students are coming into the classroom in the morning tired, unhappy, distracted, or any

other state of being. Substantial information can be gathered by the simple act of greeting students in the morning, and this information can help a teacher plan for the day and how to support students in need. If students are coming into the classroom unhappy, tired, or distracted, it is likely that they will be unable to focus as well on SEL (or any) lessons. By taking the time to quickly check-in upon arrival to the classroom, teachers will be able to understand which students may need additional support. Teachers' days are so busy that they often do not have a chance to connect with students individually during the school day. By checking in during the morning, teachers can connect with each student and gain understanding of which students may need an additional connection so the teacher can prioritize students who need support the most.

Positively Shaping Student Identities

When people are told they are something repeatedly, some begin to believe it, and eventually start to live it. When a child is told repeatedly they are no good, they are not smart, or any other negative comment, if told enough times, chances are the child will start to internalize that message and make it reality. Similarly, when a child is told repeatedly that they are good, kind, helpful, optimistic, or anything positive, they are likely to start internalizing those messages and make it reality, make it a part of who they are, and believe it. When students hear a certain message about their identity again and again, soon, they start to also tell themselves that same message and start living it (Denton, 2007; Wood & Freeman, 2012). It was concerning to hear Ms. Liz make comments to her students like, "Clearly you are not here to learn," because that is the exact message that the student will take from that interaction. This kind of language may contribute to creating a negative identity and if similar messages are regularly told to this student, it could be damaging to their academic, social, and personal development.

For whatever reason, some students come into the classroom with an extremely negative identity of themselves. They believe they are bad, they are not smart, and that they are no good. By affirming those negative beliefs, the construction of a negative identity is only perpetuated in these students. Alternatively, by deconstructing these negative beliefs and constantly rebuilding their identities into something positive, students start to believe it and become that. When Dimante, a student with regular behavior issues, was joking around with a friend instead of getting out his math book, Ms. Jane could have scolded him and embarrassed him in front of his peers or given him a consequence. Instead, she shaped his identity in a positive way by praising him for being such a positive person who makes others smile. She asked him to keep his smile as he got out his math book. Ms. Jane helped to shape Dimante's personal identity by telling him that he - as a person, as the core of his personality - was a happy and optimistic person. With Ms. Jane regularly giving him these kinds of messages, sooner or later, he will start to believe that he is a positive, uplifting person. She not only made him feel good about himself, she was able to achieve the desired behavior of him taking out his math book through the use of positive language.

Similarly, Ms. Rhonda put effort into shaping Ishan's identity in order to help him see that he does not have to be the angry, aggressive student that he believes he is. In order to help re-create an identity for Ishan, Ms. Rhonda regularly told him that he is a helpful, caring person any time he demonstrates that kind of behavior, even for the smallest, most basic acts of kindness. By doing this, Ms. Rhonda is helping Ishan build a new identity, an identity of someone who does kind things for others. Ms. Rhonda also encouraged students who already had a positive identity for themselves to take action and help others. When Shoveya came into the classroom with a large smile on her face in the morning, Ms. Rhonda continued to shape her

identity by telling her that she is a “positive, uplifting person” and then asked her to help put a smile on another student’s face who appeared to be sad as he entered the classroom. By helping to create positive identities in students, a child’s self-confidence and overall happiness is likely to increase. Further, it creates a warm classroom community and a stronger relationship between the teacher and student.

One-on-One Time

When students have had an opportunity to get to know their teacher on a deeper, genuine level that often only one-on-one time provides, trust and friendship begin to be established. When this happens, a mutual respect can develop. When students feel trust, friendship, and respect toward their teacher, it is more likely they will feel comfortable contributing to SEL discussions that often require students to share and analyze personal stories with one another. When students are contributing more to these kinds of discussions, they are likely more engaged during the SEL lessons.

Sometimes students never have a real opportunity to develop an individual relationship with their teachers. One on one time provides a brief amount of time for teachers to talk to students like friends instead of in the “lesson-giving” mode. Students have a chance to open up to teachers about home life, and other personal things that they normally would not have the opportunity to share. This also gives teachers a chance to share with students on a personal level and makes students feel valued.

Love

Most children want to feel loved, valued, and important. Ms. Jane mentioned that some of these children never hear anyone tell them they love them. In many of the classrooms I observed, students were explained that there was a clear distinction between problematic behaviors and the

individual. These teachers enforced the concept of unconditional love. If kids know they are loved, they will feel more safe and welcome in the classroom and will likely be more successful both academically and socially. A couple of the teachers observed, explicitly told the children they were loved. When children hear repeatedly from their teacher that they are loved, cared for, and valued, they will likely eventually start believing it.

More Than Classroom Management Alone

When initially analyzing my data, it seemed that classroom management alone would be the foundational element necessary to support effective Social Emotional Learning. After numerous observations in Ms. Reen's class, however, I realized that I was wrong. Ms. Reen had exceptional classroom management skills. Her students entered the classroom promptly in the morning, obediently completed morning tasks, raised their hands to speak, and followed directions well. There were rarely behavioral issues that Ms. Reen needed to address, and overall, it seemed like a well-functioning classroom. Although classroom management was consistent and strong in Ms. Reen's class, there was not an emphasis placed on teacher-student relationships. Ms. Reen did not greet students by name, show interest in their personal lives, or try connecting with them in any way outside of academic lessons. Interestingly, during *Second Step* and other SEL lessons, students were respectful, but participation and engagement were limited. Students did not openly contribute to class discussions, and Ms. Reen mainly dominated the dialogue that did occur since so few students were willing to share. It could be that there was not a community feeling in the classroom, and students did not feel comfortable sharing personal thoughts and feelings with one another because that kind of trusting relationship had not been established. When I conducted focus groups with Ms. Reen's students, answers were extremely superficial and surface level. It seems that both classroom management and strong prioritization

of teacher-student relationships are equally important when considering the foundational elements of effective SEL programming.

Why Do Relationships Matter to SEL?

All of these components of building a strong bond between the teacher and student contribute to Social Emotional Learning. Connecting with students in the morning, greeting them by name upon arrival, helping to form positive identities, spending quality one-on-one time together, and making students feel loved, all contribute to developing a stronger relationship between the student and teacher. When a strong relationship is developed, a student feels warm, welcome, and safe in their classroom. When they feel this way, it is easier to learn and focus on the lesson at hand. Furthermore, when a mutual respect is developed, student behavior issues may decrease because students want to respect their relationship with their teacher. This results in fewer behavior issues and more instructional time. Last, when a teacher tries to connect with students and build a meaningful relationship, they are modeling SEL skills for the student. This practice results in the modeling of communication skills, empathy, and compassion. In the end, positive student-teacher relationships result in children feeling emotionally secure around their teacher. When this kind of emotional security has been established, students will be more successful at school, both academically and socially.

Answering Research Question 1a:

How is SEL taught in authentic ways that are personally meaningful and context-specific, while maintaining program fidelity and school-wide coherence?

Social Emotional Learning was taught in authentic ways that were more personally meaningful and context-specific to students when teachers prepared before teaching the lesson and did not read the scripted *Second Step* lessons word for word. Instead, when teachers at

Sherman incorporated personal stories, changed the “pretend and practice” scenarios in *Second Step* lessons to be more relevant to situations that students in the class could experience, used student experiences as examples, and taught in the moment when an SEL skill could be utilized, student participation and engagement increased significantly. Although these teachers did not read directly from the *Second Step* lesson cards, fidelity was maintained because the key concepts were still highlighted, just put into the teachers’ own words with additional supplemental stories and examples to increase relevance. Alternatively, when teachers read directly from the scripted card, lessons appeared forced, unnatural, and decontextualized. Students were less engaged, easily distracted, and participation in SEL dialogue decreased.

Personal Life Stories

Teachers were able to make *Second Step* more personally meaningful to students by sharing personal stories from their own lives. Additionally, student engagement increased notably when teachers shared their stories. Perhaps this is because students viewed their teachers as “real people” when personal life stories were shared. Further, it could be that when teachers shared these stories, students were better able to connect to the message or the experience. Furthermore, when teachers make themselves vulnerable by telling personal life stories, it is possible that students feel closer to them and a stronger student-teacher relationship could be developed.

Altering Second Step Scenarios

Teachers were able to make *Second Step* more authentic and personally meaningful to students when they replaced the situations and scenarios from practice section of the lessons with ones that better reflected the life experience and culture of their students. Perhaps the reason this practice was able to help students remain engaged throughout the lesson is because students were

able to relate to the situations and converse about something that they understand, as opposed to something completely culturally irrelevant. Although all *Second Step* lessons address problems and feelings that most children face, it is crucial for teachers to consider the unique cultural attributes that each student brings to the classroom. With this, when teachers were able to alter the *Second Step* scenarios, they were also able to bring real stories of the class population into the lessons.

Teachable Moments & Student Experiences

Perhaps the most obvious way to make Social Emotional Learning more personally meaningful to students is to use their personal experiences as examples during discussions, activities, and “in the moment” when learning opportunities arise from issues that come up during the school day. Although this may seem like a simple way to increase student engagement in SEL, only four of seven teachers made this a part of their teaching practice. By using student experiences as examples for learning, students are immediately more interested because the topic is something they already understand on a personal level. Furthermore, when teachers use student examples, it sends a clear message to the class that their teacher cares about them personally and either understands, or wants to understand, their feelings and perspectives on real-life issues. This very practice further strengthens the student-teacher relationship, which results in the myriad of academic and social benefits highlighted above.

Some teachers took the time to use real-life, in-the-moment student examples to illustrate SEL lessons. This kind of learning is contextualized, meaningful, and completely relevant to students because it offers an opportunity to learn about using real life skills in situations that they have experienced or may experience in the future. Perhaps some teachers have a difficult time justifying taking away academic time to fully address an issue and do an entire SEL lesson

“in-the-moment,” but this kind of learning is invaluable. Students may benefit just as much from these lessons as the *Second Step* lessons themselves (if not more). As opposed to the *Second Step* curriculum, where a scenario is described that students may or may not be related to, by teaching from examples within the school day, students are automatically able to relate. It is possible that this results in higher engagement since students are more interested in topics that directly relate to their lives and their peer’s experiences. It is also possible that by using “teachable moments” to discuss an incident that happened to a classmate to teach SEL, students will internalize the messages far more than hearing someone else’s story. It feels more real because it is real.

In conclusion, by using student experiences and teachable moments, learning diverges from a scripted lesson and instead becomes more consistent with Authentic Intellectual Work, or AIW (Newmann, King, & Carmichael; 2007). Teaching SEL through real world experiences results in students internalizing the learning and recognizing the lesson’s “value beyond school” (Newmann, King, & Carmichael; 2007) and cultural relevance, and thus a greater likelihood that students will be able to transfer the learning to future situations they encounter outside of the classroom. As the Authentic Intellectual Work framework notes, when students are able to construct their own knowledge through interpreting and evaluating prior knowledge (in this case, teachable moments and student experiences), they are able to use this constructed knowledge to solve new problems. This is the very goal of effective Social Emotional Learning.

Answering Research Question 1b:

How is SEL integrated and embedded into everyday lessons?

Social Emotional Learning was consistently embedded into both formal and informal lessons throughout the school day in four of the seven classrooms observed. These teachers incorporated SEL into Morning Meetings, transition times, music, math, science, and literacy. Social Emotional Learning was embedded into other content areas and throughout the day in classrooms in which student-teacher relationships were valued and classroom management was consistent. It is possible that the reason for this is because when classroom management systems are strong, little time is devoted to behavioral issues. Given that the most classroom teachers lose several minutes of instructional time per lesson due to behavior issues, perhaps teachers who deal with fewer behavior issues, due to solid management strategies, have more time to be flexible during lessons. It is possible that this is the reason teachers with consistent, effective classroom management strategies find opportunities to embed Social Emotional Learning into subject areas like math and literacy. Alternatively, in classrooms without effective management strategies, teachers spend so much time dealing with behavior issues that perhaps they cannot justify taking a minute away from math or literacy since they have such limited time to teach any instruction due to managing problematic behaviors. Similarly, when teachers have developed meaningful relationships with their students, it is less likely there will be behavior issues in the classroom, in addition to a stronger sense of safety, security, and trust in the classroom. This results in more time for teachers to be flexible during core content lessons and thus have freedom to incorporate SEL into lessons.

Morning Meetings & SEL

Morning Meeting time is an effective time to incorporate SEL. It can “set the stage” for the day as it helps give students a focus for their actions and attitude. By having ideas about kindness and social inclusion fresh in their minds from Morning Meeting, students are more likely to internalize their learning through opportunities throughout the day to practice the skills that were taught during the Morning Meeting. For example, Ms. Rhonda asked her class to recite the *Hug of War* poem. Perhaps the recitation of this poem focused on non-violence and kindness resonated with students and echoed in their minds throughout the day, influencing their decision-making during conflict.

Further, the incorporation of SEL into Morning Meeting starts the day with open dialogue and conversations about real-life situations and skills that are relevant to students. This can be a great way to start a day of learning, as talking together as a class or doing a group activity contributes to a warm, positive classroom environment and may make students feel glad that they are at school. Ms. Rhonda’s incorporation of song and dance with a lesson about teamwork accomplished this. Students were clearly enjoying school while learning important life skills. By starting the morning with such activities, students’ days get off to the right start. When students are happier in school, perhaps they will enjoy learning more.

Math & SEL

Although subject areas like math and science may seem to be the most difficult content areas to include SEL instruction, some of the teachers at Sherman embedded SEL seamlessly into their math lessons. It is possible that the incorporation of SEL into math lessons sends a strong message to students that SEL is not an isolated skill set. Rather, by teaching Social Emotional Learning throughout the day, in all subjects, all the time, students receive a message

that SEL is not only something you learn during *Second Step* time. It is a skill set you need for life, in everything you do. Teachers who embedded SEL into their math lessons found simple ways to connect SEL to the lesson or felt justified to spend time giving a brief SEL lesson when an SEL topic surfaced, even though it may not have been related to math. Perhaps teachers felt justified to do this because they recognized the value in SEL. Maybe it was because they had additional time due to the implementation of solid classroom management strategies.

Literacy & SEL

SEL was most frequently embedded into literacy lessons compared to all other subject areas. The reason for this could be because SEL is present in most children's literature. Children's stories are often about fairness, friendship, and conflict. Teachers were able to formulate meaningful discussion questions about kindness, friendship, diversity, and peaceful conflict resolution based on the scenarios in read-aloud books. Ms. Jane extended these lessons into writing assignments to force students to think even more reflectively about their personal experiences with a particular SEL topic. This finding might suggest that teachers can easily incorporate SEL into any literacy lesson using a read-aloud since most children's stories involve situations that lend themselves to Social Emotional Learning discussions. Furthermore, based on these discussions, vocabulary lessons, focused on important SEL-related words, could also be included, as some of the teachers in this study did. Again, by embedding SEL into literacy, students may begin to realize its importance and that these are the skills that are necessary for life – not just for the classroom.

SEL in Music, Transition Times, & Recess

Social Emotional Learning was developed through music in numerous ways at Sherman. Perhaps the reason for this is because there are several children's songs that focus on SEL-

related topics in addition to the sing-along songs that are a part of the *Second Step* curriculum. Since playing an SEL-related song on the CD player in the background does not necessarily take away from instructional time, this may be a simple way to infuse SEL into the school day. If a teacher is playing an SEL-related song while students line up for recess, it is possible that the lyrics might remain in a student's head and cause them to think differently about a conflict that may surface. Ms. Jane's inclusion of music as a tool to change one's mood could be valuable to students as a simple way to shift a negative state into one that is positive.

Transition Times

Some teachers taught short SEL lessons during transition times, especially prior to dismissing for lunch or recess. This finding may suggest that teachers wanted to remind students of ways to apply their learning to a real world situation, like recess or lunchtime, when student experiences are less structured like in the classroom. Teachers reminded their students to be socially inclusive both on the playground and at recess and to make an effort to help their peers if they needed it. One teacher gave a short lesson on diversity and asked students to actively observe the differences that exist between themselves and their friends while at recess. Some teachers also used transition times to read small clips from books or poems that highlighted an SEL concept, followed by a very short message from the teacher about the value of that particular SEL concept. Given that these kinds of quick lessons occurred sometimes in less than two minutes, perhaps teachers who feel as though there is not enough time to embed SEL into other areas throughout the day, could include it during transition times like this.

Effective SEL Classrooms

In conclusion, there were five main ways that effective SEL classrooms differed from the other less effective classrooms involved in this study: classroom management, student-teacher relationships, positive behavioral supports, integrating SEL throughout the day, and making SEL more personally meaningful, relevant, and intellectually challenging to students. First, classroom management was strong in effective SEL classrooms and included consistent routines, known classroom agreements, and regularly discussed classroom rules. In the other classrooms involved in this study, there was regularly chaos, disorder, and heavy distractions in the classroom. There was no sign of routines, expectations, or classroom agreements of any kind. Teachers in these classrooms spent more time addressing negative behaviors than teaching lessons.

The second way that successful SEL classrooms differed from less effective classrooms was that there was an explicit, intentional focus on prioritizing teacher-student relationships. These relationships were nurtured through a variety of means including greeting students in the morning, connecting with students during non-instructional times, scheduling one-on-one times with students, and making students feel safe, welcome, and loved. In the less effective classrooms, there did not seem to be a focus on student-teacher relationships, and none of the above-mentioned efforts to connect with students personally were present.

The third way that productive SEL classrooms differed from the others was that they involved positive behavioral supports. In effective SEL classrooms, there was a strong focus on positive behavior. Teachers in these classrooms poured their energy into recognizing, reinforcing, and rewarding positive behaviors in the classroom. In these classrooms, little energy was put into negative behaviors, and undesirable behaviors were managed by focusing stronger attention on the positive. In less effective classrooms, more energy and attention was given to

undesirable behaviors. Students were regularly isolated, scolded publically, and given punitive consequences.

The fourth way that successful SEL classrooms differed from less effective classrooms was that SEL was integrated throughout the day: it was weaved into other content areas, during transition times, during Morning Meeting, and at the end of the day before students left the classroom. Further, in these classrooms, whenever students demonstrated social-emotional skills, the behavior or skill was recognized, reinforced, and students were rewarded in some way, usually without material rewards. In the less effective SEL classrooms, SEL was limited to only the *Second Step* curriculum- one thirty-minute lesson per week. There was little to no mention of the skills or concepts outside of the lesson itself. SEL was separated from the rest of the school day, and viewed as an independent entity. While the direct-instruction from a SEL curriculum is absolutely a necessary part of effective SEL programming as it provides an essential foundation of SEL concepts, the curriculum itself is not enough to result in true internalization of SEL and transfer of knowledge. It should be noted that the other classrooms technically were maintaining fidelity to the *Second Step* program. Perhaps fidelity to the program is not enough when it comes to Social Emotional Learning.

The fifth and final way that successful SEL classrooms differed from other classrooms was that SEL lessons were more personally meaningful, contextualized, and relevant to students. In these classrooms, personal stories were shared from teachers, student stories were used as examples, and situational examples from the curriculum were altered to better match the student population's experiences and culture. In the less effective SEL classrooms, SEL was limited to reading word-for-word from the lesson card script.

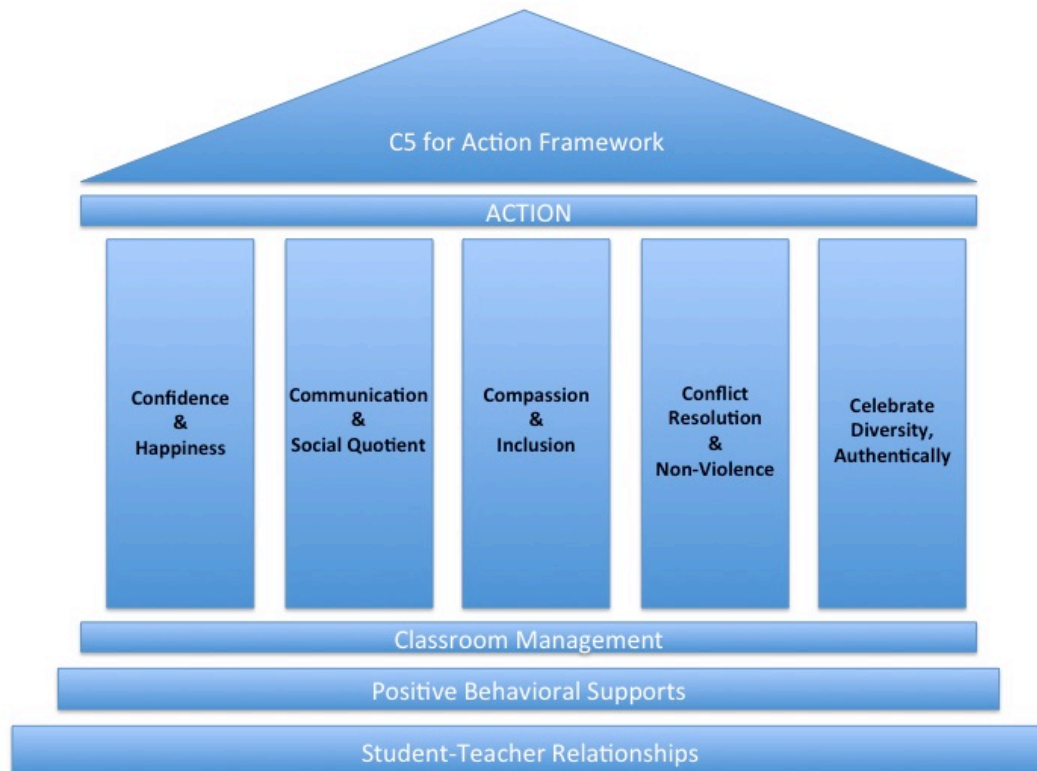
It is somewhat difficult to distinguish some of the above-mentioned practices of effective SEL classrooms, as they are quite interrelated. For example, when teachers share personal stories from their lives, the learning becomes more authentic and personally meaningful to students but it also results in nurturing the student-teacher relationships as students get to know their teachers on a more personal level. Consequently, it often results in students feeling more comfortable to share stories from their own lives, which results in more authentic, personalized learning, but also continues to foster a meaningful relationship between the teacher and students. Likewise, when teachers repeatedly provide positive messages to students about their identities, it results in positive behavior, but it also results in fostering student-teacher relationships.

Answering Research Question 2:

To what extent does SEL programming reflect the C5 Framework?

Every SEL lesson observed at Sherman emphasized one or more component of the *C5 for Action Framework*. All SEL lessons focused on one or more of the following concepts: self-confidence, optimism, communication skills, friendship-building, compassion, inclusion, peaceful conflict resolution, and/or appreciation of diversity. Although I started this research with the belief that this framework was comprehensive and encompassed all necessary elements of effective SEL programming in a school, I now realize that the framework is flawed. After analyzing my data and determining major findings from this study, I realized that the *C5 for Action Framework* neglects to include any language around student-teacher relationships, positive behavioral supports, and classroom management. While the *C5 for Action Framework* could certainly be used to determine what kind of concepts SEL lessons should emphasize, in its current state, it does not illustrate the entire picture of what is necessary to implement SEL programming effectively. Currently, the *C5 for Action Framework* lacks essential foundational

supports. Without consistent classroom management and a focus on positive behavior, it is difficult to teach any lesson (from any content) meaningfully to students since a significant amount of time is spent dealing with behavior issues. Further, relationships are essential to the effective implementation of SEL. Social Emotional Learning lessons involve open dialogue. Students are more likely to share their feelings candidly when they feel comfortable in the classroom. This comfort comes from feeling safe and happy in the classroom, and the most important way for this to be achieved is through a meaningful relationship between the student and teacher. After considering these lacking components of the original framework, I would suggest that a framework that would more accurately illustrate the necessary components of a successful SEL program would include classroom management, positive behavioral supports, and student-teacher relationships as foundation upon which the other five main components of the framework rest. Above everything, there should be a strong emphasis on taking action, as none of the SEL skills have any value if they are not put to use in students' daily lives. With this, the following figure is a more accurate framework for effective SEL implementation:



Answering Research Question 3:

What messages do students from effective SEL programming articulate about SEL?

There was a significant difference in the quality of student responses between the four more effective SEL classrooms and the three remaining observed classrooms. Students from effective SEL classrooms were able to: (1) extend their answers beyond simple surface-level responses, often through relating to their own lives and experiences or; (2) utilize SEL skills within the school day, and later talk about it; and (3) articulate the lesson of repeated SEL messages. When considering the *C5 for Action Framework*, the majority of student responses focused on compassion, social inclusion, happiness, and peaceful conflict resolution (including standing up to bullying and teasing). Although focus groups did not provide meaningful data,

other data sources were valuable for gaining student perspectives including student responses during class lessons, student interactions during group work, and individual conversations with students after lessons. Nearly all student responses focused on taking action on one of the above-mentioned components.

Difference in Quality of Responses

There was a significant difference between student responses from Ms. Lee, Ms. Rhonda, Ms. Jane, and Ms. Dorothy's classrooms (Group One) compared to student responses from Ms. Day, Ms. Liz, and Ms. Reen's classrooms (Group Two). The first group of classrooms had consistent classroom management and positive behavioral supports. Those classrooms also demonstrated strong relationships between students and teachers. It is possible that these conditions contributed to the quality of responses elicited from students about SEL lessons. The vast majority of students from the first group of classrooms were actively engaged during SEL lessons and participated in SEL discussions. Alternatively, both participation and engagement in SEL lessons was significantly lower in the second group of classrooms. When student participation and engagement are high, it is likely that learning increases. Perhaps when learning increases, it is more likely for students to be able to articulate what they have learned.

Beyond the Surface Responses

Throughout all grade levels observed, when students from Group One classrooms were asked SEL-related questions in both the classroom setting as well as during focus groups, most did not give simple, vague answers. Instead, many students were able to actually use specific examples from their own experiences to illustrate their understanding of a given concept or were able to extend their answers beyond a simple, surface-level response. For example, when Ms. Rhonda asked the class if two people could be best friends if they preferred different kinds of pie

during a diversity lesson, students did not give simple answers like, “Yes, it’s good to be friends with people who are different.” Rather, students gave more thoughtful, introspective answers relating to their own lives. One student offered an example about how he loves video games, but his good friend does not, so they find new things to do together when they play. When the conversation moved to more involved diversity concepts like religion, Ms. Rhonda asked the class if they could be friends with someone who did not believe in Santa or put up a Christmas tree. One student talked about being good friends with someone who did not believe in Jesus and did not put a Christmas tree up, even though his own mother discouraged him from maintaining the friendship for this very reason.

In a lesson about non-violence in Ms. Dorothy’s class, students were discussing a story that involved a violent man. One student related the lesson of non-violence to his own life and shared that his own uncle went down the same negative path and ended up in jail. These kinds of responses indicate that students are internalizing SEL messages and considering the lessons in relation to their own lives and experiences. It is possible that this kind of learning took place only in Group One classrooms because certain foundational structures like relationships, positive behavioral supports, and classroom management were in place. When these structural elements are solid, teachers are more likely to take time during SEL lessons to hear student perspectives and stories and extend lessons to ensure that students understand the messages. Perhaps this is part of the reason students from these classrooms were able to articulate SEL learning in a personally meaningful way.

Utilizing SEL Skills

Students from these classrooms were not only able to use the skills they learned from SEL lessons to resolve conflicts that surfaced during the school day, they were also able to talk

about the strategies they used. In Ms. Jane's class, two students were praised for resolving a disagreement during a math lesson in a positive way. When I interviewed one of the students and asked her to explain what had happened, she was able to clearly explain how she and a peer had a disagreement about the correct way to solve a math problem. She described how frustration was escalating, but her math partner reminded her of some calming down tools including talking "nice and quiet and slow" and how by doing this, they both were able to calm down and respectfully explain their perspectives. Similarly, when two students in Ms. Jane's class were arguing about who was first in line, Ms. Jane reminded them to use a peaceful conflict resolution strategy. This reminder was all that was needed to help the boys resolve their conflict. The boys were able to articulate exactly what they did to resolve the problem. One student explained that he looked at the class "calm down" poster and took deep breaths before talking. The other explained that he remembered another strategy was to think of things that made him happy, so he thought of his dog to calm down. The boys explained how much better it was to talk to each other after using these calm down methods and how being first in line no longer seemed to matter. These results suggest that students were able to internalize SEL messages so deeply that when it came time to utilize the skills, they were able to reflect back on previous SEL lessons and solve problems using tools they were taught. The fact that students could then explain the processes used to resolve conflicts using SEL strategies indicates that students truly are learning from SEL lessons and that the lessons are being transferred to real-life applications. These results suggest that students from Group One classrooms are likely to be able to transfer their learning of SEL lessons outside of the classroom, onto the playground, and beyond, into their real lives outside of the school day.

Students also used SEL skills to help their peers. When a student appeared to be sad in Ms. Lee's class, Ms. Lee reminded the group that they knew a variety of "happy strategies" to help a friend. Students immediately approached the tearful boy and after jokes, distractions, hugs, and stories from students who tried to relate to the boy, he was smiling and visibly feeling much better. A similar example occurred in Ms. Rhonda's class when a student entered the class visibly upset and another student comforted him quietly in the corner of the classroom.

Given that the very goal of teaching Social Emotional Learning is for students to be able to transfer their learning from the classroom into their lives, it is important to consider what could be possible causes for these kinds of results. Again, it is possible that having essential foundational elements in place like classroom management, positive behavioral supports, and meaningful student-teacher relationships, students learned better in the classroom and were able to truly internalize the SEL messages taught. Additionally, it could be possible that since teachers from Group One classrooms altered *Second Step* lessons to be more personally meaningful to students, lessons were more deeply understood on an individual level and students could relate to the messages. Thus, when an opportunity to utilize an SEL skill surfaced, students were able to do so.

Internalizing Repeated Messages

Certain SEL lessons seemed to resonate with students due to repetition, even when the SEL lesson was not explicitly taught repeatedly. When students spoke about these lessons, they demonstrated a genuine understanding of the lesson and how to apply it to their own lives. For example, in Ms. Rhonda's class, students recited the *Hug of War* poem daily. Although Ms. Rhonda did not discuss the value of non-violence every day, when students were asked about the meaning of the poem, they all were able to recall previous SEL lessons and explain the problems

with violence, how it could affect their life, and the value of non-violence. Similarly, Ms. Rhonda regularly asked students to use their “loud and proud” voice throughout the school day. Although she did not explain what that phrase meant every time she said it, students were able to explain that it meant they should be proud of their ideas, proud of themselves, and communicate effectively so they can share their smart ideas. These results suggest that not all SEL lessons need to be time-consuming. Simple phrases like “loud and proud” or the recitation of a meaningful poem could be enough to remind students subconsciously of the value of certain SEL concepts. Given that teachers’ days are overloaded with expectations and other content area, this finding, involving simple, repeated messages may provide ease to those who would like to incorporate SEL throughout the day without taking too much instructional time to integrate lessons.

Implications for Future Practice

Findings from this study have several implications for future practice in schools. The five following areas will be discussed with regard to implications for educational leaders: establishment of a school-wide (preferably district-wide) positive behavior plan; reallocating time; celebration of teacher individuality; divergence from traditional professional development and teacher training programs; and altering hiring practices.

Establishment of a Positive Behavior Plan

It may be helpful for all schools in a district to establish a positive behavior plan. The implementation of an SEL program is likely to yield more productive results if this area was prioritized just as much as the SEL curriculum itself. Districts considering purchasing an SEL program may benefit from committing to this area as well. This need not be done before the implementation of an SEL program, but can be done together as both efforts support the other.

When classroom management, focused on positive behavior, is in place, SEL is better taught. When SEL is well taught and internalized by students, classroom management efforts are more likely to be fruitful. Schools are encouraged to think carefully before simply purchasing an SEL program without having a behavior plan alongside it or established beforehand. Simply purchasing a curriculum without having foundational elements established may not yield desirable results. This being said, fidelity to the SEL curriculum is extremely important because it provides a critical core foundation to SEL concepts for students. Fidelity to a SEL curriculum combined with the five above-mentioned practices of successful SEL classrooms is more likely to yield the desirable social and academic benefits of Social Emotional Learning. Further, it would be helpful for one full-time staff member to be completely devoted to behavior, management, and SEL. Sherman's district completely removed PBIS and interviews revealed that SEL efforts were not nearly as successful as they were previously, as fewer teachers at Sherman were experiencing success with SEL. By having someone "in-house," who focuses on SEL, classroom management, and positive behavioral supports, teachers will have a point person to support them with all of these efforts, and SEL programming will be far more effective.

Reallocating Time

Second Step has been touted as "no prep necessary" to push back against arguments that there is no time for SEL, but the truth is that when teachers just grab a lesson and try to teach it by simply reading the scripted lesson text, the most important parts of the lesson are lost. If a school is ready to commit to *Second Step* or any other SEL curriculum, it may be helpful to devote more than just dollars, but time as well, so teachers can prepare adequately and be thoughtful about ways to make it more personally relevant, and how to include personal examples from their own lives, among others.

Similarly, to ease concerns of SEL being too time consuming for teachers who already have too much on their plates, *Second Step* trainings often involve “selling the curriculum” by saying that it only requires one 30 minute lesson per week. However, this is incorrect. Without the support of embedded SEL throughout the day, and regularly recognizing, reinforcing, and rewarding positive SEL behaviors, students will not internalize the messages and will not transfer the learning to real-life situations they encounter. When schools decide to start using an SEL curriculum, they must commit to more than 30 minutes per week for the lesson itself. Time must also be allocated toward supplemental lessons, embedding SEL throughout the day, and Morning Meetings. Morning Meetings are a perfect opportunity to frame the day with SEL-related lessons and goals, review previous SEL lessons; remind students of positive behavior expectations, and connect with students to continue building relationships and community. A simple 15-20 minute block of time could have dramatic implications for the rest of the school day for students’ academic, social, and overall well-being in addition to tremendously improving school climate.

Teacher Training Programs and On-going Professional Development

Teachers rarely receive specific training to address the importance of social and emotional issues inside the classroom (Hargreaves, 1998). Teacher training programs and on-going professional development must focus far more on how to develop and maintain meaningful student-teacher relationships and positive school climate, in general, as these components are essential to having meaningful SEL conversations and internalization of SEL messages (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). Similarly, both teacher training programs and on-going professional development must also prioritize effective classroom management strategies. When classroom management is established, teachers have more instructional time since they are

not spending as much time dealing with behavior issues. With this, they will feel more comfortable embedding SEL lessons throughout the school day in all content areas. This extra time saved from not dealing with behavior issues can be translated to additional time during math, literacy, transitions, etc. where teachers can feel justified using instructional time for a quick, embedded SEL lesson. Until teachers entering the profession come to districts with adequate training in classroom management, relationship building, and districts must prioritize these areas through professional development. With this, perhaps the irony is that the very SEL skills that our students need to acquire, in fact, first need to be given to our teachers (e.g. relationship building). Teachers cannot effectively teach SEL if they do not have the skill set themselves. Teacher training programs ought to include courses on classroom management, relationship building, and a course called “Social Emotional Teaching.” Research has shown that teachers experience less burnout and higher job satisfaction when their own SEL practices are solid (Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobson, 2009; Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010). Further, research has found that SEL beliefs are associated with a stronger commitment to the education profession (Collie, et al., 2011). Professional development that provides opportunities for teachers to co-teach with and/or observe SEL lessons from those who have experienced more success with SEL may be valuable.

Explicit professional development regarding effective ways to incorporate SEL into literacy may also be helpful for teachers. It is the most obvious, simple place to include SEL, and a simple shift in which literature books are used in a classroom could result in more meaningful incorporation of SEL. Last, perhaps it would be beneficial for both teacher training programs and on-going professional development to emphasize how to make recess, lunch time, and hallway transitions a prime time for SEL. Teachers can use these non-instructional times as an

opportunity to encourage students to be socially inclusive, stand up against bullying behavior, do random acts of kindness, and actively seek out others who may need help in some way. Again, effective ways to do this include opportunities with co-teaching and observing skilled SEL teachers.

Teacher Individuality

When a school adopts a specific SEL curriculum, perhaps teachers could also be encouraged to embed additional SEL lessons throughout the day that they are personally passionate about. As we move toward Common Core Standards and more stringent accountability measures, teachers are being given scripted lessons, which often result in eliminating teacher individuality and creativity. While some of the arguments that support streamlining curricula have merit, a degree of teacher individuality is a very positive thing. When teachers believe in whatever SEL component they are teaching, whether it be social inclusion, non-violence, diversity, or any other component, they will teach it with passion, and will be more likely to include personal life stories. With this, when teachers balance SEL curricular lessons with supplemental SEL lessons in which teachers have the freedom to teach whichever SEL components they are personally passionate about, lessons will be more engaging and personally meaningful to students. Naturally, when students are more engaged and find lessons to be more personally relevant, they are more likely to internalize the SEL lessons and transfer this knowledge to their real-life situations.

Hiring Practices

The last implication of this study draws attention to the need to be more comprehensive in our approach to hiring practices. The right people must be hired. A relationship between Student Support Services (or whatever department within the district that supports SEL) and

Human Resources must be developed to ensure that every person being hired to the district is committed to SEL. Once this relationship has been established, collectively, meaningful interview questions that may shed light on a candidate's views of SEL could be crafted. If a district is able to hire new teachers who already demonstrate a commitment toward SEL, undoubtedly, SEL efforts will be fruitful. Additionally, educational leaders who are passionate about SEL must advocate for not hiring teachers until they have been observed teaching a lesson, any lesson, to children. The simple act of observing just one lesson would shed light immediately on the kind of classroom management and relationship building skills with which the candidate is coming into the district.

Limitations & Reflections

As I reflect on my study, it is not difficult to recognize its limitations. Most notably, my focus group data did not yield meaningful results. The majority of the participants in my focus groups were under the age of six, and I was not thoughtful enough about this dynamic. Students that participated in my focus groups were easily distracted by one another, by their surroundings, and by what I was writing. In hindsight, I should have more strongly advocated for a more quiet, removed space within the building. Although I did make this request to teachers, I did not try to persuade them after they apologetically told me the only space available was the hallway. Further, if I could do focus groups again, I would have done fewer focus groups for a longer period of time with hopes to gain a more accurate understanding of student perceptions of SEL. I would have also conducted more focus groups with older students. While the data I collected certainly resulted in meaningful findings about effective SEL programming, I did not gain the kind of understanding of student voices that I had initially hoped for. I am grateful that I was

able to gain an understanding of student perspectives and understanding of SEL through a careful analysis of student responses during classroom observations, however.

Another major limitation to this study was its small sample size. By including more than one school, the study would have been more comprehensive and rich. Further, it would have allowed an opportunity to compare and contrast practices across schools or even perhaps across districts. The results presented here should contribute to further research in this field with studies that include differing contexts and a larger sample size. Finally, another significant limitation of this research is that it did not shed light on the impact that SEL had upon students in settings outside of the classroom. Although this study focused on behaviors and contributions made inside the classroom, it did not provide insight into the amount of impact that the lessons had on student actions at recess, lunch, bussing or walking home, or anywhere outside of the classroom. Given that the very goal of SEL is for students to transfer the learning to real-world situations, this is an important limitation of my study, and one that warrants further study.

Further Research

There are numerous implications for future research. Following the above-mentioned limitations of my study, a future study designed similarly with an explicit emphasis on student voices may provide meaningful insight into what messages students truly internalize from effective SEL programming. This study could focus exclusively on student voices and actions. Perhaps researchers could follow a group of students throughout the school day, inside and outside of the classroom for a given period of time. This may shed light onto how students use SEL skills to handle various situations in the hallway, at recess, at lunch, and on their way home from school. Further, research that also includes parent and family voices may also provide some additional perspectives regarding how students are able to use SEL skills outside of the

classroom. Studies of this nature would provide meaningful insight regarding how students are able to transfer their learning to a real-world context.

Another study that would be valuable would involve researching a school that has implemented SEL programming, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Responsive Classroom. Since Responsive Classroom explicitly focuses on building meaningful student-teacher relationships and effective classroom management strategies, I would be interested to see the extent to which SEL programming is more effective when supported by programs that explicitly focus on positive behavior, classroom management, and student-teacher relationships.

Conclusion

When I began this research, I was convinced that the simple incorporation of a Social Emotional Learning curriculum that was reflected by the *C5 for Action Framework* was “the answer” to solving many large-scale problems in society. I was sure schools could contribute to decreasing depression and violence if students were explicitly taught: how to be confident in themselves, find happiness from within, and become strong communicators, how to develop and maintain meaningful relationships, use compassion and social inclusion to help others, effective conflict resolution skills, the value of non-violence, and how to celebrate and embrace diversity. After conducting this study, however, I realize that I was wrong. The simple act of teaching lessons from a Social Emotional Learning curriculum will not result in students actually internalizing the messages and transferring this knowledge to their real lives. Instead, I learned that an integrated model that includes a positive behavior plan, solid classroom management, a research-based SEL curriculum, teacher individuality to adapt for authenticity, and SEL lessons

embedded throughout the school day will result in meaningful Social Emotional Learning instruction.

The two foundational elements that are essential to have in place alongside a Social Emotional Learning curriculum are strong, consistent classroom management focused on positive behavior and meaningful teacher-student relationships. In addition to these foundational elements, Social Emotional Learning programming will be most effective with two supports: regularly embedded formal and informal SEL lessons taught throughout the school day and making SEL lessons (both curricular and supplemental) authentic to students by connecting to their personal lives and including a teacher's own personal stories. When these foundational elements and structural supports are in place, students' engagement and participation will increase, and SEL lessons will be personally meaningful to students, which will result in students internalizing the messages and later applying the SEL skills to their own lives. When students apply these skills to their everyday lives, everyone will benefit.

This study has the potential to impact schools and possibly encourage more districts to implement SEL with more of an integrated, comprehensive approach as just outlined. With this, perhaps more children will be exposed to an education in which happiness strategies, social skills, compassion, non-violence, and embracing diversity are prioritized. The culture of these schools has the potential be transformed from that of judgment and insecurity to a position where education, acceptance, and compassion rule as the highest priorities. Perhaps these children will grow up with values that include respecting all people, regardless of their differences. Perhaps these students will someday become parents who promote social and emotional competencies and teach their children to respect all people regardless of their differences. It is possible that there could be a reduction in gun violence, and violence in general, since these children could

grow up knowing how to peacefully resolve conflicts and appreciate differences. Again, while I certainly do not believe this study is going to change the world, I do believe that those with well-developed social and emotional skills have the potential to make meaningful contributions to humanity.

References

- Achenbach, T.M., Dumenci, L., & Rescorla, L.A. (2003). Are American children's problems still getting worse? A 23-year comparison. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 31, 1-11.
- Atkinson, P. (2005). Qualitative research—Unity and diversity. In *Forum Qualitative: Qualitative Social Research* 6, 3.
- Austin, G., Lee-Bayha, J., & Hanson, T. L. (2004). Ensuring That No Child Is Left Behind: How Are Student Health Risks & Resilience Related to the Academic Progress of Schools?.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Banks, J.A. (1997). *Educating citizens in a multicultural society*. New York: Teachers College Press. 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027.
- Bar-On, R. (2006). The Bar-On model of emotional-social intelligence (ESI).
- Battistich, V., 2003, "Effects of a Social-Based Program to Enhance Prosocial Development on Children's Peer Relations and Social Adjustment," *Journal of Research in Character Education*, 1(1): 1-17.
- Bear, G. G., & Watkins, J. M. (2006). Developing self-discipline. *Children's needs III: Development, prevention, and intervention*, 29-44. National Association of School Psychologists.
- Bennett, W. J. (1993). *The book of virtues: A treasury of great moral stories*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

- Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C., Leffert, N., & Roehlkepartain, E. C. (1999). *A Fragile Foundation: The State of Developmental Assets among American Youth*. Search Institute, 700 S. Third St., Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415-1138.
- Berkowitz, M. W. (2002). The science of character education. *Bringing in a new era in character education* (No. 508), 43-63. Hoover Press.
- Bluestein, J. (2001). *Creating emotionally safe schools: A guide for educators and parents*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc.
- Blum, R. W., Libbey, H. P., Bishop, J. H., & Bishop, M. (2004). School connectedness—Strengthening health and education outcomes for teenagers. *Journal of School Health, 74*(7), 231-235.
- Blum, R., McNeely, C., & Rinehart, P. (2002). *Improving the odds: The untapped power of schools to improve the health of teens*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Center of Adolescent Health and Development.
- Bogdan, R.C. & Biklen, S.K., (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). New York: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Brantlinger, E., Jimenez, R., Klingner, J., Pugach, M., & Richardson, V. (2005). Qualitative studies in special education. *Exceptional children, 71*(2), 195-207.
- California Department of Education. (2005). *Getting results: Update 5 - Student health, supportive schools, and academic success*. Sacramento, CA: CDE Press.
- Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2004). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science, 591*(1), 98-124.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. (2010) Available from www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2012). *Surveillance for violent deaths-- National Violent Death Reporting System, 16 states, 2009*. US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 2011. MMWR, Surveillance Summaries 2012; 61(no. SS-4).

Character Education Partnership. (2004) “Defining and Understanding Character Education.” Retrieved March 1, 2013, from <http://www.character.org>

Cherniss, C., Extein, M., Goleman, D., & Weissberg, R. P. (2006). Emotional intelligence: what does the research really indicate? *Educational Psychologist*, 41(4), 239–245.

Clabby, J. (2003). Evidence-based youth violence prevention: Recommending programs that work. *Clinics In Family Practice*. 5(1), 73-90.

Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning. (2012). Social and emotional learning. Chicago: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.casel.org>

Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning. (2008). Social and emotional learning and student benefits: Implications for the safe schools/healthy students core elements. Chicago: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.casel.org>

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2005). Safe and sound: An educational leader’s guide to evidence-based social and emotional learning programs— Illinois edition. Chicago: Author.

- Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., & Perry, N. E. (2012). School climate and social–emotional learning: Predicting teacher stress, job satisfaction, and teaching efficacy. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(4), 1189.
- Cook, T. D., Habib, F., Phillips, M., Settersten, R. A., Shagle, S. C., & Degirmencioglu, S. M. (1999). Comer's school development program in Prince George's County, Maryland: A theory-based evaluation. *American Educational Research Journal, 36*, 543–597.
- Cook, T., Murphy, R., Hunt, D. (2000). Comer's School Development Program in Chicago: A Theory-Based Evaluation. *American Educational Research Journal, 37*(2), 535-97.
- Cookson, P. W., Jr. (2006). One mind at a time. Teaching PreK-8. *The Journal for Cognitive Affective Learning, 3*(1) p. 36.
- Cooper, W. O., Lutenbacher, M., Faccia, K., & Hepworth, J. T. (2003). Planning of Youth Violence-Prevention Programs: Development of a Guiding Measure. *Public Health Nursing, 20*(6), 432-439.
- Creswell, J. (1998). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Saddle Ridge, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- D'Augelli, A. R., Grossman, A.H., & Starks, M.T. (2006). Childhood gender atypicality, victimization, and PTSD among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 21*, 1462-1482.
- Deatrick, J. A., & Faux, S. A. (1991). Conducting qualitative studies with children and adolescents. *Qualitative nursing research: A contemporary dialogue, 203-223*.
- Denton, P. (2007). *The power of our words: Teacher language that helps children learn*. Northeast Foundation for Ch.
- Derman-Sparks, L. (1998). Antibias education: Toward a world of justice and peace. In E.

- Weiner (Ed.), *The Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence* (pp. 398-415).
New York: The Continuum Publishing Co.
- DeRoche, E. and Williams, M. ,2001, *Educating Hearts and Minds: A Comprehensive Character Education Framework*, second edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press).
- DeRoche, E. F. (2004). *Evaluating character development: 51 tools for measuring success*.
Character Development Publishing.
- Devaney, E., O'Brien, M. U., Resnik, H., Keister, S., & Weissberg, R. P. (2006). *Sustainable Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): Implementation Guide and Toolkit*.
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. 815 West Van Buren Street
Suite 210, Chicago, IL 60607.
- Docherty, S., & Sandelowski, M. (1999). Focus on qualitative methods: Interviewing children. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 22(2), 177-185.
- Duckworth, A. S., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2005). Self- discipline outdoes IQ in predicting academic performance of adolescents. *Psychological Science*, 16, 939–944.
- Duncan, G. J., Dowsett, C. J., Claessens, A., Magnuson, K., Huston, A. C., Klebanov, P. (2007).
School readiness and later achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 43, 1428-1446.
- Durlak, J. A. (1995). *School-Based Prevention Programs for Children and Adolescents*. Sage Publications, Incorporated. Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Durlak, J. A. & DuPre, E. P. (2008). Implementation matters: a review of the research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 41, 327-350.

- Durlak, J., Weissberg, R., Dymnicki, A., Taylor, R., & Schellinger, K. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child development, 82*(1), 405–32.
- Dusenbury, L., Zadrazil, J., Mart, A., & Weissberg, R. (2011). State learning standards to advance social and emotional learning: The state scan of social and emotional learning standards, preschool through high school. *Social and emotional learning group, University of Illinois at Chicago*.
- Eaton, D. K., Kann, L., Kinchen, S., Shanklin, S., Ross, J., Hawkins, J., Wechsler, H., & Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2010). Youth risk behavior surveillance- United States, 2009. *MMWR Surveill Summ, 59*(5), 1-142.
- Edutopia. (2013) "Social Emotional Learning: A Short History." Retrieved March 1, 2013, from <http://www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning-history>
- Elias, M. J. (2004). Strategies to infuse social and emotional learning into academics. *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say*, 113-134.
- Elias, M. J., Zins, J.E., Graczyk, P.A., & Weissberg, R.P. (2003). Implementation, sustainability, and scaling up of social emotional and academic innovations in public schools. *School Psychology Review, 32*, 303-319.
- Engel, S. (1995). *The stories children tell: Making sense of the narratives of childhood*. New York: W.H. Freeman.
- Farrell, A. D., Meyer, A. L., Kung, E. M., & Sullivan, T. N. (2001). Development and evaluation of school-based violence prevention programs. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 30*(2), 207-220.

- Faux, S.A., Walsh, M., & Deatrick, J.A. (1988). Intensive interviewing with children and adolescents. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 10, 180–195.
- Fay, J., & Funk, D. (1995). *Teaching with love & logic*. Golden, CO: Love and logic Press.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. Crime in the United States 2010. Uniform Crime Reports. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2011.
- Gay, G. (2004). The importance of multicultural education. *Educational Leadership*, 61, 30 - 35.
- Gini, G. (2006). Social cognition and moral cognition in bullying: What's wrong? *Aggressive Behavior*, 32(6), 528-539.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1994). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. *More grounded theory methodology: A reader*, 182-196. Sociology Pr.
- Glesne, C., (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam.
- Gordon, R., Ji, P., Mulhall, P., Shaw, B., & Weissberg, R. (n.d.). Social and Emotional Learning for Illinois Students: Policy, Practice, and Progress. *Institute of Government & Public Affairs*, 68-83.
- Gottfredson, G. D., Gottfredson, D. C., Chez, E. R., Cantor, D., Crosse, S. B., & Hantaan, I. (2000). National study of delinquency prevention in schools: Summary. *Rockville, MD: National Criminal Justice Reference Services*.
- Greenberg, M. T., Domitrovich, C., & Bumbarger, B. (2001). The prevention of mental disorders in school-aged children: Current state of the field. *Prevention & Treatment*, 4, 1–63.

- Greenberg, M. T., Weissberg, R. P., O'Brien, M. T., Zins, J. E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H. (2003). Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning. *American Psychologist*, 58, 466–474.
- Greenberg, M. T., Domitrovich, C. E., Graczyk, P. A., & Zins, J. E. (2005). The study of implementation in school-based preventive interventions: Theory, research, and practice. *Promotion of Mental Health and Prevention of Mental and Behavioral Disorders 2005 Series V3*.
- Guerra, N. G., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2008). Linking the prevention of problem behaviors and positive youth development: Core competencies for positive youth development and risk prevention. *New directions for child and adolescent development*, 2008(122), 1-17.
- Hargreaves, A. (1998). The emotional practice of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 14, 835–854.
- Hawkins, J. D., Smith, B. H., & Catalano, R. F. (2004). Social development and social and emotional learning. *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say*, 135-150.
- Hektner, J. M., Brennan, A. L., & Brotherson, S. E. (2013). A review of the Nurtured Heart approach to parenting: Evaluation of its theoretical and empirical foundations. *Family process*, 52(3), 425-439.
- Huffman, H. A. (1993). CE without turmoil. *Educational Leadership*, 51(3), 24-26.
- Hoffman, D. M. (2009). Reflecting on Social Emotional Learning: A Critical Perspective on Trends in the United States. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(2), 533–556.
- Humphrey, N., Lendrum, A., & Wigelsworth, M. (2010). Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme in secondary schools: National evaluation.

- Hunt, R., & Regis, D. (2006). A survey of homophobic bullying in schools. *Education & Health, 24*, 30-30.
- Institute of Medicine. (2009). Preventing mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders among young people: Progress and possibilities. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research, 79*, 491–525.
- Kakkori, L., & Huttunen, R. (2007). Aristotle and Pedagogical Ethics, *Paideusis, 16*(1), 17–28.
- Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, M. J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools*. Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). 121 West 27th Street Suite 804, New York, NY 10001.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*(1), 7-24.
- Landy, F. J. (2006). The search for social intelligence. In K. R. Murphy (Ed.), *A critique of emotional intelligence: What are the problems and how can they be fixed?* (pp. 81-124). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Liew, J., & McTigue, E. M. (2010). Educating the whole child: The role of social and emotional development in achievement and school success. *Handbook of curriculum development, 465-478*.

- Lickona, T. and Davidson, M., 2005, *Smart & Good High Schools: Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in School, Work, and Beyond* (Courtland, NY: Center for the 4th and 5th Rs and Character Education Partnership).
- Lickona, T. (2009). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. Random House LLC.
- Lijphart, A. (1971). Comparative politics and the comparative method. *The American political science review*, 682-693.
- Luo, W., Hughes, J. N., Liew, J., & Kwok, O. (2009). Classifying academically at-risk first graders into engagement types: Association with long-term achievement trajectories. *The Elementary School Journal*, 109, 380-405.
- Maslow, A. (1943) A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50 (4) 370-96.
- Max-Neef, M. A., Elizalde, A., & Hopenhayn, M. (1991). *Human scale development: conception, application and further reflections* (Vol. 1). Apex Press.
- McClelland, M. M., Cameron, C. E., McDonald-Connor, C., Farris, C. L., Jewkes, A. M., & Morrison, F. J. (2007). Links between behavioral regulation and preschoolers' literacy, vocabulary, and math skills. *Developmental Psychology*, 43, 947-959.
- McTigue, E. M., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. E. (2011). The Responsive Classroom approach and its implications for improving reading and writing. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 27, 5-24.
- Matthews, G., Zeidner, M., & Roberts, R. D. (2002). *Emotional intelligence: Science and myth*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Merriam, S., (2001). Case studies as qualitative research. In C.F. Conrad et al. (Eds.). *Qualitative research in higher education: Expanding perspectives*. (2nd ed.). Pearson Custom.

- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miles, M. & Huberman, M (2002). *The Qualitative researcher's companion*. London: Sage Publications.
- Miller, J. P. (2010). *Whole child education*. University of Toronto Press.
- Monahan, J. (1992). Mental disorder and violent behavior: Perceptions and evidence. *American Psychologist*, 47(4), 511.
- Murphy, M. M. (2002). *Character education in America's Blue Ribbon schools: Best practices for meeting the challenge*. Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Mytton, J. A., DiGuseppi, C., Gough, D. A., Taylor, R. S., & Logan, S. (2002). School-based violence prevention programs: systematic review of secondary prevention trials. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 156(8), 752.
- Newmann, F. M., King, M. B., & Carmichael, D. L. (2007). Authentic instruction and assessment. *Iowa (IA): Iowa Department of Education*.
- Nieto, S. (2000). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. Longman, 1185 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036.
- Nishina, A., Juvonen, J., & Mitkow, M.R. (2005). Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will make me feel sick: The psychosocial, somatic, and scholastic consequences of peer harassment. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 34, 37-48.
- Noddings, N. (2006). Educating whole people: A response to Jonathan Cohen. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76(2), 238-242.

- Olweus, D., Limber, S., & Mihalic, S. (1999). Blueprints for violence prevention, book nine: Bullying prevention program: *Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.*
- Osher, D., Dwyer, K. P., & Jackson, S. (2002). *Safe, supportive and successful schools step by step.* Longmont, CO: Sopris West Educational Services.
- Ragozzino, Katharine, Hank Resnik, Mary Utne-O'Brien and Roger P. Weissberg. (2003) What Works: Improving Student Achievement. *Education Horizon.* January, 2003. Retrieved March 6, 2013, from <http://www.casel.org> .
- Richards, H. V., Brown, A.E., & Ford, T.B. (2007). Addressing diversity in schools: Culturally responsive pedagogy. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 39, 64-68.
- Richardson, R. (2006). Classrooms and corridors: The new DFES advice on racist bullying in schools - messages from us to us. *Race Equality Teaching*, 24, 31-35.
- Robers, S., Zhang, J., Truman, J., & Snyder, T.D. (2010). Indicators of school crime and safety: 2010. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov>
- Rusby, J. C., Forrester, K.K., Biglan, A., & Metzler, C.W. (2005). Relationships between peer harassment and adolescent problem behaviors. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25, 453-477.
- Ryan, K., & Bohlin, K. E. (2003). *Building character in schools.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Salovey, P., & Sluyter, D. J. (Eds.). (1997). *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications.* Basic Books.

- Schaps, E., Battistich, V., & Solomon, D. (2004). Community in school as key to student growth: Findings from the Child Development Project. *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say*, 189-205.
- Scherer, M. (1998). The Shelter of Each Other: A Conversation with Mary Pipher. *Educational Leadership*, 55(8), 6-11.
- Schofield, J. W. (2002). Increasing the generalizability of qualitative research. *The qualitative researcher's companion*, 171-203.
- Schunk, D. H., & Zimmerman, B. J. (2007). Influencing children's self-efficacy and self regulation of reading and writing through modeling. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 23, 7-25.
- Shaw, J., Hunt, I. M., Flynn, S., Meehan, J., Robinson, J. O., Bickley, H., & Appleby, L. (2006). Rates of mental disorder in people convicted of homicide National clinical survey. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 188(2), 143-147.
- Sherman, L. W., Sommers, C.H., & Manno, B.V. (2000). The safe and drug-free schools program. *Brookings Papers on Education Policy*, pp. 125-156.
- Solomon, D., Battistich, V., Watson, M., Schaps, E., & Lewis, C. (2000). A six-district study of educational change: Direct and mediated effects of the Child Development Project. *Social Psychology of Education*, 4(3), 51.
- Sprague, J. R., & Horner, R. H. (2006). School wide positive behavioral supports. In S. R. Jimerson & M. J. Furlong (Eds.), *The handbook of school violence and school safety from research to practice*. Lawrence Erlbaum: Mahwah, NJ.
- Stone-McCown, Karen. Six Seconds. (2005). *Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Technical Manual*.

- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Swanson, J. W. (1994). Mental disorder, substance abuse, and community violence: an epidemiological approach. *Violence and mental disorder: Developments in risk assessment*, 101-136.
- Taub, J. (2001). Evaluation of the Second Step Violence Prevention Program at a rural elementary school. *School Psychology Review*, 31, 186-200.
- U.S. Public Health Service. (2000). Report of the Surgeon General's Conference on Children's Mental Health. Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services.
- Vail, P. (1994). *Emotion: The On Off Switch for learning*. Rosemont, NJ: Modem Learning Press.
- Valiente, C., Lemery-Chalfant, K., Swanson, J., & Reiser, M. (2008). Prediction of children's academic competence from their effortful control, relationships, and classroom participation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100, 67-77.
- Vogt, W. P. (1997). *Tolerance & Education. Learning To Live with Diversity and Difference*. SAGE Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320.
- Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., & Walberg, H. J. (1997). Learning influences. *Psychology and educational practice*, 199-211.
- Wells, J., Barlow, J. & Stewart-Brown S. (2003). A systematic review of universal approaches to mental health promotion in schools. *Health Education*, 103,197-220.
- Weissberg, R. P., Caplan, M. Z., & Sivo, P. J. (1989). A new conceptual framework for establishing school-based social competence promotion programs.
- Weissberg, R. P., & Greenberg, M. T. (1998). School and community competence-enhancement and prevention programs. In I. E. Siegel & K. A. Renninger (Vol. Eds.), *Handbook of*

- child psychology. Vol. 4. *Child Psychology in Practice* (5th ed., pp. 877–954). New York: Wiley.
- Weissberg, R. P., Kumpfer, K. L., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2003). Prevention that works for children and youth: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 58, 425–432.
- Wood, C., & Freeman-Loftis, B. (2012). Want Positive Behavior? Use Positive Language. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review*, 78(2), 31-35.
- Wynne, E. A., & Ryan, K., (1993). Reclaiming our schools: A handbook on teaching character, academics, and discipline. New York: Merrill.
- Yamamoto, K., Soliman, A., Parsons, J., & Davies, O.L. (1987). Voices in unison: Stressful events in the lives of children from six countries. *Journal of Child Psychology*, 28, 855–864.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). Case study research: Design and methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zeidner, M., Roberts, R. D., & Matthews, G. (2002). Can emotional intelligence be schooled? A critical review. *Educational Psychologist*, 37, 215–231.
- Zins, J. E., Bloodworth, M. R., Weissberg, R. P., & Walberg, H. J. (2007). The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 17(2-3), 191-210.

Appendix A: Email Screener 1

SEL Program: _____

Date: _____

Email Address: _____

Response Status/Date: _____

Hi! My name is Surbhi Madia Barber, and I am a PhD student at UW-Madison. My dissertation topic is Social Emotional Learning, and I am looking for a strong SEL school to study.

I understand that your program was found to be one of the most effective SEL programs available according to CASEL's extensive research. Would you be kind enough to provide a list of school districts that have purchased your SEL program? From there, I will contact districts directly to see if any of their schools fit my research criteria.

I understand that you must be extremely busy, so thank you in advance for taking a few minutes to help me. Again, I am just looking for a list of districts or individual schools that have purchased your SEL program.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!

Respectfully,

Surbhi Madia Barber

PhD Candidate, UW-Madison

612-xxx-xxxx

Appendix B: Email Screener 2

Organization or Individual Name: _____ Date: _____

Email Address: _____ Response Status/Date: _____

Hello!

My name is Surbhi Madia Barber. I am a PhD student at UW-Madison, and my dissertation topic is social emotional learning. I was hoping you might be kind enough to help me find a site school for my study. I am looking for an EXEMPLARY SEL school that meets the following criteria:

1. Has experienced significant academic gains since implementing the SEL program (as measured by an increase in test scores) and social gains (as reported by staff)
2. Has been implementing an SEL program for at least 4 years and has embedded SEL into core content areas
3. Has a racially and economically diverse demographic (preferably at least 50% students of color, at least 50% free and reduced lunch)

Again, I need to study a school that has been truly successful with SEL implementation.

Can you please offer any suggestions? Thank you so, so much in advance for your help- I really can't tell you how much I appreciate your assistance!

Respectfully,

Surbhi Madia Barber
 PhD Student, UW-Madison
 612-xxx-xxxx

Appendix C: Telephone Screener

District: _____
 School: _____

Phone Number: _____

Date:

Hello!

My name is Surbhi Madia Barber. I am a PhD student at UW-Madison, and my dissertation topic is social emotional learning. Your school has been identified as one that is exemplary in this area. Can you kindly connect me with someone who can speak to this?

(After being connected, repeat above, then add):

I was told by _____ that your school has experienced significant academic gains since implementing the _____ (specific SEL) program. Could you please tell me about this?

Have staff members noticed social growth in students since the program's implementation?

How long has your school been implementing this SEL program?

Could you please tell me about the racial and economic demographics of your school or where I could find that information?

(If the above answers are satisfactory), continue with:

Again, I am looking to study a school that has been truly effective with SEL implementation, and it sounds like your school is absolutely there. If I wanted to pursue my dissertation work at your school to learn how you have been so successful, is there a formal process to go through?

Thank you so much for your help- I really appreciate your help with this!

Appendix D: Observation Protocol

Possible Sources of Evidence:	Connecting SEL to C5 for Action Framework	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Classroom Observations</i> • <i>Staff Meetings</i> • <i>Administrator Meetings</i> • <i>Team Meetings</i> • <i>Professional Development days</i> 	<p><i>Confidence and Happiness:</i> confidence, happiness, stress and priority management, balance, self-discipline, attitude, goal setting/attainment, and empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Related agenda topics</i> • <i>Visual representations</i> • <i>Related Discussions</i> • <i>Emphasis on taking action in this area</i> 	
	<p><i>Communication & Social Quotient:</i> communication skills, social and relational skills, and adaptability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Related agenda topics</i> • <i>Visual representations</i> • <i>Related Discussions</i> • <i>Emphasis on taking action in this area</i> 	
	<p><i>Compassion & Inclusion:</i> compassion, empathy, inclusion of others, specific skills to help make others happy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Related agenda topics</i> • <i>Visual representations</i> • <i>Related Discussions</i> • <i>Emphasis on taking action in this area</i> 	
	<p><i>Conflict Resolution & Non-Violence:</i> peaceful conflict resolution, anti-bullying, respectful assertiveness, and non-violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Related agenda topics</i> • <i>Visual representations</i> • <i>Related Discussions</i> • <i>Emphasis on taking action in this area</i> 	

	<p><i>Celebrate Diversity, Authentically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Related agenda topics and discussions highlight that diversity is more than race, religion, or sexuality, but includes differences of all kinds</i>• <i>Visual representations</i>• <i>Difference should not simply be tolerated, but celebrated</i>• <i>Emphasis on taking action in this area</i>	

Appendix E: Interview Protocol—Educational Leaders

I. Introduction

A. About Me (to create a relaxed, conversational experience)

1. my teaching background
2. a bit about me personally

B. Purpose of this study

1. *How is social emotional learning implemented successfully?*
2. What is challenging about SEL?
3. To what extent does SEL programming reflect the C5 Framework?
4. What are student perspectives of SEL?

C. Institutional Review Board Protections

1. *Informed Consent*
2. Do you have any questions?

II. Background Information/Creating Comfort

1. Can you please tell me a bit about yourself?
2. How did you get into your current position?
3. Can you please tell me about any previous positions in education?
4. Do you remember your favorite teacher from childhood?

III. Successful SEL Implementation

1. According to student achievement data, students at this school have shown significant growth academically and socially since implementing an SEL program. Can you please

tell me how your school has been successful with implementing SEL? What have you done differently or additionally that other schools could learn from? How has your position played a role with SEL?

2. How have teachers found ways to adapt SEL lessons to meet individual student needs and class culture while still maintaining program fidelity and school-wide coherence?

3. How have teachers found ways to integrate and embed SEL into everyday lessons?

4. To what extent has school and district leadership played a role in the successful implementation of SEL at this school?

IV. Impact on Students

1. To what extent does SEL impact students? What are the outcomes that you see? What messages do you think your students walk away with?

2. To what extent do you see students put these lessons into action?

V. SEL content

1. From your perspective, what areas of SEL are most important?

2. To what extent and in what ways are confidence building, self-esteem, and lessons regarding finding happiness from within incorporated into SEL lessons?

3. To what extent and in what ways are communication skills, relationship building, and social skills incorporated into SEL lessons?

4. To what extent and in what ways is compassion and social inclusion incorporated into SEL lessons?

5. To what extent and in what ways are peaceful conflict resolution and non-violence incorporated into SEL lessons?

6. To what extent and in what ways is diversity* taught with SEL lessons?

7. To what extent is taking action* in these areas emphasized?

VI. Closing

1. What do you find challenging about SEL?

2. If you had to give advice to other schools that were considering incorporating SEL, what would you say?

3. Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding what contributed to the successful implementation of SEL in this school?

Appendix F: Interview Protocol—Teachers

I. Introduction

A. About Me (to create a relaxed, conversational experience)

1. my teaching background
2. a bit about me personally

B. Purpose of this study

1. *How is social emotional learning implemented successfully?*
2. What is challenging about SEL?
3. To what extent does SEL programming reflect the C5 Framework?
4. What are student perspectives of SEL?

C. Institutional Review Board Protections

1. *Informed Consent*
2. Do you have any questions?

II. Background Information/Creating Comfort

1. Can you please tell me a bit about yourself?
2. How did you get into teaching?
3. How long have you been an educator?
4. What levels have you taught previously?
5. What do you currently teach?
6. What was your favorite grade to teach?
7. Do you remember your favorite teacher from childhood?

III. Successful SEL Implementation

1. According to student achievement data, students at this school have shown significant growth academically and socially since implementing an SEL program. Can you please tell me how your school has been successful with implementing SEL? What have you done differently or additionally that others could learn from?
2. How have you found ways to adapt SEL lessons to meet your individual student needs and class culture while still maintaining program fidelity and school-wide coherence?
3. How have you found ways to integrate and embed SEL into everyday lessons?
4. What do you do in your classroom to develop the social and emotional competencies of children that are outside of the SEL program?
5. To what extent has school and district leadership played a role in the successful implementation of SEL at this school?
6. Do all teachers here have a common vision for students?

IV. Impact on Students

1. To what extent does SEL impact your students? What are the outcomes that you see? What messages do you think your students walk away with?
2. To what extent do you see students put these lessons into action?

V. SEL content

1. From your perspective, what areas of SEL are most important?
2. To what extent and in what ways are confidence building, self-esteem, and lessons regarding finding happiness from within incorporated into SEL lessons?
3. To what extent and in what ways are communication skills, relationship building, and social skills incorporated into SEL lessons?

4. To what extent and in what ways is compassion and social inclusion incorporated into SEL lessons?
5. To what extent and in what ways are peaceful conflict resolution and non-violence incorporated into SEL lessons?
6. To what extent and in what ways is diversity taught with SEL lessons?
7. To what extent is taking action in these areas emphasized?

VI. Closing

1. What do you find challenging about SEL?
2. If you had to give advice to other schools that were considering incorporating SEL, what would you say?
3. Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding what contributed to the successful implementation of SEL in your school? In your class?

Appendix G: Focus Group Protocol—Students

I. Introduction

D. About Me (to create a relaxed, conversational experience)

1. my favorite foods and colors
2. a bit about me personally- my baby girl, love to read, etc.

E. Purpose of this study

1. What do students think about SEL lessons, and what do they learn from these kind of lessons?

F. Institutional Review Board Protections

1. Informed Consent

2. Do you have any questions?

II. Background Information/Creating Comfort

1. Can you please tell me a bit about yourself?
2. What's your favorite food?
3. What do you like to do for fun?
4. What is your favorite season- why?
5. What do you think are the most important things to learn at school?

III. SEL Lesson

1. What did you think of today's lesson?
2. Why do you think your teacher thought it was important to teach this lesson?
3. What do you think the main message of the lesson was

IV. Application to Life

1. How do you think you will use what you learned today in your life?
2. Can you think of other SEL lessons you have learned before that you have had a chance to use in your real-life?

V. C5 Framework Questions

Confidence & Happiness Questions:

1. Can you tell me about something you are proud of?
2. What makes you sad? What can you do to make yourself happy if you are feeling down?
3. What makes you happy? What can you do to be happy more often?

Social Quotient Questions:

1. How do you make new friends?
2. What would you do if you saw someone sitting alone at lunch who looked sad or someone at recess who had no one to play with?
3. Do you know what it means to have strong communication skills and talk nicely? What does that mean to you? What does it mean to be a respectful listener?
4. What would you do if you saw someone in class that you don't really like, who looked like they were sad at recess?
5. What do you do to make up after you get in a fight with a friend?
6. Have you ever helped a friend solve a problem?

7. Have you ever seen someone be bullied or teased? How did you respond? What would you do differently if it happened again?

Diversity Questions

1. What do you think of people who are different than you?

What do you think about people

- with tattoos?
- who are in wheelchairs?
- who have a different color skin than you?
- who have a hard time learning in class?
- who smoke?
- who don't celebrate Christmas?
- who get into trouble in class?

Closing

1. Do you have any questions for me?
2. Thank you so much (and stickers!)

Appendix H: Artifact Review for Document Analysis

Source of Evidence:	Connecting SEL to <i>C5 for Action Framework</i>	Was this area addressed? How?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Website</i> • <i>District Handbook</i> • <i>Mission/Vision Statement</i> • <i>Strategic Plan</i> • <i>School Improvement Plan</i> • <i>Professional Development Agendas</i> • <i>Meeting Agendas</i> • <i>District Data Profile</i> • <i>Visual representations throughout building</i> • <i>Lesson Plans</i> • <i>Student Writing Samples</i> • <i>Other: _____</i> 	<i>Confidence and Happiness:</i> confidence, happiness, stress and priority management, balance, self-discipline, attitude, goal setting/attainment, and empowerment	
	<i>Communication & Social Quotient:</i> communication skills, social and relational skills, and adaptability	
	<i>Compassion & Inclusion:</i> compassion, empathy, inclusion of others, specific skills to help make others happy	
	<i>Conflict Resolution & Non-Violence:</i> peaceful conflict resolution, anti-bullying, respectful assertiveness, and non-violence	
	<i>Celebrate Diversity, Authentically:</i> diversity is more than race, religion, or sexuality, but includes differences of all kinds; Difference should not simply be tolerated, but celebrated	
	<i>Other Dimensions that Emphasize and Prioritize the social and emotional competencies of students:</i>	

Additional Notes:

Appendix I: Adult Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Title of Study: Social Emotional Learning: Effective Implementation and Student Voices

Principal Investigator: Carolyn Kelley, PhD (phone: 608/263-5733; e-mail: kelley@education.wisc.edu)

Student Researcher: Surbhi Madia Barber (phone: 612-xxx-xxxx)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study about how successful social emotional learning programs are delivered and integrated into classroom lessons and the conditions in which these practices are occurring.

You have been asked to participate because you are a teacher, principal, school-based SEL coordinator, or district-based SEL coordinator who has served in this position during the time of improved academic and social outcomes for students since the implementation of an SEL program.

The purpose of the research is to identify the processes involved in effective SEL program implementation; understand ways in which teachers adapt SEL programing to be more personally meaningful to their students and overall class culture while maintaining program fidelity and school-wide coherence; and to learn about the challenges involved with SEL.

This study involves investigating a school with diverse racial and economic demographics (at least 50% students of color and at least 50% students that qualify for free or reduced lunch) that has shown academic gains (as measured by standardized test scores) and social growth (as measured by staff reports) across all demographics since the implementation of an SEL program.

Interviews will be conducted at the offices of the participants or other locations identified by the participants. Digital audiotapes will be made of your participation and kept in a password protected file. The transcripts will also be digital with coded names and identifying information. The digital transcripts will also be kept in a password-protected file. Only the student investigator, faculty investigator, and professional transcriber will hear the recording. The digital files will be destroyed seven years after the end of the study.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be involved in an interview ranging from 1 to 2 hours, and possibly a brief follow-up interview via telephone or e-mail. You will also be given an opportunity to review the content of the interview that will be used in the dissertation before the dissertation is submitted for review. Additionally, if you are a classroom teacher, your participation involves two observations of SEL lessons. Your time, including the interview, follow-up interviews, and content review, could require up to 4 hours.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

This study will identify the actions that teachers and school leaders have taken to implement a social emotional learning program successfully. To fully understand the processes involved, some sensitive information may be shared. Although there are some risks associated with sharing sensitive material, there are numerous safeguards in place to protect participants' confidentiality. Your name will never appear anywhere in the dissertation. Instead, pseudonyms that only the researcher, transcriber, and faculty advisor have access to will be used. Confidentiality is one of the highest priorities.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

By participating in this study, you are contributing to the field of educational research regarding effective ways to implement social emotional learning in classrooms. I also hope that this provides an opportunity for you to reflect on the incredible achievements of your school in this regard and how well your school is honoring children by focusing on more than just core academic subjects and is instead honoring the whole child. Other than this pride, there are no direct benefits to you as a participant.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

While there will likely be publications as a result of this study, your name will not appear anywhere. As mentioned above, pseudonyms will be published in addition to group characteristics. If you participate in this study, I would like to be able to quote you directly without using your name. If you agree to allowing your direct quotations to be used in publications, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form. Again, your name will not appear anywhere.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today, you should contact the principal investigator, M. Bruce King, PhD, at 608- 263-4769. You may also call the student researcher, Surbhi Madia Barber, at 612-799-7872. If you are not satisfied with response of research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you begin participation and change your mind, you may end your participation at any time without penalty of any kind.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research, and voluntarily consent to participate.

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print): _____

Signature

Date

_____ I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications without using my name.

Appendix J: Parental Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON Research Participant Information and Parental Consent Form

Title of Study: Social Emotional Learning: Effective Implementation and Student Voices

Principal Investigator: Carolyn Kelley, PhD (phone: 608/263-5733; e-mail: kelly@education.wisc.edu)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

Your child is invited to participate in a research study about how successful social emotional learning programs are delivered and integrated into classroom lessons and the perspectives of students about these lessons.

Please Note: If your child returns this parental permission consent form, they *may* be selected to participate in this study. After all consent forms have been returned, names will be drawn randomly to determine participation. This sometimes results in disappointment from students, so thank you for explaining the need for randomization with participant selection.

Your child may be asked to participate in this study because this school has been identified as a model school for the implementation of social emotional learning. Your child's name was randomly drawn, and participation is completely optional.

One of the purposes of the research is to understand the messages that students walk away with after an SEL lesson, how they believe they can apply the lessons to their lives, and to understand their views on various social and emotional dimensions including confidence, compassion, and diversity, among others. A "Focus group" format will be used meaning that 3-4 students will randomly be selected to have a conversation about the above-mentioned items.

This study involves investigating a school with diverse racial and economic demographics (at least 50% students of color and at least 50% students that qualify for free or reduced lunch) that has shown academic gains (as measured by standardized test scores) and social growth (as measured by staff reports) across all demographics since the implementation of an SEL program.

Focus groups with 2-3 other students will be conducted in school spaces that have been designated by your child's teacher that have been deemed as safe and non-distracting. Digital audiotapes will be made of your child's participation and kept in a password protected file. The transcripts will also be digital with coded names and identifying information. The digital transcripts will also be kept in a password-protected file. Only the student investigator, faculty investigator, and professional transcriber will hear the recording. The digital files will be destroyed seven years after the end of the study.

WHAT WILL MY CHILD'S PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If your child decides to participate in this research with your permission, they will be involved in a focus group ranging from 45 minutes to 1 hour. You will also be given an opportunity to review the content of the focus group that will be used in the dissertation before the dissertation

is submitted for review.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO MY CHILD?

This study will identify the perspectives of students regarding social emotional learning. To fully understand the processes involved, some sensitive information may be shared. Although there are some risks associated with sharing sensitive material, there are numerous safeguards in place to protect participants' confidentiality. Your child's name will never appear anywhere in the dissertation. Instead, pseudonyms that only the researcher, transcriber, and faculty advisor have access to will be used. Confidentiality is one of the highest priorities.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

By participating in this study, your child will be contributing to the field of educational research regarding effective ways to implement social emotional learning in classrooms and student voices and perspectives. I also hope that this provides an opportunity for you as a parent or guardian to reflect on the incredible achievements of your school in this regard and how well your school is honoring children by focusing on more than just core academic subjects and is instead honoring the whole child. Other than this pride, there are no direct benefits to you or your child as a participant.

HOW WILL MY CHILD'S CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

While there will likely be publications as a result of this study, your child's name will not appear anywhere. As mentioned above, pseudonyms will be published in addition to group characteristics. If your child participates in this study, I would like to be able to quote them directly without using your name. If you agree to allowing your child's direct quotations to be used in publications, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form. Again, your child's name will not appear anywhere.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today, you should contact the principal investigator, M. Bruce King, PhD, at 608- 263-4769. You may also call the student researcher, Surbhi Madia Barber, at 612-799-7872. If you are not satisfied with response of research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320. Your child's participation is completely voluntary. If your child begins participation and changes their mind, you may end your participation at any time without consequence.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your child's participation in this research, and voluntarily consent to allowing your child to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Child Participant (please print): _____

Name of Parent or Guardian (please print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

_____ I give my permission for my child to be quoted directly in publications without using their name.

APPENDIX K: SIMPLE LANGUAGE PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Dear Sherman Families,

Hi! My name is Surbhi Madia Barber. People call me by my middle name, Madia. I taught elementary and middle school for eight years, and now I am a mother of a two year old, and I'm a PhD student at UW-Madison.

I am studying something called "Social-Emotional Learning" (SEL). SEL involves teaching students social skills, self-esteem and confidence, peaceful conflict resolution strategies, and celebrating diversity, among many other areas. Sherman is a school that has been identified as doing SEL really, really well.

I would like to learn how Sherman is making this magic happen! In order to understand this, I would like to do **three things**:

1. I would like to **observe** a few classroom lessons to see how the teacher teaches these kind of lessons. My focus will mainly be on the teacher, but I would also like to observe the students in the classroom. No names will be identified with any observations that I make.
2. I would like to **look at student writing** (after names have been removed) to see how students are writing about what they learned.
3. I would like to **interview some students** in group interviews to ask them what they learned and how they can use the lessons in real life. I will ask questions like: *What was that lesson all about? How do you think you will use what you learned today in your life? Have you ever helped a friend solve a problem?*

After I do the above three things, I will try to find things that were in common among the responses. Then I will write a paper about those themes. Your child's name will never appear anywhere. Instead, I will use a fake name. Even the real school name will never appear in my paper.

Please note: A student's participation in this study will not impact their relationship with their teacher, their report card, xxx Public Schools, or UW-Madison in any way.

By signing the attached form, you are giving permission for your child to participate in the study activities. Again the study activities include conducting classroom observations, looking at writing samples (with no names attached), and interviewing some students in a group setting.

Thank you so much for taking time to read this!

Respectfully,

Surbhi Madia Barber
xxxx@wisc.edu (I would be so happy to answer any questions!)

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your child's participation in this research, and voluntarily consent to allowing your child to participate in the following three ways:

- 1. I give my consent for my child to be observed in the classroom (although the focus is mainly on the teacher).**
- 2. I give my consent for my child's teacher to share my student's writing with the researcher after their name is removed.**
- 3. I give my consent for my child to participate in a focus group interview (if they are randomly selected and if they are fluent English speakers).**

Please note that any quotations used will not be linked to your child's name, but quotations from classroom discussions, focus groups, and other conversations about Social Emotional Learning will be included.

Name of Child Participant (please print): _____

Name of Parent or Guardian (please print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date