

EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING SUPPORTS AND INTERVENTIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

Students today can enter classrooms lacking the social and emotional skills needed to achieve academic and behavioral success in school. As the need for the classroom-based social and emotional interventions and supports grow, the need to identify the perceptions of teachers involved in the identification and implementation of these interventions and supports has also grown. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to collect the perceptions of a group of educators involved in the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions to determine what can be learned and applied to improve this process. A group of teachers at a charter school in Texas were surveyed and interviewed to collect their perceptions surrounding the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions. While the educators in the study reported a strong belief in the need for and importance of social and emotional interventions and supports, they also cited a need for appropriate professional development, training, and support to successfully meet the social and emotional needs of their students. Further, the educators reported a strong desire to address student needs through a more proactive approach, rather than a reactive approach. Finally, the educators reported a desire to be more actively involved in a structured, continuous approach to identifying and implementing social and emotional learning supports and interventions. This research study has implications for both theory and practice. The process of identifying and implementing social and emotional learning supports and interventions can serve as a theoretical

framework for future research. In practice, the steps associated with the identification and implementation of SEL can be executed at the institutional level to address student needs. This institutional specific research study provides an opportunity for future related research to be conducted.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of my career as an educator, I was not well prepared to be in the classroom. I came to education through an alternative licensing program in a major southern city; this program taught me the basics of classroom management and instructional delivery over a few weeks of summer school. This minimal training did very little to prepare me for the challenges that I faced when I entered the classroom for the first time as a special education teacher.

The first year I spent in the classroom was primarily devoted to correctly writing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). As a special education teacher, my responsibility was to determine the abilities and inabilities of students identified with special needs and write a plan to address the identified needs. More often than not, the identified need of the student was rooted in academic performance. Occasionally, a student would have an identified behavioral need. Rarely did a student have an identified social or emotional need that would be addressed within the classroom setting. Throughout my first year of teaching, I faced a variety of scenarios that required social or emotional supports or interventions for students. Unfortunately, I had not been trained in any of these, nor was I provided professional development to address the lack of training.

I have worked in multiple schools over the course of my education career. All of the schools I have worked in have been high need, urban schools in major southeastern cities. I have worked with students in classes from Kindergarten to eighth grade. While the school, student, or grade level may have changed, the need for appropriate Social and

Emotional Learning (SEL) supports and interventions did not changed. This need has remained consistent no matter where or with whom I have worked.

An observation that I have made over my six years of being a classroom teacher is how often interventions and support systems are prescribed to educators; rarely have educators been involved in the identification of school or student needs and the development of interventions and supports for those needs. When teachers are prescribed these interventions and supports, they are most often asked to return to their classroom and administer what has been given while working in isolation from their colleagues. Further, a lack of collective reflection during this process has caused educators to become frustrated or overwhelmed. It is my belief that the utilization of the continuous improvement model within collaborative bodies, or even within committees or working groups, would allow educators to be a part of the development of and implementation of appropriate SEL supports. The school chosen for this research project is using an organizational improvement model similar to the continuous improvement model. There will be more discussion on this in the following chapters.

I consider my time in the classroom to have been full of professional and personal growth. My students and my colleagues taught me so much about meeting a learner's needs. I made the decision to leave the classroom over two years ago while I was in the process of writing my dissertation. Before leaving public education, I spent a year in my district as a coach for other teachers. In that role, I would assist teachers in developing classroom lesson plans and management plans, as well as ensure paperwork issues were dealt with appropriately. The year I spent as a district coach reinforced my belief in the

need for additional SEL supports and interventions. After working as a coach, I joined an educational nonprofit organization that trains teachers on SEL supports and interventions, and publishes many resources for teachers. In my capacity with this organization, I train teachers, develop professional development, and assist with the development and refinement of programming. These collective professional experiences have served to reinforce my belief in the need for SEL supports and interventions for students, and for additional training and professional development for educators.

The structure for this research study began during my experiences within an urban school district in the southeastern United States that has multiple middle schools struggling to be effective, as measured by academic and behavioral data. Teachers I have worked with, or spoken to at district events, had grown frustrated at the amount of “interventions” that were prescribed to them without the necessary knowledge or training to make them effective. Those same teachers repeatedly argued that if they had a voice during the identification, selection, and implementation of classroom-based interventions, particularly those associated with SEL, the results of those interventions and supports would be improved. In essence, teachers believe that their ability to successfully implement interventions and supports to their students is directly impacted by their lack of involvement and opportunity to provide feedback during the process of identifying, developing, and implementing these interventions and supports. Further, I have observed how rarely teachers are asked to provide feedback on the process of identifying, developing, and implementing SEL supports. Teachers have shared with me that there were aspects of the prescribed interventions and supports that were having both a positive

and negative impact on academic and behavioral performance in the classroom, which were being overlooked due to a lack of a proper feedback tool being provided to the teachers during the process. I believe that collecting teachers' perceptions of the academic and behavioral impact of SEL supports and interventions could provide needed feedback to improve the identification and implementation process.

Background

Learning for students is a social undertaking. Students enrolled in public or private schools share the classroom with their peers and teachers, and they must navigate the social and emotional relationships that occur during the learning process. Content delivered in classrooms is learned in this social and emotional environment. For this reason, educators must teach students ways to work collaboratively and how to regulate their emotions using supports and interventions for those who struggle with these skills (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (n.d.) defines social and emotional learning (SEL) as “the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.” (Retrieved from: <http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning>).

Denham and Brown (2010) outline five major SEL competencies linked to school success: self-awareness, self-management of emotions, social awareness, responsible decision making, and relationship skills. For the purposes of framing this research

project, SEL in education consists of these five competencies. When these SEL competencies are explicitly taught and then become innate in a student, the academic and behavioral performance improves (Denham & Brown, 2010).

Social and emotional learning (SEL) can have a positive impact on the academic and behavioral success of students. Students who receive SEL supports report having an improved connection to their school and their peers (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). The positive connection students feel toward their school and classmates improves academic and behavioral confidence. Further, those students who receive SEL supports have fewer incidences of inappropriate behavior (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Bernard, 2006).

The linkage between social and emotional supports and improved academic achievement has been seen in multiple studies. In most instances, a control group was compared to a group that received structured SEL supports. Students in a first grade class in Australia, for example, showed an increase in reading scores when they received SEL supports (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). The students receiving the SEL supports in the *You Can Do It* (YCDI) program in Australia had higher academic achievement than the control group (Bernard, 2006). In a four-year longitudinal study to determine the impact of SEL supports on academic performance, students in the intervention group consistently outperformed the control group on state standardized exams (Schonfeld, Adams, Fredstrom, Weissberg, Gilman, Voyce, & Speese-Linehan, 2014). These studies reveal a positive connection between SEL supports and academic achievement.

The behavioral performance of students is also positively impacted by SEL supports. Ashdown and Bernard (2012) discovered that students who received SEL

supports self-reported a strong sense of belonging in the school and stronger peer relationships than those students who did not receive SEL supports. Further, students who received SEL supports had fewer behavioral incidences than those students who did not receive SEL supports (Bernard, 2006; Durlak, et al., 2011).

School districts are concerned about high school completion rates. Students who drop out of school often report that they quit school because they do not feel a connection to the school, to individuals at the school, or to academic achievement (Milsom & Glanville, 2010). Furthermore, research has shown that students with disabilities, a key sub-group that all districts must monitor and report on, are even more likely to drop out of school than their non-disabled peers (Marchesi & Cook, 2012). There is, therefore, a need to develop multiple interventions to prevent further dropouts from occurring. In fact, the high priority placed on SEL supports for students with disabilities as indicated by the parents of students with disabilities (Kolb & Hanley-Maxwell, 2003), creates a significant need for exploration to occur regarding the best possible interventions and supports that result in an increase academic performance and a decrease in negative behaviors. The research provides a positive connection between SEL supports and the behavioral performance of students who have disabilities and are at risk for dropping out.

As Carol Dweck's (2007) growth mindset concept, the idea that an individual's own internal belief about their ability to learn determines how much they can learn, has gained steam around the country, schools have looked to increase the amount of SEL supports provided to their students. The connection between growth mindset and SEL supports cannot be ignored (Hamedani & Darling-Hammond, 2015). As more research

has linked overall academic performance to SEL supports and interventions (Durlak et al., 2011), more schools are seeking ways to increase their supports and interventions.

Classroom instruction has become narrowly focused on student learning growth as measured by a multitude of standardized achievement tests. Additionally, the high demands from new accountability mandates and measurements, including educators' own evaluations, have placed further strain on the educator's ability to deliver SEL interventions and supports. Due to these shifts in foci, the holistic development of the child has become secondary to assessment scores. Outcomes measured by the new accountability mandates and measurements to standardized achievement tests are limited and fail to integrate the skills students require for their holistic development. Furthermore, these same demands often act as the barrier to the necessary professional development to integrate student social and emotional supports and interventions into their day-to-day instruction (Cohen, 2006).

Problem Statement

The relationship that a teacher shares with a student has a significant impact on the academic and behavioral success of the student (Hattie, 2009). Even though the relationship a teacher shares with a student is significant, teachers often have interventions and supports prescribed to them, rather than having the chance to be involved in the process of identifying and implementing what may be in students' best interests (Collie, Shapka, Perry, & Martin, 2015). The problem addressed by this research is the need to collect classroom teachers' perceptions of the academic and behavioral impact of SEL supports throughout the design and implementation of these

learning supports. Failure to include teachers in the identification of SEL interventions and supports prevent maximum academic and behavioral performance from being attained in the classroom. Therefore, when teachers are provided the opportunity to identify SEL interventions using a collaborative, school-based model, the potential for efficacy of these interventions increases (Mills, 2007; Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobson, 2009).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to better understand how teachers' perceptions, particularly those related to the effectiveness of SEL supports and interventions to improve academic and behavioral outcomes, impact the implementation of new supports and interventions at an urban school located in Texas. Additionally, this study sought to gain insight into the areas of strength and the areas of potential growth in the process of identifying and implementing new interventions and supports. Lastly, this study sought to identify how teachers involved in a collaborative, school-based team perceive their level of self-efficacy related to the identification and implementation of SEL supports and interventions. To provide focus for this study, the following questions were developed:

1. How do teachers perceive the impact of SEL interventions and supports on student academic and behavioral performance during the implementation of a new SEL intervention?
2. What areas of strength and areas for growth can be identified in the identification and implementation process of SEL interventions?

3. What are teachers' self-efficacy perceptions as they relate to the implementation of SEL interventions and supports?

Significance of Study

There is much debate about the effectiveness of various educational interventions, programs, and curricula currently being implemented in districts across the country. One educational model receiving exploration is the use of SEL support systems in the classroom to increase student achievement and decrease negative behaviors (Durlak, et al., 2011). The connection between SEL supports and their impact on students is of great interest to educators and administrators who are seeking additional ways to positively affect the academic and behavioral performance of students (Durlak, et al., 2011). This research study is significant because it adds to the current body of knowledge by capturing the perceptions of teachers involved in the implementation of SEL supports, an area lacking in the research. The findings of this study provide insight into the value of collecting teachers' perceptions during the identification and implementation phases of interventions and supports. New insights into how schools can support teachers during the implementation of new interventions and supports, specifically SEL supports and interventions for the classroom, will be discussed in Chapter V.

Theoretical Framework

The theories relied on in this study are interpretive theory, improvement science theory, adult learning theory, self-efficacy theory, and the whole child theory. The following section presents a short description of each theory. Additionally, the reason for the theory to be included in this study is presented.

Interpretive Theory

Interpretive theory is the theoretical framework used in this study. Interpretive theory is an ontological and epistemological tool used in research to collect and interpret individuals' and groups' created meaning of their everyday life, practice, experience, and communication. Interpretive theory is primarily concerned with making meaning from the experiences of individuals (Frick, 2013). For example, interpretive theory allows a researcher to study a collaborative body and use that body's interactions to create new meaning. For this study, interpretive theory will allow the researcher to explore the participants' perceptions of the impacts of SEL supports and intervention on students' academic and behavioral outcomes. Interpretive theory is appropriate for this study because it will allow the researcher to determine the participants' perceptions of the SEL implementation process and their level of self-efficacy while implementing SEL interventions and supports.

Improvement Science Theory

Improvement science is a newer theory that refers to a method of highlighting generalized knowledge through systematic experimentation or observation. Improvement science employs knowledge from a full sphere of sectors and disciplines, and it utilizes the procedures obtained from what is known as hard sciences. In a classroom environment, improvement science seeks to determine what is working best for students as educators seek to improve practices (Lewis, 2015). Improvement theory is appropriate for this study because the research is intended to explore what is working in classrooms and what can we learn from what is and is not working.

Adult Learning Theory

Adult learning theory posits that there are some differences in how adults learn in comparison to how students learn. According to Knowles' (1968), adults have a significant need to take control of their learning. Adult learning is successful when a person is in a position to connect their experience and the new information that they are learning. It is also instrumental when an adult learner can see the connections between the new learning and their own lives (Taylor, 2017). Adult learning theory is appropriate for this study because the study is intended to explore how adults are learning new skills to improve their classroom practices.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy theory deals with an individual's belief in their own ability to achieve their goals. Individuals who exhibit a high degree of self-efficacy have the ability to utilize appropriate coping behaviors to achieve their goals in the face of adversity or challenge. In a classroom context, teacher self-efficacy is the belief that a teacher has that they can have a positive impact on their students (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy theory is appropriate for this study because the study explores teachers' perceptions on their ability to have a positive impact on students' academic and behavioral performance.

Whole Child Theory

Whole child theory is an approach to education that seeks to shift the focus of education from a narrow focus of academic curriculum to a wider focus that includes the social and emotional well-being of the student and academic curriculum. When working

to implement the whole child approach to education, teachers, administrators, and educational institutions must review their culture and practices to ensure that all needs of the student are being met in order to ensure appropriate development and long-term success. Additionally, a collaborative approach to meeting the needs of students is strongly encouraged in this approach (Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza, & Giles, (2015). The whole child theory is appropriate for this research study due to the focus on meeting all the needs of the student within the classroom environment.

Delimitations

A delimitation of this study is that the unit of analysis will be restricted to a single school and a single set of educators. This study, therefore, may not have generalized application to the larger school context that does not share similar circumstances as the one studied for this research. Additionally, because the research participants all work at the same location, other educators may find their experiences fail to align with the experiences of the research participants. The limited number of participants could also be a delimiting factor as a larger sample size could result in different findings.

Limitations

The main limiting aspect of this research study is the difficulty to verify the findings. Qualitative research provides “limited generalizability of findings” (Creswell, 1994, p. 158). This research project collected, explored, and developed findings regarding four educators in a specific school location. As the research participants grow in their knowledge and experience, their responses may change. An additional limitation is that the educators interviewed are influenced by their own set of biases that they may

or may not be aware of during their interviews. Another limitation of the study is the difficulty of replicating the conditions of the study, since it focuses on a unique group of educators with their own unique experiences. A final limitation of this study is the bias of the researcher. The researcher has a multitude of classroom and non-classroom experience in dealing with the social and emotional needs of students. The researcher believes that educators are task with meeting the social and emotional needs of their students and that educators should take this responsibility seriously. The researcher believes that when students need assistance with their social and emotional skill building, the educator must build the skill with the student. In short, the researcher believes that social and emotional skills are developed with a student, not for or to a student.

Definition of Key Terms

1. Continuous Improvement Model: An ongoing effort to improve the processes, products or services of an organization or business. The improvements may come in small, incremental steps or they may come in large, breakthrough moments. The continuous improvement model utilizes the plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycle that takes its roots from the Deming Cycle created by W. Edwards Deming (Karen, Jiju, & Alex, 2007).
2. SEL: The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning defines SEL as “the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”

Put more simply, SEL supports target a student's ability to understand and manage their own emotions, build relationships with others, solve interpersonal problems, and make appropriate decisions (<http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning>).

3. Collective Teacher Efficacy: John Hattie (2009) defined collective teacher efficacy as the belief that a group of teachers (the collective) has to positively influence their students.
4. Teacher Self-Efficacy: A teacher's belief in their own ability to influence and guide their students to success is a teacher's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher's stance was provided. A background of SEL supports and interventions were discussed. The purpose statement, research problem, and research questions were specified. The importance and underpinnings of SEL supports and interventions were discussed. The importance of collecting teachers' perceptions during the identification and implementation of classroom-based SEL supports were outlined. In Chapter II, how teacher perceptions can inform practice, as well as SEL supports and interventions will be explored in detail using the current base of research literature.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will address the underpinnings of SEL supports and interventions and how they relate to the academic and behavioral success of students. The use of the continuous improvement model in schools to address the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions is explored. Additionally, the importance of collecting the perspectives and levels of self-efficacy of educators involved in the implementation process is reviewed. The literature review conducted for this study is not to be considered exhaustive. It is, however, sufficient to understand the current underpinnings of social and emotional learning supports and interventions for the school environment, provide examples of SEL, and discuss organizational improvement models.

Introduction

Given the impact that teachers have on students' academic and behavioral performance (Hattie, 2009), and the demonstrated impact that SEL can have on these performances (Durlak, et al., 2011), there is value in exploring how teachers' perspectives change while working collaboratively to improve social and emotional supports for students. With each passing year, schools are expected to improve their academic and behavioral results while receiving minimal or no additional resources.

Implementing a new social and emotional intervention model increases stress on the administrators and the teachers both inside and outside of the classroom (Romasz, Kantor & Elias, 2003). The implementation of new interventions can prove difficult for

schools for a variety of reasons. A failure of those implementing the change to have appropriate background knowledge or training can hinder the process. A lack of buy-in can slow the implementation. Failure to provide on-going professional development can cause educators to become overly frustrated and confused during the process (Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobson, 2009).

While the above examples can apply to any newly identified support and intervention in the classroom or school, implementing new social and emotional supports and interventions is no exception. There is, however, research to support the need for and advantages of creating successful social and emotional support interventions. Research has shown a linkage between student success, both academic and behavioral, when there are strong social and emotional supports and interventions (Adalbjarnardottir & Selman, 1997; Denham and Brown, 2010). The successful implementation of a new SEL support or intervention will contain a proactive, clearly communicated foundation of classroom-based academic and behavioral successes when the intervention is implemented. Clearly communicating those successes will provide teachers a critical understanding of how the intervention was implemented and the accomplishments from the intervention, as well as positively affect their outlook on the intervention implementation (Hargreaves, 1984).

In this section, a review of the literature is presented. The findings are provided in three sections. First, the literature demonstrating the relationship between SEL and the impact it has on academic and behavioral success is discussed. While this section will contain some specific examples of SEL programming being used by districts, schools, and teachers, it should be understood that it is impossible to report on all the SEL

supports and interventions that are available. Additionally, this research does not seek to review or explain all the SEL supports and interventions available. Second, the literature addressing the impact on organizational improvement using the continuous improvement cycle is explored. Third, literature discussing how the collection of teacher perspectives and how their levels of self-efficacy can inform current and future practice is outlined.

For the purposes of this literature synthesis, SEL supports are defined as targeting a student's ability to understand and manage their own emotions, build relationships with others, solve interpersonal problems, and make appropriate decisions (CASEL, 2016). This working definition is being used because there is currently not a common, universal definition of what constitutes SEL supports across school districts. Based on personal experiences in the classroom and conversations with colleagues in the education community, the working definition was developed to guide the research of the literature.

Selection Criteria

The studies contained within this literature synthesis were selected using a two-part process. First, a comprehensive search was utilized to locate as many articles as possible relating to SEL supports and interventions. Second, a criteria-based search was utilized to determine which of the articles from the initial search should be included in the review.

The initial search and selection of literature was conducted using Middle Tennessee State University's library search engine. Student descriptors, such as *students*, *students with disabilities* or *students with behavioral issues*, were combined with the terms *SEL*, *SEL supports*, or *SEL interventions* during the initial search phase. The

results were large enough to then apply the terms *academic achievement* and *academic success* (used interchangeably) to narrow the search results. The terms *organizational improvement* or *continuous improvement model* were added to the search. Separate from the above outlined search, an additional search was conducted to research *teacher perspective*, *teacher voice*, and *teacher self-efficacy*. The search terms were used in various combinations that did not always contain all search terms to determine if the current results would produce additional results. When the search terms were used in different combinations with additions or deletions, there were no noticeable differences in the results produced.

In order to determine which literature to include in this synthesis, specific criteria were applied to the literature produced from the initial search. First, with one exception of the Rojewski, Lee, & Gregg, (2015) study, only studies that focused on students in the K – 12 population were included. Second, only studies that focused on using SEL as an intervention for students were included. Third, those studies that focused on the impact of academic and behavioral achievement of students receiving SEL supports or interventions were included. Fourth, studies that explored the use of professional learning communities to identify or implement SEL supports were included.

Included in this synthesis are studies from outside the United States as long as those studies fit the other criteria. The synthesis did not exclude studies based on the date in which they were published; the earliest study is from 1994 and the most recent study was published in 2015. Finally, the synthesis included favorable and non-favorable conclusions on the topic.

Once the body of literature was collected, the in-depth synthesis began. Each study was read and the purpose, participants, independent and dependent variables, outcomes, and limitations were identified. After the in-depth synthesis was completed, the information was categorized as either general information for the impact of SEL on students, or as specific to the use of professional learning communities. The separation of the information in this manner allowed for the presentation of findings and recommendations in the sections that follow.

Social and Emotional Learning Supports and Interventions (SEL)

Denham and Brown (2010) outline five major SEL competencies linked to school success: self-awareness, self-management of emotions, social awareness, responsible decision making, and relationship skills. Within these competencies are a variety of skills (see Table 1) that can be taught to students (Denham & Brown, 2010).

Table 1

SEL Competencies and Skills

SEL Competency	SEL skills contained within the competency
Self-Awareness	Ability to place a label on emotions
	Ability to relate feelings and emotions to behaviors
	Ability to identify own strengths and weaknesses
	Self-efficacy
Self-Management of Emotions	Optimism
	Regulating one's own emotions
	Managing stress
	Self-control
Social Awareness	Self-management
	Empathy
	Respecting others' opinions
	Respecting diversity
Responsible Decision Making	Ability to recognize and adhere to social norms
	Ability to consider the well-being and needs of others before making decisions
	Ability to recognize the need to act ethically
	Ability to evaluate decisions based on possible outcomes
Relationship Skills	Ability to build relationships with a diverse group of people
	Ability to communicate clearly
	Ability to work cooperatively with a diverse group of people
	Ability to resolve conflicts
	Ability to seek help appropriately when needed

SEL skills are needed to manage emotions and behaviors in order to be academically and behaviorally successful. Denham and Brown (2010) outline five major SEL competencies that are linked to academic and behavioral success. First, students must have self-awareness. This is achieved when the student understands his or her own emotions before those emotions overwhelm the student and the student cannot control their actions. An example of a healthy level of self-awareness in the classroom is the student who realizes he or she is anxious and chooses to take a break from an activity to manage that anxiety. Second, the student must possess self-management abilities of their emotions. Students who do not possess self-management of their own emotions run the significant risk of struggling both academically and behaviorally. The student who uses a strategy of taking a break from an activity to manage their level of anxiety is an example of this skill being present in the classroom. Third, the student needs to have social awareness. This is the ability of the student to understand the social context of what is occurring around him or her. Imagine, for example, a student who lacks this skill working in a small group setting within a classroom. If the student is unaware of the social context of the other student's voices and nonverbal communication, the student may behave in a way that may cause the student to be isolated from the group. This lack of social awareness leads to further social and emotional struggles. Fourth, the student must possess responsible decision-making skills. Struggles with the decision making process can also cause the student to struggle within the academic world due to the amount of decisions that are made in the school environment and with learning, in general. A student, for example, who makes the decision to talk to his or her friend

during classroom work time and fails to finish an assignment on time is a student who lacks the ability to make appropriate decisions in the combined academic and social context of the classroom. Last, students must have relationship skills. Take the earlier example of the student who is struggling in small group work. That student will continue to struggle in many other aspects of the academic world if appropriate relationship skills are lacking or absent. The ability of students to make appropriate peer-to-peer and student-to-educator relationships is critical to the overall academic and behavioral success of the student. When these five SEL competencies are explicitly taught and are present within a student, the academic and behavioral performance of the student is increased (Denham & Brown, 2010).

Social and emotional learning (SEL) refers to the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills required to succeed in schooling, the workplace, relationships, and citizenship (CASEL, 2018). Some schools use prescribed, curriculum-based SEL programs for their students. While it would be impossible to explore all SEL supports and interventions programs, it is important to gain context in exploring three examples of prescribed, curriculum-based SEL support and intervention programs being used throughout educational settings in the United States.

Second Step is a classroom-based program that provides instruction in social and emotional learning for Pre-K, elementary and middle school students (Second Step, 2018). The program utilizes complete units on teaching students the skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, friendship skills, and problem solving. Second Step uses

four key strategies to reinforce skill development: brain builder games (to build executive function), weekly theme activities, reinforcing activities, and home links. Teachers are encouraged to give children daily opportunities to practice these skills, which are often new to students. Using a specific structure for each day of the week, Second Step can connect these newly learned skills to other areas in the curriculum. The first day of the lesson contains a script for the teacher to utilize and a main lesson for the student to learn. The second day includes a story for the student to connect the skills and a discussion to connect the student to more understanding of the skill. The teacher, on the third and fourth days of the lesson, provide practice activities in small and large groups for the student. Students read a book connected to the overall unit theme and taught skill on the fifth day. Teachers can send home a lesson that allows the student to practice the new skill at home. Second Step lessons and accompanying photographs incorporate a variety of cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds to provide inclusion for students from all backgrounds, and the lessons are scripted for the teacher. All teachers are expected to be trained by a certified instructor prior to beginning the lessons (Second Step, 2018).

Leader in Me seeks to improve the whole school culture by teaching SEL practices from grades kindergarten through sixth (The Leader In Me, 2018). Leader in Me takes an organizational approach to promote SEL to all members of the school community. The program begins by providing professional development that focuses on helping teachers work collaboratively to create a school culture where students and adults practice SEL through a leadership lens as part of their everyday lives. When they are needed, the Leader in Me provides freestanding lessons for each grade-level that teachers

or staff members may utilize as they see fit. Leader in Me aims to shift mindsets with five core paradigms: everyone can be a leader, everyone has genius, change starts with me, educators empower students to lead their own thinking, and develop the whole person. The program provides teachers with a variety of practices that help to support leadership in the classroom, culture in the classroom, and academics in the classroom, while also seeking to impact the larger school community as well. The practices that are utilized in the program require professional staff trainings (The Leader In Me, 2018).

The You Can Do It! Program (YCDI) is a SEL program that is popular in Australia (Kids Matter, 2018). The program seeks to positively impact students by teaching specific social and emotional behaviors and skills. The scripted lessons allow students to better understand how they can control their emotions and behaviors. The program is for ages 4 through 6 and utilizes a variety of teaching methods including stories, role-playing, and puppets to teach these skills. Teachers are trained from the facilitator's manual included within the kit (Kids Matter, 2018).

Studies have shown that SEL can have a positive impact on the academic and behavioral success of students (Durlak, et al., 2011). The students who receive SEL supports and interventions in school report a stronger connection to their school and their peers than students who receive no social and emotional supports (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). When students feel connected to their school and SEL supports are present in the classroom, with specific, explicit instruction to assist students in understanding the support and how to use it, the academic and behavioral performance of a student is improved (Bernard, 2006; Denham & Brown, 2010; Durlak, et al., 2011; Zins, 2004).

Academic Achievement and SEL

The linkage between social and emotional supports and improved academic achievement has been seen in multiple studies. In most studies, a control group was compared to a group that received structured SEL supports. In a study of 99 first graders in Australia, reading scores increased for those receiving structured SEL supports compared to those in the control group who did not receive structured SEL supports (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). In another study that utilized a mixed-methods design, 61 students in grades four through six who were identified as having academic, behavioral, or social and emotional needs were randomly divided into two groups in Australia. One group was given SEL supports using the You Can Do It (YCDI) program while the other group received counseling from the school counselor. Students who received the SEL supports in the YCDI program had higher academic achievement than the control group (Bernard, 2006). In an additional study, which was a four-year longitudinal study on 705 3rd through 6th grade students in a large, urban district in the Northeastern United States to determine the impact of SEL supports on academic performance, students in the intervention group consistently outperformed the control group on state standardized exams (Schonfeld et al., 2014). These studies reveal that there is a positive connection between SEL supports and academic achievement.

Utilizing a meta-analysis of existing research, Jones, Jones, & Vermette (2009) found a positive impact between SEL supports and academic performance in the secondary math classroom. From that research, they provided concrete ways to incorporate SEL supports without requiring schools or teachers to acquire additional

resources for the math classroom. First, teachers should include SEL within their current lesson plans. For example, the addition of the metacognitive strategy in which students think about the way they solved a math problem increased the academic outcome for those students. This is a no-cost way that all teachers can incorporate an SEL strategy. Second, they argue that schools should adopt a SEL climate. This may be accomplished by having a common language that defines SEL supports and the school stating the expectation of how these supports will be utilized. For example, a school can develop a common language and definition of the support or intervention. This step enables the school staff to all operate from a common language and definition. The last way the researchers identified to incorporate SEL supports was to simply allow students time and opportunity to reflect, which can be guided or free thought. This can be in relation to their academics or their behavior. When these three no-cost social and emotional supports are present, the academic achievement in secondary math was improved (Jones et al., 2009).

While SEL supports do not receive the same amount of attention as singular academic content competency supports, SEL supports have a direct impact on those academic content competencies. The literature is clear: students who struggle with social and emotional behaviors will struggle with core academic competency (Zins, 2004). Elias (2001) illustrates the connection between SEL competencies and academic success by stressing “unless students are given strategies to regulate their emotions and direct their energies toward learning, it is unlikely that added instructional hours or days will eventuate in corresponding amounts of academic learning” (p. 131). In the practical

sense, what this means for teachers and schools is that a student who lacks SEL competencies will struggle both academically and behaviorally until those competencies are achieved regardless of the amount of hours or instructional tactics that are used.

Behavioral Performance and SEL

The behavioral performance of students is positively impacted by SEL supports. In the previous study of first grade students who were given a structured SEL intervention, Ashdown and Bernard (2012) discovered that students who received SEL supports self-reported a stronger sense of belonging in the school and self-reported more positive peer relationships than those students who do not receive SEL supports. In this study, students were provided a structured approach to SEL within their classrooms. After ten weeks of explicit instruction designed to teach students confidence, persistence, organization, and emotional resilience, the behavior of the students having received the explicit SEL instruction was compared to that of a control group. Using survey data reported by teachers, the study concluded that there was a statistical significant positive effect on the level of appropriate behaviors for those in the instructional group when compared to those in the control group. Further, students receiving SEL supports have had fewer negative behavioral incidences than those students who did not receive SEL supports.

Students with disabilities represent the population most researched regarding SEL and its impact on behavior. While this illustrates a gap in the research, there are key findings associated with SEL that should be noted. Students with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to SEL struggles during their academic careers and are more

likely to drop out of school than their non-disabled peers (Milsom & Glanville, 2010). With proper SEL supports, however, students with disabilities can thrive in both their academic and behavioral performance (Bernard, 2006). Elksnin and Elksnin (2004) discovered that many students with disabilities struggle with making friends at school because they lack a foundation of appropriate social and emotional skills. This struggle can then lead to additional struggles with academics and behaviors (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2006). Part of the struggle for students with disabilities is that while schools routinely reinforce positive academics in the form of grades, schools do not properly reinforce positive social and emotional behavior in a structured and routine way (Hanley, 2003).

Students with disabilities need structured SEL supports in order to be academically and behaviorally successful in school (Bender & Wall, 1994; Hanley, 2003). One such way to achieve this is through the utilization of inclusion-based educational placement for students with disabilities (Hanley, 2003). When students with disabilities are placed in inclusion-based education classes, they will receive the benefit of being around adults and peers who have appropriate social and emotional behaviors (Krull, Wilbert, & Hennemann, 2014). Furthermore, students with disabilities who are placed in inclusion classes report higher self-esteem (Krull et al., 2014). The parents of students with disabilities rate inclusion as their top choice for the educational placement of their children (Kolb & Hanley-Maxwell, 2003). The inclusion classroom setting can be an effective way of modeling and teaching appropriate social and emotional behavior for students with disabilities when appropriate social and emotional behaviors are

occurring in the classroom. This setting should be considered the primary placement option when possible.

Students with disabilities experience a higher dropout rate than their non-disabled peers. Marchesi and Cook (2012) believe that this is due, in large part, to the lack of social and emotional competencies for students with disabilities. Their research showed that those students who self-reported higher social and emotional competency levels had lower dropout rates. For students with disabilities, this could be an effective component to preventing unnecessary dropouts. Additionally, they discovered that those students who self-identified as having higher social and emotional competencies are better prepared for the workplace environment; particularly, they are better prepared to handle the stress of the workplace (Marchesi & Cook, 2012).

Not all of the research on SEL supports and their impacts on academic and behavior performance produce conclusive results. Jones, Brown, Hoglund, & Aber (2010) conducted a one year randomized study of SEL supports on the academic impact of literacy interventions. For the study, a randomized group of 942 third grade students received SEL supports while also receiving literacy interventions. At the conclusion of the study, the study determined that the intervention group and the control group had similar outcomes. It is hypothesized, however, by study's authors, that over a longer period of time these SEL supports would have a noticeable impact on the literacy interventions of these students (Jones, Brown, Hoglund, & Aber, 2010). This study is included in this literature review to illustrate the possible limits of the current knowledge and the possible opportunity of future studies and research.

Whole Child Theory

The whole child theory of education posits that all policies, practices, and resources for education should be focused on meeting all the needs of a child, not just the curriculum-based needs. The relationship between the whole child theory and social and the emotional learning primarily deals with how educators and students respond and process the influences of emotions associated with learning in the classroom environment (Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza & Giles, 2015). Studies that review programs that are focused on identifying and implementing SEL indicate that one of the methods of promoting the emotional and the social development of a child is through fostering a good relationship between the student and the teachers. This relationship building assists in decreasing problems in behavior and enhances a conducive and a mutual learning environment for the student (Slade, 2016).

According to the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development's (ASCD) whole child theory, it is evident that a child needs to be healthy physically and emotionally to learn. The teacher and parent share the responsibility of ensuring that each child remains healthy by having their classroom and non-classroom needs met. The child also needs to be engaged and supported during the learning process. Additionally, the ASCD whole child theory supports the idea that a child needs to be appropriately challenged. Through these appropriate challenges, children learn the virtue of hard work and therefore they strive to achieve their best (Housand, Honeck, & Betts, 2018).

Improvement Science Theory

Improvement science refers to a method that creates knowledge through systematic experimentation or observation. Improvement science employs knowledge from a full sphere of sectors and disciplines, and it utilizes the procedures obtained from what is known as “hard sciences” (Nader, 2014). In a learning environment such as a classroom, improvement science is based on clear explanations and is determined by the various ways through which new knowledge will be created.

Improvement science theory takes place in a learning environment. One of its targets is to make a timely difference to the quality of education provided. It calls for a very close partnership between the learners and the decision makers on how learning can best be organized and delivered to the learners (Marsick & Watkins, 2015). Improvement science theory, therefore, encourages educators to make good use of scientific evidence when seeking adjustments or improvements in their classrooms. Researchers are challenged to focus on the usefulness of their research and its implications. This theory best occupies the space between the academia and the learning services. Improvement science uses a disciplined inquiry to create a solution to a specific problem. Those participating interact with improvement tools or ideas, and are charged to apply them in solving problems or challenges that they face their classrooms or organizations.

Improvement theory draws on Deming’s (Dahlgaard, 2015) points for management in the process of ensuring that there is success in an organization or process. William Deming is a consultant for management who has continued to emphasize the

importance of continuously improving organizations. Deming strongly encourages proactive approaches to organizational changes rather than reactive approaches (Dahlgaard, 2015). Deming's 14 points of knowledge is a blueprint for organizational success (Dahlgaard, 2015). Educators can utilize these 14 points to manage their learners and their content in a proactive approach.

Organizational Improvement

Individuals working collaboratively to identify improvements to existing structures or products and those working to identify solutions to problems often benefit from using the continuous improvement cycle, whether they seek solutions to immediate or long-term problems. The continuous improvement cycle encourages group members to be actual participants in the process of identifying and implementing changes or solutions for the organization (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). The school chosen by the researcher for this study is using the continuous improvement cycle within their internal SEL collaborative team to improve the identification and implementation of SEL supports and interventions.

In order to successfully identify and implement new interventions and supports, schools should address the following six components within the organization: the culture; the leadership; the operations; the excitement, passion and drive; the change that is sought; and the overall commitment to student growth (Studer, 2008). One such way to capture and utilize data associated with these six areas is to collect the perspectives of teachers involved in the identification and implementation of the interventions and supports, which will be explained later in this chapter.

According to DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker (2008), a school must commit to an examination of the school's culture in order to successfully implement a new intervention or system of supports. Within a school there are many moving pieces that all come together to create the school's social and emotional culture (Durlak et al., 2011), and these moving pieces must be guided by clearly defined mission, vision, and goals. Setting this precedent should be accomplished by engaging members of the leadership team, teachers, involved parents, and appropriate community leaders, and not simply by one individual who explains the framework to the stakeholders. The expectations of those who work and learn in a school should be clearly communicated in order for faculty, staff, and students to know how to make the intervention or support successful. Furthermore, everyone must be willing to adjust when necessary to improve the school's culture (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008).

Second, in order for a school to successfully identify and implement new interventions and supports, effective leadership must exist (National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), 2014). Leadership must not be defined as a position or a title someone possesses; rather, it should be a mindset used as the guiding force for school improvement. Leadership of the school should have participated in the process of developing a clear mission, vision, and goals, and they should continue to possess a commitment to achieving those. School leaders, both in administration and in the classroom, set and maintain clear expectations for faculty, staff, and students. This high level of expectation and accountability can only be possible with the tireless investment of these leaders by fostering trust, offering support, providing appropriate and meaningful

feedback, taking ownership of behaviors and actions, and appropriately using resources (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; NIST, 2014; Studer, 2008).

Third, schools that successfully implement new interventions and supports have effective operations that allow for appropriate feedback (NIST, 2014). Schools sustain effective operations by the appropriate use of resources including, but not limited to, human resources, facility resources, and community resources. Proven processes will be utilized for effective operations within these schools. The use of proven processes allows schools to be successful because it provides a strategic plan for the day-to-day operations within the school. Process mapping is a workflow or decision-making diagram to provide a visual representation of a process. For all major areas of the process, a visual is created so that all faculty and staff are able to complete tasks with the same inputs and objectives and see improved results (NIST, 2014). Schools that utilize process mapping enjoy greater successes with programming and implementation of new interventions by ensuring that all staff members are approaching the use of the program or implementation in a similar fashion (NIST, 2014). The use of process mapping provides all faculty and staff with the same knowledge and understanding of the expectations. Process mapping is one such way to achieve effective operations that allow for appropriate feedback. Participants of this research study will directly impact the operations within their school by identifying the most appropriate SEL supports and interventions and the most effective ways to implement those supports and interventions, and by developing these process maps to be used by other educators within the building.

Fourth, schools that successfully implement new interventions and supports allow for change to occur when it is appropriate (NIST, 2014). Many schools operate with a sense of urgency. Schools can use this sense of urgency to become solutions-focused. When faced with an issue or problem, change should be appropriately invited with careful planning and organization to influence and control possible solutions. Conversations should be solutions-focused and not problem-driven. Schools that use the feedback process and the ongoing commitment to learning allow adjustments to occur when necessary and enact appropriate change with this sense of urgency.

Fifth, schools that successfully implement new interventions and supports have excitement, passion and drive to accomplish their mission, vision, and goals (NIST, 2014). Leaders in schools accomplish high motivation among their staff through the collaborative teaming process, during which faculty and staff have time and opportunity to collaborate on the learning process. This process provides the vehicle for learning and feedback to be shared within schools (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016). The use of collaborative teams with the continuous improvement model serves two distinct purposes. First, it will provide a collaborative body for the participants to identify the needed interventions and supports and the implementation process for these. Second, it will provide a model for the school in the effectiveness of not only using the continuous improvement model, but also the effectiveness of collaborative teams (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016).

The sixth component of schools that successfully implement new interventions and supports is the commitment to student growth (NIST, 2014). Data-driven leaders are

critical to the success of schools and know where their students are performing, where they want their students to be performing, and how they will get their students to that performance level (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016). Schools present ambitious but realistic goals for those students working toward achievement. Because these goals can be individualized for the student or can encompass entire grade levels or classes, schools commit themselves to student growth by focusing effort on student learning—not *teaching*—and providing appropriate feedback (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016). This is true for academics and behavior. Identifying the needed social and emotional supports and interventions for student growth will be a primary concern of the collaborative team involved in the continuous improvement model.

The school being studied in this research is using the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle to work toward continuous improvement. Pioneered by W. Edwards Deming, the continuous improvement model has been used in many organizations to overcome challenges or improve services and products (Karen, Jiju, & Alex, 2007). While the school does not have a formal process or team in place, the school is using the PDSA Cycle for the identification and implementation of SEL supports. The PDSA Cycle has specific steps. First, an opportunity for change or improvement is identified and a plan is made to implement that change or improvement. Second, the plan is implemented on a small scale inside the school or organization. Third, the impact or results of the small-scale implementation are studied and analyzed to determine the results of the change that was implemented. Last, a determination is made on what action is next by determining if

the change needs to be adjusted or if it can be scaled larger, and the process begins again (Karen, Jiju, & Alex, 2007; Peter & Paul, 2015).

Schools that use the continuous improvement model to identify and implement interventions and supports for students have seen improved academic results (Continuous Improvement in Education, 2013). Take, for example, Penn Elementary in Prince William County, VA. Penn Elementary has been able to rapidly respond to student, teacher, and school needs by utilizing the PDSA cycle. Penn Elementary uses the PDSA cycle for students and for teachers and has seen academic and behavioral growth. When the school noticed a decline in reading scores, it decided to use the PDSA cycle to combat the decline. Students whose score declined took their individual reading results from Accelerated Reader (AR) testing and inserted the score into a PDSA cycle that was provided to them by an educator. Students self-reflected on their reading habits to establish an individual action plan for their own improvement. The individual student action plans focused on changes in the student's independent reading habits and the student's appropriate selection of books as related to their reading levels. Penn Elementary's reading scores increased by 25% for this group of students (Wheless, 2009).

Adult Learning Theory

Adult learning theory, developed extensively by Malcolm Knowles in 1968, posits that adults learn slightly differently than kids. One of the most important distinguishing characteristics of adult learning is that the adult takes significant responsibility for their own learning (Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2014). Given the

fact that individuals are highly engaged in education directed by someone else, the teacher for example, during the first 25 years of their own lives, it is essential that they not only learn the importance of self-education but their preferred method of learning and the responsibility it takes to sustain their learning. This learning process begins as early as pre-school and should be part of any conversation around curriculum implications. Education should have aspects at all levels where a person can take responsibility for their own learning (Ozuah, 2016).

Adult education theory is essential because it equips the learner with skills that help them take control over their learning in the context of their current and future work. The theory of adult learning places experience as the foundation of an individual's personalized learning. When an individual experiences something that requires them to learn more skills, they must know how to personalize that learning to meet their needs. Adult learners bring a wealth of experience into their teaching and should apply the knowledge gleaned from their experiences as their foundational base during the process of adult learning (Merriam, 2018).

Adult learning is most successful when a person is in a position to connect their experience and the new information that they are learning. It is also instrumental when an individual can see the connections between the adult learning and their own lives (Wendt & Evers, 2014). Constructivism is built the idea that there should be personalization in the K-12 education system, which takes advantage of the motivational element produced when a student connects the classroom learning with what they are interested in doing. Since knowledge brings a rooted experience, adults have the

experience in solving problems that arise in their own lives. Adult learning explains that learners who are low skilled are likely to persist in education and in the end, their achievements are positive (Wendt & Evers, 2014).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Educators play a role in whether or not the identification and implementation of SEL supports and interventions are successful, yet they are often not included in the process of identifying these supports and interventions (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). The failure to collect teachers' perspectives during the identification and implementation of SEL supports and interventions prevents schools from using these perspectives during the process to improve the outcome (Mills, 2007). In a study of 133 teachers in an urban Pennsylvania school district, teachers who reported higher levels of positive perceptions associated with the training and development of SEL supports and interventions also reported high self-efficacy and impact. The study asked teachers to rate their perceptions regarding a mandated SEL program they had been asked to implement. The teachers were asked to rate their perceptions regarding the specific categories of "administrative support", "coaching", and "training". The study showed a higher level of burnout and low self-efficacy for those who did not believe they were supported or a part of the identification and implementation process (Ransford et al., 2009). Capturing teacher perceptions of the level of support during the identification and implementation phases of new supports and interventions provides schools with the opportunity to improve this process for educators (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012). Collie, Shapka, and Perry (2012) collected teacher perceptions to monitor the level of stress, job

satisfaction, and self-efficacy of teachers involved in using new SEL supports and interventions. Using a sample of 664 teachers from the elementary and middle school grade levels at various schools, their study concluded that when teachers perceive themselves to be involved in the overall process of identifying and implementing new supports and interventions, those teachers report lower stress levels, higher job satisfaction, and high self-efficacy. The results of these studies suggest that the use of teacher perceptions can allow schools to improve the process of identifying and implementing new supports and interventions that will allow for improved outcomes.

The self-efficacy of a teacher can have a significant impact on the achievement of students (Henson, 2001; Jerald, 2007). Self-efficacy is defined as the belief that a teacher can positively impact a student's academic or behavioral achievement (Henson, 2001). Teachers that report a high level of self-efficacy tend to demonstrate a high level of planning and organization (Jerald, 2007). Planning and organization are both critical to the success of students that require SEL supports and interventions. Teachers that report a high level of self-efficacy are open to new ideas and will experiment to meet the needs of their students (Jerald, 2007). This is of critical importance when working in collaborative groups to identify and implement new interventions and supports for students. Teachers that report high levels of self-efficacy are less critical of themselves and their students when activities do not go according to plan (Jerald, 2007). As teachers work to develop new supports and interventions, the ability to adapt and not be overly critical becomes important to the overall success of the supports and interventions.

Teachers that have high self-efficacy can negate the issues of poverty associated with urban school populations (Dell'Angelo, 2016). Dell'Angelo's research surveyed more than 1,200 teachers from 31 different high schools in an urban district on what they believed the barriers to student success were and their attitudes toward whether or not they had positive impact on those barriers. Her research showed that when teachers report a higher level of self-efficacy, their students, even if they attend a high-poverty, urban school, achieve at high levels in comparison to those teachers who report low levels of self-efficacy. High levels of self-efficacy become critical to the academic and behavioral successes of the students within the schools, due to the level of poverty that is present.

In addition to Henson's (2001) work, this study drew from Bandura's (1977, 1997) self-efficacy theory to define teacher efficacy as the teacher's belief in their ability to complete classroom activities in such a way as to positively affect student academic and behavioral performance. For the purposes of this study, teacher efficacy is defined as the extent to which teachers believe their actions within the classroom affect the academic and behavioral performance of students. Teachers who report a high sense of efficacy, therefore, would have a high internal belief that their classroom-based actions have a positive impact on the academic and behavioral performance of their students. In contrast, those teachers reporting a low sense of efficacy would have a low internal belief that their classroom-based actions have a positive impact on the academic and behavioral performance of their students. Bandura (1977, 1997) found that individuals who report a higher sense of efficacy are more willing to engage in challenging activities and

persevere through difficult situations. Bandura's findings have a direct correlation in the classroom: teachers with a higher sense of self-efficacy embrace the challenge of teaching, both academically and behaviorally, and will persevere when the results are not what was planned.

Due to the nature of this study, teacher collective efficacy cannot be ignored. "A group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments" (p. 477) is how Bandura (1977) defines teacher collective efficacy. Bandura's study explores the relationship between teacher beliefs and achievement. The collective nature of educators must also be considered when exploring the relationship between belief and success. For Bandura's study, teacher collective efficacy is the combined aspect of the individual teacher's belief in how much their actions impact student performance and the individual teacher's belief in the collective capabilities of the teachers they work with to impact student performance. The collective efficacy of teachers is an influence on how teachers cope with the challenges of education (Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2001).

Rachel Eells (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of studies related to collective efficacy and achievement in education. Eells's meta-analysis of 26 studies demonstrated that the beliefs teachers hold about the ability of the school as a whole impact the achievement of students regardless of the subject area. John Hattie (2016) used Eells's analysis when he positioned collective efficacy at the top of the list of factors that influence student achievement. Hattie then conducted his own study of more than 1,500 meta-analyses. What Hattie found was that collective teacher efficacy is at least three

times times more powerful and predictive of student achievement than socioeconomic status. Collective efficacy is more than double the effect of prior achievement. Collective efficacy is more than triple the effect of home environment and parental involvement. Collective efficacy, according to Hattie's work, is also greater than three times more predictive of student achievement than student motivation and concentration, persistence, and engagement (Hattie, 2016). In short, Eells and Hattie concluded that collective efficacy is critical to the success of students and schools.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, literature was reviewed to provide context for this research study. The literature review conducted for this study is not to be considered exhaustive, but sufficient to understand the current underpinnings of social and emotional learning supports and interventions. Research on SEL supports and their impact on academic and behavioral performance was identified and discussed. Literature related to various learning theories was presented. Literature exploring the use of the continuous improvement model and teacher perspective was presented.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive case study was to better understand teachers' perceptions of the academic and behavioral impact of social and emotional learning supports and interventions during the implementation of these supports and interventions at an urban public charter elementary school in Texas. Additionally, this study sought to better understand how a teacher's sense of self-efficacy regarding the implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions was impacted when he or she was a part of a school-based collaborative team using the continuous improvement model. Finally, this study sought to determine the areas of strength and the areas of growth that can be ascertained by using the continuous improvement model in a collaborative approach to identify and implement SEL supports and interventions.

A review of the literature revealed a lack of research on the collection of the perceptions of teachers on the academic and behavioral performance of their students during the implementation of social and emotional learning supports. The lack of literature in this area created an opportunity for the researcher to collect the perceptions of teachers involved in the implementation of social and emotional learning supports to see if any areas of strength and any areas of growth could be identified to further improve the implementation process.

A qualitative case study design was chosen for this research study in order to align with the Interpretive Theory framework to collect teachers' perceptions to answer

the research questions. This chapter provides the research design and rationale for the research study. Consideration of ethical issues is discussed.

Research Design and Rational

Qualitative research is a research strategy that allows for concepts and theories to be built on the collected data rather than testing a hypothesis (Patton, 2015). This qualitative case study did not seek to test a hypothesis; rather it sought to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions in the process of the implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions from their own, personal perceptions and experiences. In this simple qualitative case study of a group of four teachers, the researcher collected the data through fieldwork and analyzed the data in an ongoing, iterative process. Patton (2015) writes, "During fieldwork the researcher spends time in the setting under study – a program, an organization, a community, or wherever situations of importance to a study can be observed, people interviewed, and documents analyzed" (p. 14). For this research study, the principal researcher conducted fieldwork in a charter school in Texas.

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method designs are used in educational research. Within each one of these designs, there are differing strategies and approaches that provide specific direction for the procedure of the chosen research design (Creswell, 2015). One type of qualitative study is a case study. A case study design was appropriate for this study because this study focused on a group of educators who all work in the same school. A case study involves an up-close, in-depth, and detailed examination of an individual or individuals. Additionally, a case study examines the

related contextual conditions of an individual or individuals. This case study was designed to be an in-depth examination of the perceptions and experiences of a group of educators at the same school (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The research design was selected to allow for data triangulation to occur to strengthen the evidence. Patton states (2015), “Triangulation within a qualitative inquiry strategy can be attained by combining both interviewing and observations, mixing different types of purposeful sampling” (p. 317). The decision to use a qualitative design method, according to Patton (2015), is to capture data in the form of “words, stories, observations, and documents” (p.14). The use of interviews, surveys, and the researcher’s observational notes provided the principal investigator the opportunity to collect and review data to assess commonalities or themes and to triangulate the data collected. The research questions for this study were most appropriately addressed using these three sources of data. To provide focus for this study, the following research questions were developed:

1. How do teachers perceive the impact of social and emotional learning interventions and supports on student academic and behavioral performance during the implementation of a new social and emotional learning intervention?
2. What areas of strength and areas for growth can be identified in the identification and implementation process of social and emotional learning interventions?
3. What are teachers’ self-efficacy perceptions as they relate to the implementation of SEL interventions and supports?

Interpretive Theory

As stated in Chapter I, Interpretive Theory is the theoretical framework used in this study. Interpretive Theory provided the researcher the framework to explore the stakeholders' (teachers') perceptions of the impact of the social and emotional classroom supports and interventions for students, as well as the level of self-efficacy reported by those teachers involved. Specifically, Interpretive Theory is an ontological and epistemological tool used in research to collect and interpret individuals' and groups' created meaning of their everyday life, practice, experience, and communication (Frick, 2013). Interpretive Theory was most appropriate for this study, as it allowed new knowledge to be gained regarding teachers' self-efficacy as connected to SEL. Additionally, it allowed for the individual and collective perceptions regarding the academic and behavioral impact of social and emotional learning interventions and supports to be collected. Simply stated, Interpretive Theory provided the framework for the researcher to collect data and create meaning from the collected data (Frick, 2013).

Case Studies

The use of a case study allowed the principal researcher to focus the study on a specific group of educators located in a specific school. Even though this case study contains multiple interview subjects, it was designed as a singular case study due to the participants belonging to a singular group (Creswell, 2015). While defined in different ways by different individuals, case studies, as defined by Merriam (1998), are "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 27). Case studies are especially useful when attempting to collect insights when

other research approaches may not be helpful. Case studies used in the educational setting are commonly geared toward teaching, learning, or curriculum (Merriam, 1998). Unlike those approaches that may explore only quantitative data, the case study method includes context as a driving part of the study. Case studies can be as explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive in nature. Explanatory case studies present data bearing on cause-and-effect relationships (Patton, 2015). Exploratory case studies attempt to define the questions and hypotheses of a previous study (Patton, 2015). Descriptive case studies present complete descriptions of phenomena within their context (Patton, 2015). This was a descriptive case study. Creswell (2015) describes case studies as a methodological design by which the researcher is able to explore a case or phenomenon using detailed data collection of multiple sources. The sources can include interviews and surveys. Once the data is collected, the researcher describes the case or phenomenon using the themes that have emerged that leads to a final theory (Creswell, 2015).

This case study took place over the course of the 2017 – 2018 school year. Over the course of this period, the principal researcher administered a SEL Self-Efficacy survey (See Appendix A) for the participants to gauge their reported levels of self-efficacy as related to the implementation of new social and emotional learning supports and interventions. A one-on-one interview was conducted to elicit a deeper understanding of the participants' perceptions surrounding the impact of these supports and interventions. Finally, the principal researcher conducted a focus group interview with the research participants to develop a collective understanding of the perceptions on the identification and implementation of SEL as it was related to collective teacher

efficacy. Specifically, the focus group was designed to determine how teachers perceived the impact that working together had on the identification and implementation of SEL.

Before continuing, it is important to note the ontological and epistemological beliefs of the researcher and to disclose all biases that may influence the research contained in this study. The ontological beliefs of the researcher create the reality of the researcher (Patton, 2015). In short, the principal researcher of this study believes that the creation and definition of reality is formed by the individuals (interview subjects) who have created and defined their reality from their experiences and beliefs. From an ontological standpoint, guiding this qualitative research project is the belief that the realities of the interview subjects can be validated or negated through cross-coded analysis to create reliable data to answer the research question. Further, the beliefs of the interview subjects can either be validated or negated with the use of surveys, one-on-one interviews, and the focus group interview. It should be noted that the word “negated” used here is in the context of illustrating the failure to validate the individual beliefs of the interview subjects. It is not to be interpreted, nor is it the intention of the principal researcher, when the word “negated” is used, to mean that the interview subject’s beliefs are false (Patton, 2015).

The ontological beliefs of the principal researcher influence the epistemological considerations for this research project. The reality created by the interview subjects and their stated beliefs guide the perceptions of the principal researcher to create meaning during the research process to answer the research questions. Additionally, the data collected from surveys provide an additional layer of reality to compare and contrast to

the interview subjects' beliefs. The reality created by the interview subjects through personal interviews in combination with the survey results and the focus group interview create a set of data from which the principal researcher is able to create and justify new knowledge. This new knowledge can influence the identification and implementation process for schools and teachers that seek to develop and implement social and emotional classroom interventions to address academic and behavioral challenges for individual students (Patton, 2015).

In the interest of full disclosure, it is appropriate to acknowledge my beliefs as the principal researcher. I believe that the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions is paramount in an educational setting. I do not believe that a student can realize their full academic potential without having an appropriate level of SEL competencies. Further, I believe that teachers must be provided the appropriate level of training and professional development in an effort to meet the academic and behavioral needs of their students. Lastly, I believe that teachers should be included individually and collectively in the identification and implementation of SEL. Having disclosed all of this information, the principal researcher took multiple steps to ensure these biases and beliefs did not interfere with the collection and interpretation of the data. These steps are outlined further within this chapter.

Setting and Participants

During a qualitative case study research project, the researcher explores the case using an in-depth data collection and analysis from different sources. This descriptive case study explored teachers' perceptions using a self-efficacy survey, one-on-one

interviews, and a focus group interview collected by the researcher during the research process.

Setting

The school in this study is an independently operated, accredited public charter-based elementary school located within Texas. The school has a student body population of approximately 300 students. The school served students from kindergarten through sixth grade during the 2017 – 2018 school year. When the school began operations, it served students in kindergarten, first grade, and sixth grade – the beginnings of elementary and middle school. The school has steadily added grade levels each year since it was opened. The school student population is approximately 82% African – American, 15% Hispanic, 2% Caucasian, and 1% identified as other (Asian, American Indian, etc.). Ninety-one (91%) percent of the student body of the school is economically disadvantaged. Four (4%) percent of the students have limited English proficiency and 62% of the students are considered at-risk. Students with special needs comprise 9% of the student population. The school has 17.4 students per teacher. The average number of years that a teacher in the school has been teaching is 7.9. Since its opening, the school has had a learner-centered, constructivist approach to education. The school sought to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students. While there is no specific zone from which the school's students reside, the student body is made up of students that may reside in three separate school districts. The school accepts the registration of a student as long as the student resides within one of those school districts.

The school did not have a specific social and emotional intervention and support program in place for the 2017 – 2018 school year. Students' needs were largely determined by individual teachers or teachers working with their colleagues on the students' needs. At times, grade level teams met to discuss student needs and would develop supports or interventions for students. There was a consistent, on-going, informal meeting process that would occur between colleagues or teams to develop, review, and implement supports and interventions.

Participants

The participants were selected based on their stated desire to work toward improving the social and emotional supports and interventions in the school and their stated desire to be a part of this research project. On behalf of the researcher, the school's principal sent an email that included an introduction crafted by the researcher. The teachers who expressed an interest to be involved to the principal were contacted directly by the principal researcher. The researcher used a school-based email address provided by the school's principal to contact the teachers directly. Attempts were made to recruit a diverse group of participants representing different grade levels within the school. There were four participants in the study. The school had a total teaching staff of twenty teachers during the 2017 – 2018 school year. While no limitations were placed on the participants based on age, number of years teaching, or content taught, an attempt was made to include a participant from each grade level present in the school and a participant from each core subject content taught at the school.

Consent was first attained from the research participants, building administrator, and district administrator prior to any research beginning. Additionally, consent to conduct this study was attained from the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board (See Appendix B).

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection occurred over the course of four months during the Spring 2018 semester. Analysis of this data was on-going after the collection of each piece of data (survey, one-on-one interview, focus group interview). After administering the self-efficacy survey, the principal researcher analyzed the participants' responses to assist in guiding the one-on-one interviews. For example, if a particular participant reported a high-level or low-level of self-efficacy, the researcher asked open-ended questions during the one-on-one phone interview to elicit more information as to why the participant reported that level of self-efficacy. Upon completion of the one-on-one interviews, transcriptions were completed and coded prior to the focus group interview. Lastly, the focus group interview was completed and coded. If follow-up questions were needed to provide additional clarification or context, those took place after the focus group interview was completed. While a formal researcher's notebook was not kept, informal notes were made by the researcher during each step of the data collection process. All of these data are explained further in the sections to follow.

Surveys

First, in August of 2017, the self-efficacy survey, SEL Scale for Teachers, (see Appendix A) was administered to the research participants via individual, unique

SurveyMonkey links. This survey was created by Dr. Mark Brackett and was chosen due to the appropriateness of its questions as related to the research questions of this survey. Other surveys were reviewed and considered for this study, but those surveys were rejected because they had not been validated or did not ask questions related to the research questions of this study. The survey chosen asked 12 Likert-Type questions of the respondent to gauge the level of self-efficacy a teacher has regarding implementing SEL. This survey was administered to attain their level of self-efficacy as associated with social and emotional learning supports and interventions. These surveys allowed the researcher to gain insight into the individual level of self-efficacy reported by the research participants. The surveys asked the participants to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements associated with the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions. A few examples of the questions are:

1. My school expects teachers to address children's social and emotional needs.
2. The culture in my school supports the development of children's social and emotional skills.
3. All teachers should receive training on how to teach social and emotional skills to students.
4. I would like to attend a workshop to develop my own social and emotional skills.

5. Taking care of my students' social and emotional needs comes naturally to me.
6. I am comfortable providing instruction on social and emotional skills to my students.
7. I feel confident in my ability to provide instruction on social and emotional learning.

The reported levels of self-efficacy of the participants is important as the study sought to explore the perceptions of teachers involved in this process while the participants were tasked to identify and implement social and emotional learning supports and interventions within their classrooms. These surveys provided critical insight into the teachers' beliefs as to whether or not they could be successful with SEL supports and interventions. The surveys provided additional information and insight into the teachers' perspectives that could generate additional questions during the one-on-one interview process.

Participants were informed that the surveys would not be anonymous, as they were used in conjunction with the one-on-one interviews by the principle researcher. Participants, however, were informed that their anonymity would be protected during the publication of this research study. The principal researcher reviewed the survey responses prior to the one-on-one interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the teachers' perspectives of their self-efficacy as it related to the implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions. Survey questions were noted to reflect the respondent's level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. For

example, if the respondent reported that they disagreed with the statement that they were comfortable providing SEL skills in the classroom, then a note was made to follow-up during the interview process.

One-on-one and Focus Group Interviews

Once the surveys were administered, teacher perceptions were captured using open-ended questions (see Appendix C) during the one-on-one interviews and focus group interview, which provided the teachers an opportunity to respond to how they perceive the impact of the SEL supports and interventions on the academic and behavioral performance of their students. Further, the impact of the school's desire to use the organizational improvement model of the continuous improvement cycle in identifying and implementing social and emotional learning supports and interventions was explored and discussed during the individual and focus group interviews.

The one-on-one interviews took place over the phone from January through March of 2018. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes and was recorded using an audio recording device. Audio recordings were uploaded to the researcher's personal computer and an audio file was created. The audio file was placed on a removable jump-drive and password protected. After the audio file was completed, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews within one week of the interview. Upon creation of the transcriptions, the researcher emailed the transcriptions to the research participants for a member-check. Research participants reviewed the transcripts and approved the transcriptions with no changes. The audio file remains under password protection with the principal researcher until the project is completed and

published. The transcriptions contain no identifying information in order to protect the anonymity of the research participants. Aliases were created for each research participant. The same initial research interview questions were used in all interviews; however, the questions were adjusted when appropriate to elicit additional information from the participants (see Appendix C for the question protocol). While the research question protocol was followed with every interview, follow-up questions were asked when needed. Follow-up questions were not scripted and were a part of the natural conversation. A few examples of follow-up questions are:

1. Can you tell me more about why you said...
2. Can you elaborate on...
3. How does this comment connect to...

One-on-one interview protocol questions were developed to guide the data collection process. Those questions were:

1. How do you think that the social and emotional learning supports are impacting the academic and behavioral performance of your students?
2. Have you felt supported and sufficiently trained prior to and during the implementation phase of the intervention?
3. How has your involvement in the Continuous Improvement Cycle within the school-based social and emotional learning team impacted your understanding of the implementations?

4. How has your involvement in the social and emotional school-based team impacted your ability to address the social and emotional needs of your students?
5. Is there anything you would like to share that has not been asked?

The focus group interview followed the same protocol as the one-on-one interview. The focus group took place in May of 2018 with three of the participants, as one could not attend. The focus group took place using a conference call and took approximately 45 minutes to complete. Participants were asked the questions from the focus group protocol. Follow-up questions, similar to the examples previously given, were asked during the conversation when needed. No other changes were made to the question protocol.

Focus group interview protocol questions were developed. Those questions were:

1. Thinking in terms of the entire school and not just your classroom, what impact do you all think the social and emotional learning supports and interventions have had at this school?
2. What impact do you all believe social and emotional learning supports are making, or have made, a difference in your classroom?
3. What impact has the social and emotional learning supports or interventions that the collaborative group has designed had on the academic and behavioral performance of your students?
4. To what extent has being a part of this collaborative group, specifically, the continuous improvement model, improved the identification and

implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions?

5. What impact has being a part of this collaborative group had on your belief that you can have a positive impact on the level of social and emotional learning supports and interventions in your classroom?
6. What are your beliefs on the impact this collaborative group is having on the success of your classroom and your school?
7. Is there anything you would like to share that has not been asked?

A self-efficacy survey, a one-on-one interview, and a focus group interview with the research participants was completed over the course of five months. After collecting each piece of data (a completed survey, a completed interview, etc.), transcriptions and coding of the data took place. Further, these two sources of data, the surveys and interviews, were compared to determine if the participants were consistent in their survey responses, one-on-one interview responses, and their conversations during the focus group interview.

A coding scheme was developed upon completion of the transcriptions of the interviews, but a general coding framework guided the initial process. Saldaña (2013) writes, “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). For this research study, codes, such as an individual number or letter of the alphabet, were first assigned to each pertinent, singular piece of data contained in the interviews or focus group interview. Data

associated with the general perceptions of teachers was identified using this method. Second, categories were developed to place the various codes into similar content or connections. These categories were determined using an on-going analysis of the coded data. The final coding scheme provided the necessary vehicle for the final theory to emerge from this descriptive case study (Saldaña, 2013).

In an effort to control the researcher's personal biases from influencing the findings, precautions were in place. First, the principal researcher used a committee review process to oversee the study. The researcher scripted the interview questions prior to the submission of the IRB Protocol and the interviews to create consistency. When appropriate, follow-up questions were asked during the interviews to ensure clarity and context were evident. A member check occurred after the interviews were transcribed. The researcher used a Likert-type Scale survey in order to measure the self-efficacy of the participants. Specifically, regarding the research process, the researcher entered the process with no expectations other than to interview the research participants and then review those interviews. Finally, the triangulation of the Likert-type Scale surveys, one-on-one teacher interviews, and from the school-based team meetings provided opportunity to evaluate consistency of the reported findings.

Ethical Issues

The participants were provided a full explanation of the purpose of the study at the time of informed consent. During informed consent, an explanation was provided to each participant informing them that they have no obligation to participate in any aspect of the research study and can remove themselves at any time. The participants for this

qualitative research project were informed about their role in this project and how the information attained from the project would be used. The teachers selected for this research project were all educators at the school located in the district. On behalf of the researcher, the school's principal sent an email that included an introduction crafted by the researcher to recruit research participants. Those research subjects that expressed an interest to the principal were contacted directly by the principal researcher via the email address provided to the researcher by the principal and asked to participate in the study by the researcher. Prior to administering of the self-efficacy surveys and the one-on-one interviews, the study participants received a full explanation of the interview process and the survey response process. For these stated reasons, there are no ethical concerns associated with this research study.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the research design of this study was explained. The context of a descriptive qualitative case study was presented. The methodology and design of this research study was outlined. Lastly, ethical considerations and biases of the study were presented.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND RESULTS

This chapter provides the data and results of the study. A description of the data collection process is presented first. The strategies used for analyzing the data in the study will be presented in the first section. In relation to the research questions, the findings, relationships, and themes are presented.

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to explore the perceptions of teachers involved in the process of identifying and implementing social and emotional learning supports and interventions for students and to explore what can be learned from their experience. The participants for this study were four teachers at a public charter school in Texas. These teachers were all involved in the identification and implementation of social and emotional interventions and supports at their school. The teachers have had no professional development or training to prepare them to identify and implement SEL interventions and supports. Primarily reactive in practice, the teachers would meet and discuss specific students and what SEL were needed. These meetings would take place as often as needed to meet the students' needs, yet no formal process to proactively identify needed supports and interventions was in practice at the school.

Data Collection Process

The purpose of this section is to explain the strategies used to generate data for this research study. Additionally, this section explains the strategies used to ensure the integrity of the data collected.

The school chosen for this research study was selected because the educational mission, vision, and focus included meeting the social and emotional needs of their students both behaviorally and academically. The school was still in the very early stages of existence having only been opened within the last five years. As such, the teachers at the school were still in the early stages of identifying and implementing the social and emotional supports and interventions their students require. The participants of this research study are teachers who are directly involved in the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions for the students at the school.

Participants

The recruitment process involved two steps. First, the principal of the school emailed the entire teaching staff using language provided by the researcher. The email explained what the research project was and how teachers could choose to be a part of the project by completing the initial survey and submitting their contact information. Second, the researcher personally emailed all individuals who submitted their contact information with the survey. From this recruitment process, four teachers were identified to be a part of this research study. Three are female and one is male. The participants vary in length of time teaching with one having taught for over 30 years, one for approximately 11 years, one for less than five years, and another for less than two years. A variety of content is taught by the research participants: one participant is a self-contained (teaching all subjects) second-grade teacher, one is a pre-K teacher, one is a

science and language teacher, and one is an art teacher for all grades. Aliases have been created to ensure anonymity for the participants.

Jed. Jed is a 41-year-old, male art teacher at the school. He began teaching at the university level. He decided after a period of time to move to the K-12 level because “grown-ups have their own ideas” and he preferred to be with younger students. Jed began his K-12 teaching career at a different charter school in the area. He worked at the elementary, middle and high school levels before joining the school studied in this research project. He has been in K-12 education for 11 years. When he began at the school, he was a self-contained 2nd grade teacher. After his first year, the school decided to begin an art program and he spearheaded that effort after leaving his 2nd grade classroom. Jed works to integrate art into the core subjects to illustrate the connectedness of art and other subjects.

Dolores. Dolores is a 41-year-old, female science and Spanish teacher. She has been teaching for 11 years. With a degree in Biology and Chemistry, she was a natural fit for science. She is a fluent Spanish speaker and that allowed her the opportunity to teach Spanish as well. Dolores has an interest in affecting education policy through advocacy and possibly elected positions.

Abby. Abby is a 49-year-old, female self-contained 2nd grade teacher. As a self-contained teacher, she teaches all core (math, science, social studies, language arts) subjects. Teaching is a third career for Abby. Her first two careers were resale (buying and reselling goods) and retail. After coaching a sport for a period of time, she decided to enter the teaching profession. As Abby began working on attaining her teaching

certification, she was a substitute teacher. She substitute taught for four years and has now been a full time teacher for seven years.

Zoe. Zoe is a 58-year-old, female Pre-K teacher. Zoe began teaching over 30 years ago as a temporary teacher. In her career, she has worked in a variety of schools and positions. Zoe has worked internationally as well. She has worked with a variety of ages, but primarily has worked with younger students. Zoe has worked with students that have specialized learning needs.

Collecting and Recording Data

Data collection began in December of 2017. Participants were emailed a link to a SurveyMonkey survey that contained items from the SEL Scale for Teachers (See Appendix A) created by Dr. Marc Brackett (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012). Next, individual one-on-one interviews with each of the participants was completed to engage the participants in a conversation around their experiences in the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions. Last, a focus group interview was conducted with three of the participants. A fourth participant was unable to join the focus group interview, but was invited to submit written thoughts to be included in the data. The participant declined to provide any additional thoughts.

Transcripts of the one-on-one interviews and the focus group interview were digitally created and placed on a jump drive that is password protected. Each participant was provided a copy of their one-on-one transcribed interview to be reviewed for accuracy. None of the participants requested any changes be made to their individual

transcripts. The three participants who were a part of the focus group were provided a copy of the focus group transcript to review for accuracy. None of the participants requested any changes be made to the transcript. When completed, the transcripts created ninety-one pages of double-spaced data.

Coding

Using the coding process outlined by Saldaña (2013), data was coded first by hand. Each line of data was carefully reviewed and analyzed for words, phrases, sentences, or groups of sentences that contained information directly related to the research questions. An individual number or letter of the alphabet was first assigned to each pertinent, singular piece of data contained in the interviews or focus group interview. In total, over eighty pieces of individual data were created using this method. Data associated with the general perceptions of teachers was identified using this method. Second, major categories were developed to place the various coded information into similar content or connections. These categories were determined using the on-going analysis of the coded data. The five categories were: perceived supports, perceived challenges, supports needed, current successes, and outliers. All the data units were then compiled into a document that was used to analyze the data for relationships that would summarize the main points found within the data. The final coding scheme provided the necessary vehicle for the final findings and theory to emerge from this qualitative research case study (Saldaña, 2013).

Findings Related to Research Questions

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to examine the perceptions of teachers involved in the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions. The research questions were used to guide the formation of the interview questions. When appropriate, additional questions were asked during the interviews for the purposes clarification.

The analysis of the data revealed several key findings that address the specific research questions asked in this study. The coding strategy allowed the data to be organized into categories to be analyzed for the research study. When appropriate, specific data excerpts have been included in the findings to illustrate the voice of the participants as they have shared their experiences (Creswell, 2015; Saldaña, 2013).

The key findings from the research questions were:

- 1.) Teachers perceive that social and emotional supports and interventions are critical to student behavioral and academic performance.
- 2.) Teachers reported a firm belief in professional development, training, and support as the ways teachers can use to meet the emotional and social needs of students.
- 3.) The participants reported a strong desire to address student needs through a more proactive approach, rather than a reactive approach.
- 4.) The educators reported a desire to be more actively involved in a structured, continuous approach to identifying and implementing social and emotional learning supports and interventions.

Research Question 1

The research approach used in this study yielded numerous ideas and concepts that can be consolidated into three main themes to align with the three research questions. The first research question, “How do teachers perceive the impact of social and emotional learning interventions and support on student academic and behavioral performance during the implementation of a new social and emotional learning intervention,” was aimed at examining the perceptions of teachers regarding the impact of social and emotional support systems on the academic and behavioral performance. In this case, teacher perceptions were recognized as a single node, and the researcher highlighted all the expressions that reflected how teachers perceive social and emotional support systems. After underlining the statements, the researcher pieced them together and conducted further coding to find the relationship between the statements. For instance, in the first research question, the participants provided in-depth insight into their perception regarding the impact of social and emotional learning supports and interventions. While some of the participants only responded with a simple, direct statement reflecting what they think about the relationship between the use of social and emotional support systems and academic and behavioral performance, these responses, while simple and direct, elicited rich information for this study. For example, Jed said, “I think it’s a direct impact,” when he was asked what he thinks about the impact of social and emotional learning on student academic and behavioral performance.

From the first research question, it was discovered that teachers firmly believe in the need for and importance of social and emotional interventions and support systems.

All four participants that were recruited for the interview reported this firm belief and reiterated it during the focus group interview. Zoe stated, "I just think it's so critical and that's the first step for children. I don't think that children can learn if they don't feel capable." In this context, the participant argued, social and emotional support ranks ahead of academic support for the success of a student. Zoe continued by stating that the capability that she was talking about is social capability which enables students to engage in the classroom, in their learning, with their peers, and ask appropriate questions. In other words, social and emotional learning dictates the activity level of students in school since academic learning does not entail only listening to the teacher. Learning also involves interacting with peers and educators. Successful relationships between teachers and students and the relationships of students to other students are formed through social and emotional learning (Durlak, et al, 2011). Because of this, Zoe argued that educators should always prioritize SEL interventions and supports. Further, according to Zoe, connecting SEL to academics has a direct, positive impact on the academic and behavioral performance of students.

Statements from other participants of this study also revealed that social and emotional support and interventions should be given at least equal priority to academic support. Dolores reported that "you can have great teachers, you can have a great curriculum, but if we don't support our scholars or our students, especially in the inner city with their social and emotional, I guess how can I put it? Issues, then we're really not helping them at all." This statement echoes how critical social and emotional supports and interventions are to the academic and behavioral performance of students. Dolores

also mentioned a critical aspect of social and emotional support systems that “...especially in the inner city...” reflect the notion that social and emotional support systems in schools can help in managing diversity of culture and background experiences in the school. Dolores implied that children who come from the inner city require robust social and emotional support systems because they, in the teacher’s opinion, need them most. Thus, this can also be described as an implication of the impact that geographical location has on the importance of social and emotional learning supports and interventions.

In addition to classroom activity level and relationships with teachers and other students, the teachers also reported a firm belief that social and emotional support systems help students to learn how to concentrate in the classroom regardless of the learning context or content. For example, learning to concentrate on your classroom work even when there are classroom-based distractions is a skill that students can learn through SEL supports. Dolores reported that “their [students’] ability to concentrate...or not concentrate, not be able to perform, not be able to think about academics all stems from that [a lack of SEL].” Additionally, this statement also implicitly placed emotional and social learning at a higher ranking than academic support in the school context. The primary role of teachers is to ensure all students gain maximally from the content and coursework. In order to ensure academic success, teachers must know how to maximize the concentration of students in the classroom (CASEL, 2016). Simply stated, the emotional and social well-being of students determines their ability to concentrate when learning academics. Further, Dolores reported that “unless those needs [social and

emotional needs] are met, they [students] are not going to be able to tackle any happiness, successfulness...” This statement also relates to the previous statement quoted in this paragraph. In more particular terms, it is apparent that students cannot attain behavioral and academic success without proper levels of concentration when learning. The above statements support that teachers perceive social and emotional supports and interventions as critical to the academic and behavioral achievement of students.

There were sub-themes that also emerged from these teacher perceptions. The interviewees were given unlimited time to express their thoughts regarding their understanding of the impact of social and emotional learning supports and interventions. In the process of free expression, their arguments inevitably diverted to what can be done to successfully meet the social and emotional needs of all students that make up a diverse population. The participants repeatedly mentioned three sub-themes, namely professional development, training, and support to meet the social and emotional needs of students successfully. Abby reported “...the one thing I think that would benefit me is that some of these students have issues that I’m not trained on and I think at some point some sort of professional development” to identify and implement SEL. Abby reported lack of adequate skills to deal with issues facing students with social and emotional problems. She then suggested that professional development would help her as an individual to deal with issues facing students with social and emotional problems. Zoe responded during the interview that “...kids need a professional, you have to have a professional that is guiding, we don’t know how to guide them.” She also expressed a lack of adequate skills to successfully address social and emotional issues facing students

in this school. Zoe also mentioned the word “professional” twice in the same sentence to mean that while professionals, such as counselors, are needed to meet students’ needs, professional development that would increase a teacher’s ability to meet these needs would be the best solution at the moment because a counselor may not always be available. This statement was also supported by Abby who spoke of the significance of professional development in the following statement: “professional development on de-escalation, and we do restorative justice, but at the moment [of the student’s escalated behavior], you can’t do that because the kid is throwing chairs.” In the broader context of the discussion during the interview, Abby stated a belief that professional development would be the best solution to the successful implementation of social and emotional learning.

Abby mentioned during the focus group session that “the need is greater than what you can give and I think that’s why the whole village, it takes the whole village to raise a child, is so important because we need strong partner teachers...we need the principal and the administration...” This statement illustrates the importance of collaboration between teachers and the administration when implementing social and emotional supports and interventions. However, it was not considered a significant sub-theme in this study because it lacked connections with related statements. In order to prevent personal influence on the results of this study, the sub-theme was dropped, and the researcher recommended consideration in future research.

In summary, the first research question, “How do teachers perceive the impact of social and emotional learning interventions and support on student academic and

behavioral performance during the implementation of a new social and emotional learning intervention,” was answered in this study. This research study revealed that teachers perceive social and emotional supports and interventions as critical to student behavioral and academic performance during the implementation of a new social and emotional learning supports. Additionally, the study revealed that teachers have a firm belief in professional development, training, and support for teachers to successfully meet the social and emotional needs of students.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked: “What areas of strength and areas for growth can be identified in the identification and implementation process of social and emotional learning interventions?” This question could not be directly answered because the school lacked a specific, designed process. The information attained during the interviews associated with this question still provided rich information.

Jed, during his individual interview session, responded: “I think that we often start off with, ‘I’m having this issue’, and then that leads us to more information about a particular student, but then we have a very good staff, and we almost always end up with, ‘How can we prevent this in the future, and does this connect to other things that are happening? And what can we do to ensure that his needs are met without the student having to act out, to get the attention for it?’”

The above statement reflects a twofold approach to addressing students’ social and emotional needs. Essentially, the comment speaks to the combination of reactive and proactive approaches. This participant reported that when an issue arises, teachers use a

specific student to discuss the issue in detail. Without much concentration on the specific student, the teachers then combine thoughts and formulate interventions to prevent similar problems in the future. Importantly, they provide in-depth insight into what can be done in the future to meet student needs without letting students act out of the need for social and emotional learning. This statement reflects two aspects that are relevant to research question 2. First, the identification of emotional and social supports and interventions is primarily reactive. Jed mentioned that one of the members of the staff starts “I’m having this issue” which creates a discussion among other members. This is the identification process used in this school. Thus, it can be said that teachers use a reactive approach to identify issues affecting students socially and emotionally. Second, teachers formulate interventions to prevent similar problems in the future proactively. This was especially evident when Jed mentioned that teachers tend to seek solutions that can help prevent similar issues in the future before even students act out. This was taken as a solid point in this study because it was reinforced by two different participants during the focus group as explained below.

Abby made the following statement during the focus group that was attended by three subjects who also participated during the individual interviews: “...I think I have done a very good job about how to be proactive in situations that might come up. I think it's also helpful that [the principal] is in the classroom every week, so there's no disconnect for her about what's going on in students' lives.” The above statement reiterates the point that was spoken by the participant referred to in the previous paragraph. First, this participant is talking about their administrator taking proactive

approaches to address student needs. The difference portrayed in this statement when compared with Jed's comments referred to in the previous paragraph is that Jed provided more details, whereas Abby provided less information but in explicit quality. The connectedness of the two statements was driven by the fact that the participants were staff members of the same institution. Furthermore, although not stated in details, this statement implicated the role of leadership in the identification and implementation of social and emotional supports and interventions. Abby also expressed how the administration acts to implement social and emotional support systems. For example, she indicated that the principal ensures constant connectedness with students' lives by visiting them in the classroom at least weekly. In other words, the constant connectedness ensures students' needs are met even without waiting to find out what those needs are after an event occurs.

Finally, Jed said the following during the focus group: "Yes, I agree that we need to maybe be more proactive and say: we need to be part of this policy and how we're going to deal with this." This statement also portrayed a connection with the previous two statements. Jed expressed his belief in proactive approaches to addressing students' needs. Jed mentioned the significance of including teachers to be part of the policy with the intent to improve social and emotional learning. However, in this context, Jed expressed a desire for the administration and teachers to be proactive in identifying and implementing social and emotional supports and interventions.

The second research question, "What areas of strength and areas for growth can be identified in the identification and implementation process of social and emotional

learning interventions?” was answered by all participants identifying one primary area of growth: utilization of proactive approaches to address student needs. When the responses of this research question were grouped and their relationship examined, it was discovered that participants desire the school to have steps for identifying and implementing social and emotional supports and interventions. When the teachers were given room to express their perceptions of the right approach to identifying and implementing supports and interventions, they emphasized the need for proactive approaches. For example, participants expressed their desire to be a part of a process where teachers and administration hold regular meetings to anticipate social and emotional problems that students are likely to encounter in their time at school. Through experiential insights, the teachers will use the evidence base to suggest strategies that can counterattack students’ social and emotional problems efficiently and effectively. By doing so, these problems will not have a chance to impact on academic and behavioral performance.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked: “What are teachers’ self-efficacy perceptions as they relate to the implementation of SEL interventions and supports?” Self-efficacy, as highlighted in the previous section, is the belief of one’s ability to succeed in a particular situation. As reported by the research participants, teachers’ perception of their ability to implement new social and emotional learning interventions has an impact on the success of the implementation of the supports and interventions. The participants expressed a myriad of statements that portray their self-efficacy perceptions when involved in the implementation of new social and emotional learning interventions.

The teachers reported a general desire to be involved actively in the identification and implementation of social and emotional interventions because they indicated that they feel their self-efficacy declines when they are engaged in the implementation of new social and emotional learning interventions while not being actively involved in the identification of these supports and interventions. Abby reported: "...the one that I think would benefit me is that some of these students have issues that I'm not trained on..." When the context of this excerpt was examined, the researcher discovered that this is the time the participant also mentioned about the need to utilize professional development to help teachers to identify and implement social and emotional learning supports and interventions successfully. The statement above portrays that teachers' perception regarding their ability to successfully implement social and emotional learning interventions reduces significantly when they are not involved in the identification of these interventions.

More particularly, the teachers perceive that the process of identifying and implementing social and emotional learning supports and interventions consumes their instructional time, which is the detailed reason for their perception of reduced self-efficacy. Abby made the following statement when she was asked to state how she felt when she lost instructional time:

"...absolutely [in reference to the loss of instructional time impacting academic success of all students and that loss impacting her sense of efficacy] because if I'm supposed to do four rotations with reading and four rotations in math, 15-minute increments, so I see everybody every day, but I spent 15 or 20 minutes doing behavior, then I only get to two or three of the groups and not all of them, so somebody's missing instruction,

one-on-one instruction. It's normally my higher-level kids that don't benefit because I always pull the lower level ones.”

The above statement reflects that teachers are sometimes ethically challenged when involved in the process of identifying and implementing social and emotional learning interventions. They do not know how to manage their time so that they do not lose a significant amount of instructional time. Abby, Zoe, and Jed all referenced their concern in the loss of instructional time because of social and emotional needs. Abby's statement, and agreement from Zoe and Jed, reflect an indication that teachers experience low perceptions of their self-efficacy when involved in the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning interventions in real-time in the classroom.

Abby's collective thoughts indicated her belief that teachers have a low perception of their self-efficacy when implementing social and emotional learning interventions in isolation. In a story about an interaction with a colleague, Abby mentions that this colleague has a different tactic on how to handle a classroom when involved in the process of identification and implementation of classroom-based social and emotional learning supports and interventions. Abby shared the following story of her interaction with a colleague where they compared approaches: "...Do you have a soft spot in your classroom? I said: Soft spot? I was like: I've got a carpet...No, you need a soft spot..." The two colleagues were arguing about the best strategy to manage a classroom when identifying and implementing effective social and emotional learning interventions. From the conversation as reported by Abby, it is this disconnected process that leads to less than desired results. This was also reiterated by Jed who made the

following indicative set of statements about the need for a collective, proactive approach to the identification and implementation of social and emotional supports and interventions: "...if for no other reason to bounce ideas off of each other. You have a new teacher come in, and they're not entirely sure of anything, a more experienced teacher can help be just informative about what student are, and what school procedures are." Jed speaks of the significance of the need of collaboration among teachers to improve teachers' sense of self-efficacy when involved in meeting students' social and emotional needs. However, at its best, the researcher coded the statement under Research Question 3 because it relates to other comments that have shown that educators often develop a low perception of their ability to teach effectively when actively involved in the identification and implementation process.

Finally, Jed supported the statements made by colleagues, indicating the need for collaboration among teachers and between teachers and the administration for continual identification of student needs. Jed started by saying, "...it's usually about specific students and specific needs..." and went on and said, "...when we conference like that, one on one as teachers and administrators, I think that it's just much more specific to each student." In other words, Jed argues that collaboration and active involvement of teachers in a structured and continuous approach to identifying and implementing new social and emotional learning interventions is the best approach. This approach, Jed argues, ensures teachers' perception of their ability to teach when involved in the process of identification and implementation of new social and emotional learning supports and interventions improves considerably. In relation to other statements highlighted above,

this was considered a robust point in this study because it provides the school with specific, actionable opportunities for growth. Thus, the perfect answer to Research Question 3, “What are teachers’ self-efficacy perceptions as they relate to the implementation of SEL interventions and supports?” is that teachers perceive that they have a lowered ability to teach when involved in the identification and implementation of new social and emotional learning supports and interventions. The most effective way to improve this perception is to actively engage them in a structured, continuous approach to identifying and implementing social and emotional supports and interventions. Active participation of teachers involves collaboration between themselves and with the administration.

Outlying Responses

The focus of this research study was to explore the perceptions of teachers involved in the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions. All of the participants reported varying levels of support during this identification and implementation process. Participants reported a desire for more proactive approaches to the identification and implementation of supports and interventions for students’ social and emotional needs. A need for more training and professional development surrounding meeting the social and emotional needs of students was reported by all the participants. To this end, there were no outlying responses reported by the participants.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the process of data collection was presented. The findings as related to the collected data were presented.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, and RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to explore the perception of teachers involved in the process of identifying and implementing social and emotional learning supports and interventions for students. The researcher utilized a descriptive case study with four teachers to conduct this research. Three research questions were involved, and the researcher answered them by conducting a survey, one-on-one interviews, and a focus group interview with teachers of a recently established charter school in Texas. The interview responses were followed by a focus group interview that utilized the same participants of the one-on-one interviews. Three key findings emerged from a thematic analysis of the interview and focus group responses: (1) the participants reported a firm belief in the significance of social and emotional supports and interventions, but they also cited a need for professional development, training, and support in order to meet student needs effectively and efficaciously, (2) the educators expressed a strong desire to address students' social and emotional needs through a more proactive approach, rather than a reactive approach, and (3) the teachers reported a desire to be more involved in a structured, continuous approach to addressing students' social and emotional needs, especially in the process of identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions. The purpose of this chapter is to interpret and analyze the key findings as well as provide implications for practice and theory, generate recommendations for action and future research, and perform a reflection and generate a valid conclusion from the findings.

Interpretations of the Findings

The findings generated from the survey, one-on-one interviews, and the focus group were analyzed using interpretive theory as the theoretical framework, guided by the research questions. As highlighted in Chapter IV, the participants of this study were teachers of a school that is actively involved in the process of identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions.

Research Question 1

The first research question was: “How do teachers perceive the impact of social and emotional learning interventions and support on student academic and behavioral performance during the implementation of social and emotional learning interventions?” Statements that directly expressed how teachers perceive the impact of social and emotional learning on academic and behavioral performance of students were revealed. Those statements lead to the discovery that all of these teachers had a firm belief in the value of social and emotional learning on student performance both academics and behaviors. The teachers believe that social and emotional learning is a prerequisite to improved academic and behavioral performance. Also, the teachers reported the need for professional development, training, and support for effective identification and implementation of social-emotional learning supports and interventions.

Research Question 2

The second research question was: “What areas of strength and areas for growth can be identified in the identification and implementation process of social and emotional learning interventions?” Statements that reflected as answers to the above question were

identified and grouped based on their connectedness. First, the participants expressed answers to this question in a myriad of ways. Based on the researcher's intention to discover the areas of strength and growth that can be identified during the process of identifying and implementing social and emotional learning interventions, the guided interview script was used to ensure this question was covered adequately during the one-on-one interviews and the focus group. All the participants were unsure of the specific answer to this question. While expressing this, most of the statements were geared towards the significance of using a proactive approach rather than a reactive approach to address students' social and emotional needs to identify specific areas of strength and areas of growth during the identification and implementation of social and emotional supports and interventions. In other words, the areas of strength and growth might differ from one student to another, and the most effective way to identify them during the process is to employ proactive approaches rather than reactive approaches. This interpretation will be further discussed in the analysis sub-section below.

Research Question 3

The third research question was: "What are teachers' self-efficacy perceptions as they relate to the implementation of SEL interventions and supports?" This research question was somewhat more controversial than specific because the context of teachers' self-efficacy is not clearly stated. More directly stated, the above research question intended to examine teachers' capacity to bring instructional change while identifying and implementing social and emotional supports and interventions. In other words, the question sought to understand the impact of the identification and implementation of

social and emotional learning supports and interventions have on instructional time. Teachers reported that the amount and quality of instructional time are significantly reduced when they are involved in the identification and implementation of social and emotional supports and interventions during their teaching time hence decreasing their teaching self-efficacy considerably. However, they also expressed that, based on the impact social and emotional learning has on the academic and behavioral performance of students, they should actively be engaged in a structured, continuous approach to identifying and implementing social and emotional learning supports and interventions. This interpretation will be elaborated further in the analysis sub-section below.

Analysis

During the review of the literature, the researcher identified three critical aspects that can provide an in-depth insight into how social and emotional supports and interventions are identified and implemented in a school setting. The essential elements include the impact of social and emotional learning on the academic and behavioral performance of students, the use of continuous improvement model in schools to identify and implement social and emotional learning supports and interventions, and the importance of collecting the perspectives and levels of self-efficacy of teachers involved in the implementation process. Nonetheless, also highlighted is the need for a more robust, teacher-driven model for continuous improvement in schools to address the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions. Educators are directly involved in the academic and behavioral performance of students, therefore their perceptions should not be ignored.

The first key finding of this study is that the educators reported a firm belief in the need for and importance of social and emotional learning interventions and supports. More particularly, all the participants reported that they believe social and emotional learning has a direct impact on student academic and behavioral performances. Social and emotional learning is a prerequisite to excellent student academic and behavioral performance. The perceptions of these teachers align with findings from prior outcome studies. For example, apart from the few studies that were reviewed in Chapter II, others (Cristóvão et al., 2017; McCormick et al., 2015) have confirmed that social and emotional learning has a positive outcome on academic achievement and behavioral performance. Social-emotional learning promotes healthy student development and reduces problem behaviors among students, which results in improved classroom climate and overall academic improvement (McCormick et al, 2015). In this regard, the alignment of teacher perceptions with prior research findings is an indication of broader implications on teachers' ability to identify and implement social-emotional learning interventions and supports in the school setting. The findings of this research project are in alignment with the findings of previous research in that teacher perceptions impact the identification and implementation of social and emotional supports and interventions.

The cited studies that have shown a positive connection between social-emotional learning and academic and behavioral achievement were conducted in various countries (e.g., Portugal, the U.S., Australia, the U.K., etc.) thus providing a connection between the two constructs. In a recent study that was published in the *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* (2018), it was discovered that teachers' passion and enthusiasm

influence student academic achievement directly (Whittle et al., 2018). Since teachers' perceptions impact teachers' passion and enthusiasm to implement social-emotional learning supports and interventions (Whittle et al., 2018), it was concluded that schools that are committed to improving their students' social-emotional needs through a robust, teacher-driven model should first start by collecting teacher perceptions.

Based on the key findings, the process identified by this study began with using teachers to drive the identification and implementation process for social and emotional supports and interventions. Secondly, while expressing their perception of the impact of social-emotional learning on student academic and behavioral performance, the participants expressed that they lacked the skills needed to identify and implement social-emotional learning supports and interventions successfully. Thus, the second step of this process after collecting teacher perceptions is to assess their skills and competency levels to leverage the identification and implementation process. If the skills and competency gap is identified during the evaluation, schools should provide professional development and train teachers on how to perform the implementation process as well as offer them support. Once the teachers are trained, or if the assessment reveals that they are skillful and competent, the next step should focus on the identification of student needs.

Another key finding of this study is that teachers expressed a strong desire to address student needs through a more proactive approach rather than a reactive approach. A proactive approach focuses on eradicating problems before they have a chance to happen or appear, whereas a reactive approach focuses on responding to events that have already occurred. This is the theme that emerged from the statements surrounding the

conversations between the researcher and participants regarding the areas of growth and strength that can be identified during the identification and implementation process.

More particularly, the participants were unable to give specific responses and uniformly referenced the need for a more proactive approach. Therefore, the reason why a more proactive approach should be used is to facilitate the areas of growth and strength during the implementation process. Thus, after collecting teacher perceptions and assessing their skill and training needs, the next step is to formulate a proactive approach that can be used to identify areas of student-based SEL strengths and areas of growth. At the end of the identification of strengths and growths, the process begins again, creating an on-going, iterative cycle. This process is represented in Figure 1.

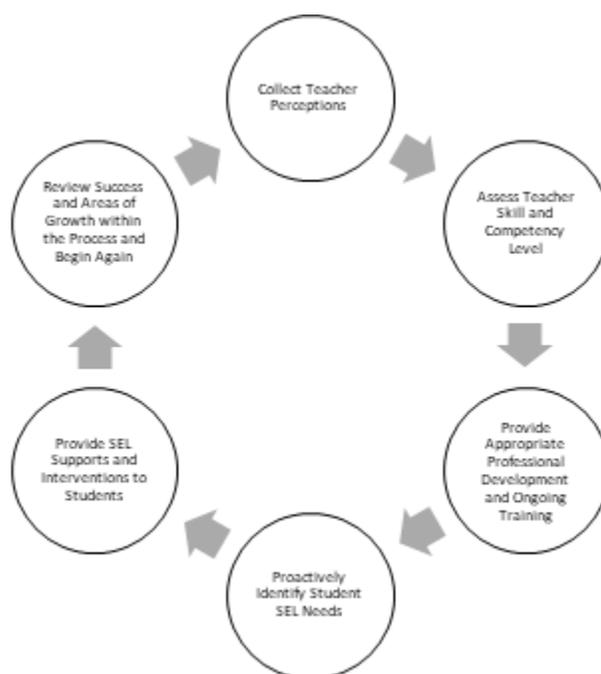


Figure 1. Social and Emotional Support and Intervention Identification

Many studies have recommended the use of proactive approaches when dealing with situations and circumstances in the modern world. Some of the reasons cited include that proactive approaches are associated with quicker new awareness and understanding of risks related to a case or condition at a lower cost when compared to reactive approaches (Ensby, 2013). Mainly, apart from the expenses incurred in formulating strategies to deal with similar problems in the future, additional costs are incurred in addressing the situation that has already occurred not to mention the harm caused to those involved. Hence, the use of a proactive approach puts individuals and institutions ahead of disruptive situations and helps them to manage those disruptive situations better and avoid losses such as class time. Further, proactive approaches are associated with improved work performance due to enhanced personal initiative (Kim,

Hon, Crant, 2009). In the context of this study, the use of a proactive approach would leverage personal initiative in identifying and implementing social and emotional supports and interventions. Thus, in addition to the benefits associated with proactivity highlighted from the literature, this study also determined that proactivity enables teachers to efficaciously identify areas of strength and growth for students during the identification and implementation of social-emotional learning supports and interventions. In other words, teachers who are proactive in their identification and implementation of SEL supports and interventions have a higher sense of self-efficacy.

The use of a proactive approach necessitates a continuous assessment of student needs, which is why the educators also indicated a strong desire for a structured, continuous approach to identifying and implementing social and emotional learning supports and interventions. Additionally, the teachers indicated that they need to be actively involved in this approach because they play a central role in students' behavioral and academic performances. The issue of teacher active involvement in the structured and continuous process emerged when the researcher asked the participants questions related to their perception of self-efficacy during the implementation process. The teachers reported a lowered self-efficacy that can be raised through professional development, training, and support. This will help them teach instructional material effectively and productively while identifying and implementing supports and interventions for social-emotional learning at the same time.

The purpose of qualitative research is exploration (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The survey, one-on-one interview, and focus group interview provided more than just answers

to the questions. Participant responses to the survey and interviews created the data for this qualitative research. In qualitative research, the researcher analyzes and interprets the collected data to generate abstract theory that emerged beyond the themes developed during the coding process. An interview, for example, is not intended to just provide the opportunity to transmit information that is transcribed (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). An interview, rather, becomes a process where the researcher and research participant collaborate in making meaning through the interview process. Emerging meaning and theory, therefore, become as important as the immediate, surface-level information provided by the data collected (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). The most important finding that emerged in this research was discovered beyond the answers provided to the research questions during the survey and interview protocols. The emerging theory was discovered after listening to respondents as they shared and explained their stories and made meaning out of their own experiences.

The previously detailed findings were not surprising to the researcher because teachers share a deep commitment to social and emotional learning supports and interventions, a desire for a proactive approach to the identification and implementation of these supports and interventions, and their recognition of the impact that the effect identification and implementation of these supports and interventions have on their level of self-efficacy. What did surprise this researcher was the emerging theory from this research: that educators desire an integrated and universal approach to the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions. Beyond the research participants' cursory answers to the survey and research questions is a desire

for the social and emotional supports and interventions to be as important as core and related content areas that have developed curricula. All four participants stated repeatedly the negative impact that the loss of class time has on all students when they are reactive to social and emotional issues in the moment and the negative impact it all has on the self-efficacy level of the educator. The educators who were a part of this study see great value in saving classroom instruction time by spending time proactively dealing with the social and emotional needs of their students. Additionally, educators see the need to be properly trained in how to address the social and emotional needs of their students. Far more often than not, as relayed by the research participants, teachers provide SEL supports and interventions “to” and “for” students, but desire to do them “with” students. When looking deep into the research participants’ answers, it is evident that teacher preparation programs at the university level should consider including this type of training in their programs and educational institutions should appropriately train all their staff to deal with the unique social and emotional needs of their students.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications both for theory and practice. First and foremost, the themes identified have been classified and developed into a process of identifying and implementing social and behavioral supports and interventions. The process can serve as a theoretical framework for future research in related areas of study. Second, the steps identified can be executed at the institutional level to address student needs. However, as explained below, the steps need further refinement and should remain tentative until further confirmation in future related research.

Recommendations for Action

In order to successfully implement the process of identifying and implementing social and emotional learning supports and interventions, schools should consider many factors. First and foremost, the most crucial aspect of implementing any newly identified process to meet students' social and emotional needs is time. Teachers will need the time to not only identify and implement within the classroom, but will also need the time to properly be trained, if training is required. Second, recognizing that different students have different levels of social-emotional needs, teachers must be prepared to address a multitude of needs. As such, teachers must be aware that students' social and emotional needs can be influenced by factors such as race, ethnicity, exposure to trauma, home life, etc. (CASEL, 2018). All of these factors should be considered adequately in any process designed to identify and implement social and emotional supports and interventions. For example, if the school identifies that the majority of its student population reside in areas that make them more vulnerable socially and emotionally, the continuous assessment of their needs should be more rigorous and frequent. Third, schools should identify needed professional development and training to build the capacity of their staff. Training should be ongoing and frequent. Fourth, in an effort to continuously improve the process of identifying and implementing social and emotional supports and interventions, schools should develop a social and emotional learning professional learning community within the school to constantly review the needs of students and to review the supports and interventions that are in place. Finally, in an effort to both meet the social and emotional needs of their students and to build the capacity of their teachers to meet these needs,

schools should utilize the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model for continuous improvement within the school. Schools that utilize a combination of an SEL Team and the PDSA model will be best prepared to meet the needs of their students and their teachers.

Recommendations for Future Study

First, this case study is for a specific school, which means it is institution-specific. Schools should perform a similar study in their context, or apply the steps of identifying and implementing social and emotional supports and interventions determined in this study with caution. Furthermore, the steps defined in this study, due to institutional specificity, are subject to various weaknesses due to the lack of inclusion of factors that are unique to other institutions. For instance, the school studied in this research was established recently, and teachers are actively involved in the implementation process. This context might differ with a school that has been established for several years. Future studies, therefore, should, address the universality of these steps by applying continual refinements to them.

A longitudinal study that utilizes repeated cycles of data collection to explore how teacher efficacy related to social and emotional learning supports and interventions changes over time is another future study recommendation. Recognizing the limitations of this case study, this is a prime area of future study as related to this case study. The ability of a researcher to track levels of teacher self-efficacy related to the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions could provide more universal and generalizable findings that are applicable to multiple

educational settings. In addition, this type of study could be completed in a different setting using a larger sample size. A study of this type could also include exploring student perceptions of SEL while collecting teacher perceptions.

Reflection

I conducted this study at the best level of my ability as a doctoral level student. I approached the topic with an open mind and reviewed the literature to identify specific knowledge gaps. I also used the literature to determine the most appropriate methodological approach to investigate this problem. I encountered numerous field challenges when collecting data, which I perceived as normal. Some of them include communication with the participants and time to conduct the sessions. However, I overcame them and implemented the research design and methodological approach effectively. After data collection, I also encountered some technical challenges in transcribing the interviews verbatim, but I managed to solve them successfully. The analysis of the interviews and focus group responses was done with ease to identify the themes outlined in this chapter. While using a case study approach, I experienced minimal problems because of an excellent comprehension of the data. Overall, I firmly believe this study was conducted at the best level of my knowledge, and the findings have added a significant amount of enlightenment to me, which I also wish is bestowed onto the readers of this research.

Conclusion

From the perspective of teacher perceptions, a process of identifying and implementing social and emotional learning supports and interventions has been

identified in this study in close conformity with the interplay between academic and behavioral achievement and social and emotional learning. The first step that was identified in this study is the collection of teacher perceptions to determine their level of personal initiative, enthusiasm, motivation, and commitment in identifying and implementing the supports and interventions. If teacher perceptions reveal a lack of readiness to participate, the school administration should introduce strategies that can increase teacher readiness and buy-in. For example, if the school recognizes a need to implement new student-based strategies of appropriate classroom assertiveness and teachers seem unprepared or uninterested in implementing this strategy, the school should clearly illustrate the reason why this change is needed and how teachers can successfully implement the change. Clearly illustrating the reason why a change is needed and ensuring preparedness on the part of the teacher will increase readiness and buy-in. The second step is to assess teachers' competency and skills to perform the identification and implementation process effectively. If teachers lack adequate skills, they should be offered opportunities for professional development, training, and additional needed supports. The third step is the identification of areas of growth and strength in addressing students' social-emotional needs. The participants of this study indicated that every student has unique social-emotional needs; hence, the use of a proactive approach will play a significant role in identifying areas of strength and areas of growth. More particularly, a proactive approach gives room for continuous assessment of student needs even before students act out that they need help. The educators indicated they require active involvement in the proactive approach used because they play a central role in

students' behavioral and academic performances. Next, it is also important to assess teachers' self-efficacy during the identification and implementation process because a disproportionate focus on meeting students' social-emotional needs can impact instructional time negatively thereby reducing academic and behavioral performance and thus diverging from the initial goals of the program. Finally, fully implementing the SEL Team and the PDSA model will allow teachers to be a part of the process in a way that will increase motivation and, hopefully, lead to an increased sense of self-efficacy. Overall, the process of identifying and implementing social and emotional learning supports and interventions was developed in this study through a case study approach. The findings should, however, be applied in other school settings tentatively or with caution because institutional factors differ from one school to another.

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Appendix A

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Scale for Teachers

Please read the following definition:

***Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)** refers to the development of skills related to recognizing and managing emotions, developing care and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively.*

With this definition in mind, please read the following statements and think about how true each is for YOU.
Rate the extent to which you **agree** or **disagree** with each statement.

YOUR RESPONSES TO THIS SURVEY ARE CONFIDENTIAL
Completely fill in the bubble that corresponds with your response.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My school expects teachers to address children's social and emotional needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The culture in my school supports the development of children's social and emotional skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. All teachers should receive training on how to teach social and emotional skills to students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I would like to attend a workshop to develop my own social and emotional skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Taking care of my students' social and emotional needs comes naturally to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. My principal creates an environment that promotes social and emotional learning for our students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I am comfortable providing instruction on social and emotional skills to my students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Informal lessons in social and emotional learning are part of my regular teaching practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I feel confident in my ability to provide instruction on social and emotional learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. My principal does not encourage the teaching of social and emotional skills to students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I want to improve my ability to teach social and emotional skills to students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I would like to attend a workshop to learn how to develop my students' social and emotional skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please write your name here: _____

Appendix B

IRB
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
 Office of Research Compliance,
 010A Sam Ingram Building,
 2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd
 Murfreesboro, TN 37129



IRBN001 - EXPEDITED PROTOCOL APPROVAL NOTICE

Tuesday, April 25, 2017

Principal Investigator **Joseph Tilley** (Student)
 Faculty Advisor Nancy Caukin
 Co-Investigators NONE
 Investigator Email(s) *jmt2g@mtmail.mtsu.edu; nancy.caukin@mtsu.edu*
 Department College of Education

Protocol Title ***Educator perceptions of social and emotional learning supports and interventions***
 Protocol ID **17-2234**

Dear Investigator(s),

The above identified research proposal has been reviewed by the MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the **EXPEDITED** mechanism under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110 within the category (7) *Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior*. A summary of the IRB action and other particulars in regard to this protocol application is tabulated as shown below:

IRB Action	APPROVED for one year from the date of this notification
Date of expiration	4/30/2018
Participant Size	10 (TEN)
Participant Pool	Adult (18 or older) employees of School A
Exceptions	1. Allowed to use identifiable information to coordinate the research. 2. Voice recording is permitted with restrictions (refer below).
Restrictions	1. Mandatory signed informed consent 2. Identifiable information must be destroyed up on data entry. 3. Voice recordings must be destroyed after data analysis.
Comments	NONE

This protocol can be continued for up to THREE years (4/30/2020) by obtaining a continuation approval prior to 4/30/2018. Refer to the following schedule to plan your annual project reports and be aware that you may not receive a separate reminder to complete your continuing reviews. Failure in obtaining an approval for continuation will automatically result in cancellation of this protocol. Moreover, the completion of this study MUST be notified to the Office of Compliance by filing a final report in order to close-out the protocol.

Institutional Review Board

Office of Compliance

Middle Tennessee State University

Continuing Review Schedule:

Reporting Period	Requisition Deadline	IRB Comments
First year report	3/31/2018	TO BE COMPLETED
Second year report	3/31/2019	TO BE COMPLETED
Final report	3/31/2020	TO BE COMPLETED

Post-approval Protocol Amendments:

Date	Amendment(s)	IRB Comments
None	NONE	NONE

The investigator(s) indicated in this notification should read and abide by all of the post-approval conditions imposed with this approval. [Refer to the post-approval guidelines posted in the MTSU IRB's website.](#) Any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918 within 48 hours of the incident. Amendments to this protocol must be approved by the IRB. Inclusion of new researchers must also be approved by the Office of Compliance before they begin to work on the project.

All of the research-related records, which include signed consent forms, investigator information and other documents related to the study, must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) at the secure location mentioned in the protocol application. The data storage must be maintained for at least three (3) years after study completion. Subsequently, the researcher may destroy the data in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity. IRB reserves the right to modify, change or cancel the terms of this letter without prior notice. Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
Middle Tennessee State University

Quick Links:

[Click here](#) for a detailed list of the post-approval responsibilities.

More information on expedited procedures can be found [here](#).

IRB
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
 Office of Research Compliance,
 010A Sam Ingram Building,
 2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd
 Murfreesboro, TN 37129



IRBN001 - EXPEDITED PROTOCOL APPROVAL NOTICE

Monday, April 30, 2018

Principal Investigator **Joseph Tilley** (Student)
 Faculty Advisor Nancy Caukin
 Co-Investigators NONE
 Investigator Email(s) *jmt2g@mtmail.mtsu.edu; nancy.caukin@mtsu.edu*
 Department College of Education

Protocol Title ***Educator perceptions of social and emotional learning supports and interventions***
 Protocol ID **17-2234**

Dear Investigator(s),

The above identified research proposal has been reviewed by the MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the **EXPEDITED** mechanism under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110 within the category (7) *Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior*. A summary of the IRB action and other particulars in regard to this protocol application is tabulated as shown below:

IRB Action	APPROVED for one year
Date of expiration	4/30/2019
Participant Size	10 (TEN)
Participant Pool	Adult (18 or older) employees of School A
Exceptions	1. Allowed to use identifiable information to coordinate the research. 2. Voice recording is permitted with restrictions (refer below).
Restrictions	1. Mandatory signed informed consent 2. Identifiable information must be destroyed up on data entry. 3. Voice recordings must be destroyed after data analysis.
Comments	NONE

This protocol can be continued for up to THREE years (**4/30/2020**) by obtaining a continuation approval prior to **4/30/2019**. Refer to the following schedule to plan your annual project reports and be aware that you may not receive a separate reminder to complete your continuing reviews. Failure in obtaining an approval for continuation will automatically result in cancellation of this protocol. Moreover, the completion of this study **MUST** be notified to the Office of Compliance by filing a final report in order to close-out the protocol.

Institutional Review Board

Office of Compliance

Middle Tennessee State University

Continuing Review Schedule:

Reporting Period	Requisition Deadline	IRB Comments
First year report	3/31/2018	A continuing review (CR) was conducted on this protocol consistent with the Expedited Review category 8. The CR finds this the protocol to be in good standing (04.30.2018). The current research team consists of: J. Tilley and N. Caulkin.
Second year report	3/31/2019	TO BE COMPLETED
Final report	3/31/2020	TO BE COMPLETED

Post-approval Protocol Amendments:

Date	Amendment(s)	IRB Comments
None	NONE	NONE

The investigator(s) indicated in this notification should read and abide by all of the post-approval conditions imposed with this approval. [Refer to the post-approval guidelines posted in the MTSU IRB's website.](#) Any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918 within 48 hours of the incident. Amendments to this protocol must be approved by the IRB. Inclusion of new researchers must also be approved by the Office of Compliance before they begin to work on the project.

All of the research-related records, which include signed consent forms, investigator information and other documents related to the study, must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) at the secure location mentioned in the protocol application. The data storage must be maintained for at least three (3) years after study completion. Subsequently, the researcher may destroy the data in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity. IRB reserves the right to modify, change or cancel the terms of this letter without prior notice. Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
Middle Tennessee State University

Quick Links:

[Click here](#) for a detailed list of the post-approval responsibilities.
More information on expedited procedures can be found [here](#).

Appendix C

One-On-One Interview Questions

- 1.) How do you think that the social and emotional learning supports are impacting the academic and behavioral performance of your students?
- 2.) Have you felt supported and sufficiently trained prior to and during the implementation phase of the intervention?
- 3.) How has your involvement in the Continuous Improvement Cycle within the school-based social and emotional learning team impacted your understanding of the implementations?
- 4.) How has your involvement in the social and emotional school-based team impacted your ability to address the social and emotional needs of your students?
- 5.) Is there anything you would like to share that has not been asked?

Appendix D

Focus Group Interview Questions

- 1.) Thinking in terms of the entire school and not just your classroom, what impact do you all think the social and emotional learning supports and interventions have had at this school impact?
- 2.) What impact do you all believe social and emotional learning supports are making, or have made, a difference in your classroom?
- 3.) What impact has the social and emotional learning supports or interventions that the collaborative group has designed had on the academic and behavioral performance of your students?
- 4.) To what extent has being a part of this collaborative group, specifically, the continuous improvement model, improved the identification and implementation of social and emotional learning supports and interventions?
- 5.) What impact has being a part of this collaborative group had on your belief that you can have a positive impact on the level of social and emotional learning supports and interventions in your classroom?
- 6.) What are your beliefs on the impact this collaborative group is having on the success of your classroom and your school?
- 7.) Is there anything you would like to share that has not been asked?