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Social and Emotional Learning Program Implementation: Educators' Perspectives of Preparation and Support

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Walden University

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Papani Faa'gi Saini

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Social and Emotional Learning Program Implementation: Educators' Perspectives of
Preparation and Support

by

Papani Faa'gi Saini

MA, Walden University, 2017

BS, Valdosta State University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

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Abstract

Teachers are not properly prepared and supported to implement social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in the United States. Teachers must be properly equipped to be successful throughout implementation, thereby allowing students to reap the benefits of SEL programming. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support they need to implement SEL programming. The conceptual framework for this study was based on Scheirer's program implementation theory. The research questions focused on the perspectives of K-2 educators regarding the preparation and support they need for SEL program implementation. Purposeful sampling was used to select nine teachers who had engaged in a full year of SEL program implementation and taught in kindergarten, first, or second grades. Data were collected from five educators who agreed to engage in semistructured interviews. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using provisional as well as initial coding methods. The data analysis process yielded four themes: (a) teachers need targeted and thorough training by an experienced and knowledgeable professional, (b) educators need more support from administration or program deliverers, (c) teachers need monthly check-ins or SEL professional learning community meetings, and (d) educators need support from an individual who is knowledgeable about SEL to serve as a point of contact. This study may promote positive social change by providing professionals who implement SEL training with the perspectives of educators, which may help leaders modify training and support systems to better prepare and support educators.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Social and emotional learning (SEL) programs are designed to promote and cultivate the development of students' social and emotional competencies (Haymovitz et al., 2018; Martinsone & Vilcina, 2017a). SEL competencies include managing and understanding emotions, engaging in responsible decision making, forming and maintaining positive relationships with others, being socially aware, and being aware of oneself (Haymovitz et al., 2018; Martinsone & Vilcina, 2017a). SEL programs help students to fully thrive in academic environments as they engage in lessons that foster the skills necessary to feel and show empathy for others, set and accomplish personal goals, develop a growth mindset, and understand and manage emotions (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018).

Educators play a critical role in supporting the social-emotional needs of students in the classroom and contributing to the overall effectiveness of SEL programming (Cho et al., 2019). This role can be challenging for teachers because they are under scrutiny to increase student academic performance and meet both the academic and SEL needs of students with limited resources (Corcoran et al., 2018). Despite the challenges that educators face, teachers have expressed the value and importance of SEL programs and that they are beneficial for students (Van Huynh et al., 2018), should be a priority (West et al., 2018), and that they play an important role in the SEL process (Martinsone & Vilcina, 2017b).

The teacher's role in SEL program implementation is important because the actions they take and the decisions they make throughout the implementation process

contribute to achieving full program implementation (Scheirer, 1987). The success of SEL program implementation is influenced by the level of preparation an educator possesses and the support they are given throughout the implementation process (Domitrovich et al., 2016; Low et al., 2016; Poulou, 2017; Zinsser et al., 2015). Although preparation and support are important to the implementation process, there is a lack of both for teachers prior to and during SEL program implementation (Norman & Jamieson, 2015; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017).

My study contributed to filling the gap in practice regarding implementation of SEL programming related to what is known about the perspectives of teachers as to what they need for preparation and support before and during SEL program implementation. Giving teachers the platform to share their specific needs concerning how they could be best prepared or supported to be successful throughout the implementation process could provide valuable insight that can be used to promote positive change. The information gleaned from these educators may assist SEL program leaders in modifying training and support systems to better equip teachers to feel comfortable, supported, competent, and prepared before and during program implementation. When teachers are prepared and supported, the likelihood that teachers are equipped to improve the SEL competencies and student skills increases (Humphries et al., 2018). Ultimately, the positive social change that my study may create benefits the students who are engaged in the SEL programming and may identify best practices and/or needed professional development for the teachers who are implementing these programs.

The potential for positive social change and other important components of this study can be found in this chapter. I share relevant research related to the scope and background of the study, the problem upon which it is centered, and the reasoning behind why I created it. I also provide the research questions (RQs) and discuss the conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background

In the last decade, an increasing number of schools have implemented evidence-based SEL programming to meet the needs of students (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). For schools to implement SEL programs as planned with the goal of benefiting students, several key factors (outlined in this study's conceptual framework) must be examined and assessed (Scheirer, 1987). Among those factors is one central component that influences the success of program implementation, which is the program delivery professional: the classroom teacher (Scheirer, 1987). The potential for SEL programming to produce favorable outcomes hinges on the perceptions, actions, decisions, investment, comfort, and competence of educators who are charged with implementing SEL programming (Anyon et al., 2016; Domitrovich et al., 2016; Poulou, 2016, 2017; Zinsler et al., 2015).

Educators who feel competent, prepared, and supported are more likely to engage in SEL program implementation and support the implementation process (Low et al., 2016; Poulou et al., 2018). However, educators are not properly prepared with the knowledge necessary to meet the SEL needs of students in classrooms (Schonert-Reichl

et al., 2017). Educators have expressed the need to be better supported throughout SEL program implementation so that they can be successful throughout the implementation process (Hanson-Peterson et al., 2016; Norman & Jamieson, 2015). My research study was needed to potentially contribute to the knowledge of how to best support and prepare teachers to implement SEL programming for students.

Problem Statement

Although attention from policy makers and educational professionals to SEL programming has increased, questions remain about the efficacy of SEL program implementation (Rowe & Trickett, 2018; Soutter, 2019). The problem that I addressed in this study is that teachers are not properly prepared and supported to implement SEL programming (Norman & Jamieson, 2015; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). This lack of equipping teachers is expressed through a lack of preparation prior to implementation (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017) and a lack of support during implementation of SEL programming (Norman & Jamieson, 2015). Schonert-Reichl et al. (2017) surveyed teacher preparation programs and found programs in 49 states failed to prepare educators to support the SEL needs of students indicated by the absence of the promotion and teaching of the five core SEL competencies for students. Bailey et al. (2019) indicated that underprepared and undersupported educators are problematic. If educators are not supported throughout their practice and equipped with knowledge regarding SEL core competencies, they may not be properly implementing the programming, which could affect student learning of necessary SEL skills. The potential ramifications regarding student attainment of SEL skills are significant because equipping students with these

skills will help them better transition into adulthood, cope with traumatic experiences, improve their mental health, develop a healthy self-concept, and reduce negative outcomes (Bailey et al., 2019; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2017; Gulbrandson, 2018; Tan et al., 2018).

To address this gap in practice, program implementation researchers have focused on single and multiple dimensions of implementation, such as fidelity, participant responsiveness, or quality of delivery, to explore their role in explaining outcomes (Low et al., 2016). Low et al. (2016), in a quantitative research study, examined the multiple dimensions of program implementation regarding how teachers implemented SEL curriculum, not whether educators believed they were prepared to adequately deliver this programming. Yet, understanding teachers' perspectives is an important part of correcting the gap of teacher preparation outlined previously (Norman & Jamieson, 2015). Both Humphries et al. (2018) and Stearns (2018) called for research that further examines the perspectives of teachers tasked with implementing SEL programs.

Norman and Jamieson (2015) attempted to address this gap in practice by examining teachers' perspectives of the practices, beliefs, and attitudes related to SEL programming. Although they examined these beliefs and found that teachers felt underprepared and undersupported, the context of the study was specific. The teachers in Norman and Jamieson's study worked only with students with special needs. I have not found any research literature that addressed the perspectives of educators regarding teacher preparation for and support during SEL programming delivered to students without special needs. The responsibility of teaching SEL curricula and implementing

SEL programming for students belongs to educators (Laughlin, 2018; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). Therefore, the success of students and program outcomes depend on the teachers who use their expertise to guide pupils and implement programs (Collie et al., 2015). In this research study, I answered Humphries et al.'s (2018) and Stearns's (2018) direct call to examine the perspectives of teachers implementing SEL programs. The findings of this study could contribute to the knowledge of how to best prepare teachers to implement SEL programming for students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support that they need to implement SEL programming. Learning teachers' perspectives of SEL program preparation are critical because educator perceptions of the programs that they implement influence the classroom experience for students (Stearns, 2018). Furthermore, teachers are the primary implementers of the program, and their beliefs, experiences, and perceptions likely influence student outcomes, program delivery, and program implementation (Collie et al., 2015; Reyes et al., 2012). Thus, exploring teachers' perspectives can potentially address the previously identified gap in SEL program implementation regarding the preparation and support of teachers.

Research Questions

- RQ 1: What are the perspectives of K-2 educators regarding their preparation for SEL program implementation?

- RQ 2: What are the perspectives of K-2 educators regarding the support they needed for SEL program implementation?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that I used for this study was Scheirer's (1987) program implementation theory (PIT). Scheirer's PIT focuses on the delivery of a program and reasons why it is or is not delivered as planned. Scheirer posited that the degree to which a program is successfully implemented depends on the interrelationships among several elements: the program itself, client inputs, program deliverers, operational aspects, organizational structure, and pressures from the organization's external environment. Preparation and support are integral components of program implementation (Scheirer, 1987). In this way, the concepts described in the PIT were appropriate to guide my study.

Scheirer's (1987) PIT informed several aspects of my study's design. Viewing SEL preparation as the program that is being implemented and using Scheirer's theory as a guiding framework allowed me to analyze the phenomenon of teacher preparation and support. Because preparation and support are part of implementation, they can be described in terms of the various aspects of the theory. Scheirer's PIT provided a lens through which I can help deepen the understanding of what teachers need in terms of preparation and support. This conceptual lens contributed to the development of the RQs as it focused the study clearly on the participants' perspectives of the specific aspects of SEL program implementation that contributed to or hindered their preparation and support during SEL program implementation. Using the conceptual framework to

develop the RQs led me to select a basic qualitative design for the study. This design enabled me to gather the perspectives of educators regarding preparation for and support during SEL programming. Once I collected these perspectives, the PIT as a conceptual framework allowed me to systematically look for evidence during data analysis of ways that Scheirer's elements were expressed in the preparation and support of teachers for SEL program implementation.

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support they need to be properly equipped to implement SEL programming. Basic qualitative studies focus on the experiences of people and how they interpret and attribute meaning to what they experience (Merriam, 2002). The basic qualitative research design allows the researcher to explore the opinions, reflections, perspectives, and beliefs of people regarding an experience (Percy et al., 2015). This research design was appropriate because it provided the structure to examine the perspectives of teachers regarding preparation for and support during SEL program implementation in a school district in an in-depth way. I used purposeful sampling to select five educators who engaged in SEL program implementation and taught students in kindergarten, first, or second grades at an elementary school in a remote town of a southeastern state. I collected data from the participants using semistructured, video- and audio-recorded, open-ended, online interviews. I used a combination of initial and provisional coding to analyze the data (see Saldaña, 2013).

Definitions

I use the following terms, in this study:

Implementation: This term refers to the way that SEL programs are carried out in a school. More specifically, implementation refers to how and when teachers teach SEL lessons; the frequency in which SEL lessons are taught; the development of an SEL leadership team; the resources, supports, and training offered to teachers; and the building and maintaining of SEL culture throughout a school (CASEL, 2019; Low et al., 2016).

Perspectives: The thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of teachers (Taylor et al., 2016).

Preparation and support: The accessibility to training, professional development, tools, resources, curricula, or other forms of assistance needed to be successful during SEL program implementation (Zinsser et al., 2019).

Assumptions

Assumptions are statements that are believed to be true and are an essential part of a study as these detail the conditions in which the study produces valid results (Vogt & Johnson, 2015). My first assumption in this study was that the participants would openly and honestly share their perspectives with me. This initial assumption was necessary because it would take an inordinate amount of time to validate each response made by the participants. My second assumption was that the participants' responses would include expressions of their perceptions of what they need to be supported and prepared throughout the SEL implementation process rather than sharing the experiences of other professionals. This second assumption was necessary because the purpose of the study

was to explore the unique perspectives of the individual participant and not the perspectives of a teacher who may not have fit the study criteria.

A third assumption was that there would be a variety and range of responses due to the participants' different levels of professional experience and unique perspectives. The third assumption was necessary because, although there could have been similarities in the responses of participants, each participant's response was different because answers were crafted based on their distinctive experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives. Finally, the remaining assumptions of the study were that the participants would understand the purpose of the study, have the assurance that their information will remain confidential, and be satisfied in knowing that I would use the data for its intended purpose.

Scope and Delimitations

I explored K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support that they need to implement SEL programming by asking them how they have been or needed to be prepared or supported to be successful throughout the implementation of SEL programming. Gathering these perspectives regarding preparation and support is important because educators are the primary implementors of SEL programming and have an immense impact on programmatic outcomes for students (Collie et al., 2015; Reyes et al., 2012). When teachers share what they need to be supported and prepared, then school leaders are better equipped with the knowledge to support teachers' success during program implementation, which increases the likelihood of students benefiting from SEL programming (Collie et al., 2015; Reyes et al., 2012).

The scope of the study was based on the data obtained from the perspectives of a purposefully selected participant pool of kindergarten, first-, or second-grade teachers from a school who participated in the initial year of SEL program implementation. Participant selection was not based on years of professional experience or educational background but on a specific set of criteria. To be eligible to participate in the study, educators must have taught students in kindergarten, first, or second grade, and participated in the initial year of SEL program implementation at their school.

Delimitations narrow the scope of the study. As such, this study was limited to a school selected because the SEL program implemented at the site was in its inception phase, and teachers in all grade levels participated in SEL program implementation for 1 year. I did not include the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as the administrators, instructional coaches, or support staff, because the focus of the study was to gather information from implementors—the educators who were charged with teaching SEL lessons and helping students to develop or cultivate their SEL skills.

I considered two frameworks for this study: Scheirer's (1987) PIT and the CASEL SEL framework. CASEL's SEL framework was potentially relevant to this study because the specific components of meaningful SEL programming are outlined. However, because I focused on the support and preparation teachers need to be successful during implementation and not on how the content of SEL programming impacts successful program implementation, Scheirer's PIT was more appropriate. Thus, I narrowed the scope of the conceptual framework to exclude CASEL's SEL framework and focused solely on Scheirer's PIT.

Transferability is the degree to which the results of the study can be applied to other contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). One strategy that can be used to establish transferability is choosing a modal sample for a study (Malterud et al., 2016). The modal sample represents the typical population that can be found in a similar context or setting to the one used in a researcher's study (Malterud et al., 2016). In this respect, the sample of participants represented in my study was a typical representation of the racial diversity found in elementary and secondary schools in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). In my study, 80% of the sample were Caucasian educators and 20% were African American. The national percentage distribution of teachers by race in elementary and secondary schools is 80% Caucasian and 20% African American, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or two or more races (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Limitations

This research is limited to a small sample size of participants. There are nine K-2 teachers who work at the school where I conducted this study. Of those nine educators, I invited eight to participate in this study. I excluded potential participants with whom I had formed close relationships outside of the workplace from being invited to participate in the study. I made this decision was made to control participant bias because I conducted insider research (see Fleming, 2018).

Insider research is conducted within an organization that the researcher is a part (Greene, 2014). I have established professional relationships with the participants, which was beneficial for the study because the participants may have been more willing and

comfortable to share information with rich details and descriptions with someone with whom they are familiar (Fleming, 2018). I was a partial insider—a teacher at the school where the study took place but removed from the community that was the focus of the current study (see Fleming, 2018). I was the teacher of the gifted and, although I had a set of affective development standards for the gifted program I oversaw, I did not participate in SEL program implementation in any capacity. I did not make any decisions that influenced the implementation of the SEL program at the study site, nor did I hold any power over the teachers who participated in the study. Additionally, I did not teach any SEL lessons utilized in the SEL program that was implemented at the study site.

Even though the study was situated in the school where I was employed, there are many advantages to conducting insider research. An inside researcher has easy access to participants and can create a safe and trustworthy research environment with participants because relationships have already been established (Taylor, 2011). Inside researchers are familiar with their colleagues and know how to approach participants, which creates a setting in which individuals are usually more willing to offer comprehensive information (Greene, 2014). Although the benefits of conducting insider research are many, this type of research still presents a limitation to my study.

I used several methods to avoid bias associated with insider research and to build trustworthiness. To assist in maintaining credibility, I engaged in debriefing by sharing findings or elements of the study with others, such as my dissertation chair or coach, so that I would be able to think critically about the research experience and reflect on thoughts or actions that may have affected my judgment (see Greene, 2014). I kept a

journal to maintain notes about any potential biases that arose on behalf of myself or the participants, record field notes about interactions with the participants, and engage in self-reflection (see Greene, 2014). Finally, I participated in reflexivity as I evaluated the relationships I had with each participant while maintaining an appropriate social and emotional distance (see Greene, 2014).

Significance

This study contributes to filling the gap in what is needed to prepare and support teachers to implement SEL programming by exploring the perspectives of educators to identify what they need to be fully prepared and supported. As a result, I was able to make an original contribution to the field of early childhood education by illuminating the voices of educators, allowing them to share ways that they can be best supported and prepared for SEL program implementation. This study supports professional education practice by providing professionals who implement SEL training with the perspectives of educators. Taking the perspectives of teachers into account may help leaders modify training and support systems to better prepare teachers, which in turn increases the likelihood that they will be equipped to improve the SEL competencies of students (Humphries et al., 2018). Ultimately, the positive social change that this study may create benefits students who are engaged in the SEL programming and may identify best practices and/or needed professional development for the teachers who are implementing these programs.

Summary

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, an educator's role in the implementation process is of great importance (Cho et al., 2019). Because educators have a considerable influence on the success of program implementation, it is necessary to prepare and support them so that they feel competent, equipped, and comfortable to implement programming successfully (Anyon et al., 2016; Domitrovich et al., 2016; Poulou, 2017; Zinsser et al., 2015). I designed this study to address the problem of teachers not being properly prepared and supported to implement SEL programming (Norman & Jamieson, 2015; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). Thus, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support they need to implement SEL programming. In Chapter 2, I present evidence in the literature review that supports the need to explore K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support they need to implement SEL programming.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There has been a shift in SEL program implementation research. The focus has changed from whether SEL programming is beneficial for students to examining what aspects of program implementation are contributing to or detracting from the overall success of implementation (Low et al., 2016). The evidence provided in this literature review supports the need to explore K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support they need to implement SEL programming so they can positively affect programmatic outcomes for students. First, this literature review provides information regarding aspects of program implementation that should be examined when assessing whether SEL programming is implemented as planned. Next, I share the benefits to students and teachers. In line with the shift in the literature regarding SEL program implementation, the focus of the literature review changes to examine how SEL programming has been implemented in the United States and abroad and the factors that contribute to or hinder successful implementation. In the final section of this chapter, I provide a glimpse into the literature related to the perspectives of educators regarding SEL programs.

Literature Search Strategy

In this literature review, I focused on research related to SEL program implementation, such as the benefits and barriers, aspects of successful implementation, and the perspectives of educators. I conducted literature searches using Walden University's online databases, including Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials, EBSCOhost, Education

Resources Information Center, Education Source, MAS Ultra-School Edition, Military and Government Collection, Open Dissertations, Primary Search, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycEXTRA, PsycINFO, PsycTESTS, Research Starters-Education, SAGE Journals, Teacher Reference Center, and Thoreau. The search terms

I used to locate extant research included *social and emotional learning*, *social and emotional learning programs*, *social and emotional learning program implementation*, and *teacher's perceptions of social and emotional learning program implementation*. I also used Boolean phrases to locate research literature, such as *social and emotional learning and teacher perceptions* or *teacher attitudes* or *teacher views*, *social and emotional learning and teacher support*, *social and emotional learning programs and teacher* or *educators and training* or *education* or *development* or *learning*, *social and emotional learning and teacher perceptions* or *teacher attitudes* or *teacher views*, *social and emotional learning and implementation* and *teacher views* or *perceptions* or *attitudes and components* or *elements* or *parts*, *social and emotional learning and teacher perspectives* or *attitudes* or *views* and *preparation*, *social and emotional learning and teacher perspectives* or *attitudes* or *views* and *barriers* or *obstacles* or *challenges* or *difficulties* or *issues*, *social and emotional learning and teacher perspectives* or *attitudes* or *views* and *administration* or *management* or *leadership*.

I started the research process by extensively searching Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, Education Source, SAGE Journals, and Thoreau for articles about SEL program implementation. I used the search terms in the abstract and the bibliographies of pertinent articles to search for related research

articles. I narrowed the search to focus on the perspectives of educators. Initially, I limited the date range of my search to include peer-reviewed literature published within the past 5 years. Once I exhausted my search of the current literature, I expanded the date range to find seminal articles and authors.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that grounded this study was Scheirer's (1987) PIT. The preparation and support that teachers need to implement SEL programs was a focus of this study and could be described through the elements and tenets of PIT. Scheirer posited that the degree to which a program is or is not implemented as planned depends on the interrelationships among several key elements. These elements include the program itself, program deliverers, operational aspects, organizational structure, and pressures from the organization's external environment (Scheirer, 1987).

Characteristics of Program Deliverers

One element of the PIT is the characteristics of program deliverers (Scheirer, 1987). Scheirer (1987) emphasized the importance of examining the characteristics of program deliverers in the program implementation process. The actions teachers take and the decisions they make are critical to achieving full SEL program implementation (Scheirer, 1987). Factors that could influence program delivery are teachers' incentives for achieving change, the amount of training provided, and the values, attitudes, and beliefs about SEL held by educators (Scheirer, 1987). The combination of these factors encompasses the characteristics of program deliverers that need to be examined throughout the implementation process (Scheirer, 1987).

The characteristics of program deliverers have been studied by several researchers (Goegan et al., 2017; Poulou et al., 2018). Teachers who feel comfortable, competent, and prepared are more likely to engage in SEL program implementation and support the implementation process to produce desired program outcomes (Goegan et al., 2017; Poulou et al., 2018). Goegan et al. (2017) found that teachers' comfort level with SEL implementation was closely tied to their sense of competency in SEL. Poulou et al. (2018) reiterated the need for teachers to feel comfortable and prepared to implement SEL programming and found that teachers who felt this way during implementation experienced positive relationships with their students. In addition, the pupils in these classrooms experienced less anxiety and an increase in their ability to manage and adjust their emotions.

Although both studies provided valuable insights into how teachers' comfort levels affect SEL program implementation, they did not explore what educators need to be prepared and supported to feel comfortable throughout the SEL implementation process. Furthermore, these studies were conducted outside of the United States. In the study by Poulou et al. (2018), K-5 educators made up the participant pool, while the participants in the study by Goegan et al. (2017) included K-8 preservice and in-service teachers. The contexts and participant pools of these studies did not align with the current study, which focused on the perspectives of K-2 educators in a remote setting in the United States.

Educators' responses to a new program are influenced by the environment in which they work (Scheirer, 1987). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the operational

aspects of an organization's program implementation (Scheirer, 1987). The ease of SEL program implementation increases when the process aligns with previously established routines and schedules set in a school environment (Scheirer, 1987). Essential factors to consider when discussing operational aspects of program implementation include (a) supervisor buy-in because an administrator's support for SEL programming will most likely be transmitted to teachers and (b) implementation norms and expectations (Scheirer, 1987).

Administrative Support

Administrative support throughout the implementation process has been a common theme in the results of numerous studies. Administrative support plays an important role in the successful implementation of SEL programming (Collie et al., 2015; Humphries et al., 2018). Using latent profile analysis ($N = 1,267$), Collie et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of administrative support to teacher buy-in. To help promote teacher buy-in, administrators need to be knowledgeable regarding SEL (Humphries et al., 2018).

Although both studies by Collie et al. (2015) and Humphries et al. (2018) indicated that administrative support is necessary, they do not examine other aspects of how teachers can be best supported throughout the SEL implementation process. Moreover, Collie et al. conducted a quantitative study using a survey and lacks the depth of analysis regarding teachers' perceptions of administrative support. In addition, Collie et al. did not specify the grade levels that teachers in their study taught. Regarding the content analysis done by Humphries et al., the researchers focused on teacher perceptions

of students in urban settings. This research study specifically examined teacher perspectives in a K-2 setting in a remote setting and did so via a basic qualitative approach.

Organizational Structure

Organizational structure is another key element of program implementation. Leaders within the school can support program implementation by establishing rules and expectations and providing essential support and resources (Scheirer, 1987). Resources provided to educators are an important component of the implementation process and can include the following: consumable supplies, information resources, support staff, and SEL leaders who can support and troubleshoot during the initial stages of the program (Scheirer, 1987). Examining the organizational structure is important when discussing supporting and preparing teachers as this element of PIT is the main avenue of support for educators through access to resources and help from staff throughout the implementation of SEL programming (Scheirer, 1987).

Environmental Pressures

The last element to consider in program implementation is environmental pressures (Scheirer, 1987). Environmental pressures are factors within an organization that may affect program implementation (Scheirer, 1987). Environmental pressures that could influence SEL program implementation include the climate of support and interest from the school community, the type of staff available to implement SEL programming, funding, and district regulations (Scheirer, 1987). Environmental factors that could influence the success of SEL program implementation include a lack of resources (e.g.,

help from staff) or a lack of support from the school community, which could negatively impact SEL program implementation (Scheirer, 1987).

The elements of PIT aligned with the focus of my study, which I used in the planning phase and the data analysis process. I applied the fundamentals of Scheirer's (1987) theory to my provisional codes (see Saldaña, 2013). Provisional coding is a deductive method of analyzing the data where the researcher utilizes a predetermined set of codes derived from the study's conceptual framework or the RQs (Saldaña, 2013). Provisional coding allowed me to develop specific interview questions that gave educators the opportunity to share their perspectives regarding how they had been prepared or what they needed to be prepared and supported throughout SEL program implementation through the lens of PIT. The provisional codes include the following: program deliverers, training amount, preparation amount, organizational structure, administrative support, resources, environmental pressures, staff, and support climate.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables

In this literature review, I provide data that supports the need to explore K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support they need to implement SEL programming. I outline the benefits of SEL programming and provide the reader with an overview of the scope and manner of implementation in the United States and abroad. Next, I share factors of successful implementation as well as the barriers. I end the literature review by providing a snapshot of the perspectives of teachers related to SEL programming and implementation.

Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning Programming

Affective Development Benefits

The affective development benefits of SEL programming have been clearly demonstrated in several studies (Coelho & Sousa, 2018; Correia & Marques-Pinto, 2016; Kehoe et al., 2018; Martinsone & Vilcina, 2017a). Coelho and Sousa (2018) found that SEL programming conducted during school hours increases the development of students' SEL competency and skills. Specifically, Kehoe et al. (2018) determined that students are more empathetic to one another and more likely to engage in prosocial behavior as a result of engaging in SEL programming. As students become equipped to manage their emotions and behavior in social situations, their prosocial behavior improves (Correia & Marques-Pinto, 2016). Coelho and Sousa (2018) explained that students who participate in SEL programming experience improvement in several skill areas such as social awareness, self-control, and self-esteem. Martinsone and Vilcina (2017a) added to the list of affective skill improvements students experience by sharing that learners improve their communication with others and develop positive interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.

Academic Benefits

As a result of developing skills in the affective development domain through engaging in SEL programming, students experience academic growth (Stalker et al., 2018). The academic benefits of SEL programming have been clearly demonstrated in several studies (Coelho & Sousa, 2018; Correia & Marques-Pinto, 2016; Kehoe et al.,

2018; Martinsone & Vilcina, 2017a; McCormick et al., 2015). Using a randomized control trial ($N = 143$

teachers and 43 students), Abry et al. (2017) sought to explore how SEL programming affected the quality of interactions among students and teachers. Abry et al. discovered that through the implementation of SEL programming, higher levels of quality interactions between teachers and students occurred in the classroom. These interactions contribute to the development of teacher-student trust in the learning environment, which positively affects student behavior, academic achievement, and motivation (Alzahrani et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2016). Schonfeld et al. (2015) used a cluster-randomized longitudinal study design ($N = 705$ students) to examine how the implementation of a 4-year SEL program affected achievement scores on high stakes tests and found that students who engaged in SEL programming achieved greater proficiency scores than students in the control group.

Not only does SEL programming positively affect achievement scores, but it also helps students with the transition to higher grade levels (Correia & Marques-Pinto, 2016; Duncan et al., 2017). Correia and Marques-Pinto's (2016) quasi-experimental study ($N = 14$ teachers and 228 students) examined whether SEL programming helps students when advancing to the next grade level. Correia and Marques-Pinto not only found that engaging in SEL programming made the transition easier for students but also improved their relationships with peers, adjustment to school, and academic behavior. Further reinforcing the point that SEL programming aids in student success when transitioning from one grade level to the next, Duncan et al. (2017) conducted a longitudinal study in

which they used a cluster-randomized trial ($N = 1,130$ students). Findings indicated that SEL programming positively affected students' behavior and benefited their behavioral trajectories from third to eighth grades.

Benefits in Economically Disadvantaged Contexts

The benefits of SEL extend to students at schools with high populations of economically disadvantaged learners. Students who engage in SEL experience cultural, academic, and affective benefits (Cook et al., 2015; Graves & Aston, 2018; McCormick et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016). Graves and Aston (2018) conducted a study with 14 sixth and seventh-grade students that focused on the effects of an SEL curriculum for African American students. Graves and Aston found that offering students culturally responsive SEL programming improved students' Afrocentric values (Graves & Aston, 2018). In addition to the cultural benefits of SEL, these programs have positively affected academic achievement in schools and improved outcomes for students in schools with contextual risks (McCormick et al., 2015).

Wang et al. (2016) conducted a study of 7,495 students in 70 junior high schools in China. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of SEL programming on students in developing countries. Wang et al. found that pupils in developing countries were positively affected by SEL programming; students experienced a reduction in learning anxiety, and schools have reported a reduction in the dropout rate.

Cook et al. (2015) conducted a study that utilized a quasi-randomized control design that focused on fourth and fifth-grade students. Cook et al. sought to examine the effects of implementing a blended approach to SEL programming by integrating it with

an existing schoolwide program, Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports. Cook et al. found that students who engage in a blended program approach to SEL program implementation reported improvements in their overall mental health.

Benefits to Teachers

SEL programming is beneficial not only to students but to teachers as well (Abry et al., 2017; Domitrovich et al., 2016; Kehoe et al., 2018; Martinsone & Vilcina, 2017a). As a result of engaging in SEL programming, teachers reported that they paid more attention to the quality of the relationships they have with their students and coworkers and acknowledged the extent to which students and teachers have an influence on one another (Martinsone & Vilcina, 2017a). Abry et al. (2017) echoed these findings by adding that teachers who participated in SEL program implementation increased the quality of their interactions with students in the classroom. Kehoe et al. (2018) noted that teachers were better equipped to interact with students when disciplinary issues arose, as educators used techniques such as a calm tone and strategies taught during SEL lessons to help students. Likewise, Domitrovich et al. (2016) reported that teachers who implemented SEL programming improved their behavior management skills, SEL competency, and self-efficacy.

With the many benefits that teachers experience professionally as a result of engaging in SEL program implementation, identifying what educators need to be prepared and supported throughout the SEL implementation process could be beneficial to their success throughout the longevity of SEL programming. When educators are prepared and supported, the likelihood that teachers are equipped to improve the SEL

skills and competencies of students grows (Humphries et al., 2018). Through the development of SEL skills and growth in SEL competencies, SEL programming can positively impact the lives of students, as evident by the benefits they experience from engagement in these programs. Because teachers and students thrive from participating in SEL programming, it was important to conduct this study to identify what teachers need to be prepared and supported so that they can experience success. This success could potentially create an environment in the classroom for students to reap the full benefits that SEL programming has to offer.

Limits of Current Research

As the studies previously discussed demonstrate, there are several benefits of SEL. However, the research regarding these advantages is far from complete. The current research contains contextual and methodological holes, which this research can help fill (see Abry et al., 2017; Coelho & Sousa, 2018; Cook et al., 2015; Domitrovich et al., 2019; Duncan et al., 2017; Graves & Aston, 2018; Kehoe et al., 2018; McCormick et al., 2015; Schonfeld et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016; Zhai et al., 2015). Contextual holes include population demographics and the grade levels of students served by teachers in each study. Methodological holes include the researchers' use of quantitative design methods.

Contextual Holes

In several ways, the contexts of the studies discussed in this literature review are similar to the context in which this study took place. For instance, the school in this study serves students who come from economically disadvantaged households. One hundred

percent of students in this school receive free and reduced lunch. However, the research regarding students in this population is limited because, in all cases, the students studied are significantly older (Cook et al., 2015; Graves & Aston, 2018; Wang et al., 2016). Students served by teachers in this study were in K-2 and are at entirely different developmental levels. While it is reasonable to assume that SEL would benefit economically disadvantaged students in this age group, I have not found a study that specifically examines its effects on this population. While this study did not focus on the effects of SEL but rather on implementation, it is important to note the lack of research focusing on this vulnerable population.

Methodological Holes

Another way that current research regarding SEL benefits has been incomplete was in the methodologies employed by the researchers. Duncan et al. (2017), Schonfeld et al. (2015), Wang et al. (2016), and Zhai et al. (2015) utilized a cluster-randomized quantitative design. Coelho and Sousa (2018) and Correia and Marques-Pinto (2016) used a quasi-experimental quantitative design. Abry et al. (2017), Domitrovich et al. (2019), and McCormick et al. (2015) selected a random controlled quantitative design. I was only able to locate two qualitative studies: Martinsone and Vilcina's (2017a) and Kehoe et al. (2018).

Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning

The benefits of SEL have been clearly demonstrated in the literature. Since students benefit both affectively and academically by participating in SEL programming, it is important for the framework to be correctly implemented. However, at present,

teachers are not being adequately prepared and supported to implement SEL programming (Norman & Jamieson, 2015; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). To understand this gap regarding implementation, I will now examine the research concerning factors and issues that lead to successful or poor implementation.

Scope and Manner of Implementation

Scope of Implementation

SEL programs have been implemented in the United States and abroad in several ways. Since the passing of legislation supporting teaching SEL skills in schools in 2004, SEL programming has been implemented in thousands of schools across the United States (Hoffman, 2009; Mahoney et al., 2018). SEL programming originated in the United States and has since been implemented all around the world (Hanson-Peterson et al., 2016; Poulou et al., 2018). Schools around the globe have implemented SEL programming designed using CASEL's SEL framework (Correia & Marques-Pinto, 2016; Gol-Guven, 2016) or created based on the culture, values, and norms of the area in which the program was implemented (Dyson et al., 2019). While SEL programs have been implemented in countries, such as Romania and Portugal since 2004, there are other countries that have just begun to implement SEL programming in the past 5 years (Wang et al., 2016).

Manner of Implementation

SEL programming has been implemented in a variety of ways in the United States and abroad. Several U.S. state departments of education have developed standards or are in the process of developing standards to guide professionals to assist students in

acquiring or cultivating SEL skills in each grade level (Mahoney et al., 2018). Many schools in the United States have chosen to use SEL programs developed by professional organizations that are evidence-based and have been field tested (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). Several of these SEL programs have been the focus of several studies, including PATHS (Domitrovich et al., 2019; Schonfeld et al., 2015), INSIGHTS (McCormick et al., 2015), Positive Action (Duncan et al., 2017), Responsive Classroom (Anyon et al., 2016; Stearns, 2018), Social Harmony (Haymovitz et al., 2018; Morrison et al., 2019), and Second Step (Low et al., 2016). School leaders have also taken innovative approaches to address SEL in schools by implementing blended SEL programs that integrate dance (Pereira, & Marques-Pinto, 2018) and drama (Usakli, 2018) or school-wide programs like PBIS (Cook et al., 2015). Likewise, school leaders abroad have implemented SEL programs that are culturally relevant and developed with CASEL's SEL framework in mind. Several of these SEL programs have been the focus of numerous studies, including Circle Solutions (Dobia et al., 2019), Giant Leap (Correia & Marques-Pinto, 2016), Lion's Quest Program (Gol-Guven, 2016), Inclusive SEL Biology Education (Ferreira González et al., 2019), Positive Attitude (Coelho & Sousa, 2018), and Roots of Empathy (Hanson-Peterson et al., 2016).

Limitations of Current Research

While the studies previously noted have contributed to the body of research regarding SEL programming, they fall short in several ways. The majority of the studies conducted in the United States are centered around teachers who serve the student population that is a focus of the current study, K-2 students (Domitrovich et al., 2016;

Domitrovich et al., 2019; Low et al., 2016; McCormick et al., 2015); however, there are several differences. The focus of these studies is on the fidelity of SEL program implementation (Anyon et al., 2016; Domitrovich et al., 2019; Low et al., 2016; McCormick et al., 2015), teacher perspectives of the value and benefits of SEL programming (Haymovitz et al., 2018), or the impact of SEL program implementation on student behavior (Domitrovich et al., 2016). The research fails to examine SEL program implementation through the perspectives of educators regarding what they need to be prepared for and supported throughout implementation so they can potentially increase implementation fidelity or program outcomes.

Furthermore, the methodologies used in the majority of studies conducted in the United States are quantitative (Domitrovich et al., 2016; Domitrovich et al., 2019; Low et al., 2016; McCormick et al., 2015), and two of the studies utilized a mixed-methods approach (Anyon et al., 2016; Haymovitz et al., 2018). Only one of these U.S. studies provided educators with the opportunity to share their perspectives regarding SEL program implementation regarding the factors that contributed to the high fidelity of implementation (Anyon et al., 2016). The majority of the current research that I found that employed a qualitative approach to obtaining the perspectives of educators regarding SEL program implementation have been conducted overseas (Bower et al., 2015; Dyson et al., 2019; Esen-Aygun & Sahin-Taskin, 2017; Ferreira González et al., 2019; Gol-Guven, 2016; Martinsone & Vilcina, 2017a; Martinsone & Vilcina, 2017b). However, these qualitative studies fail to provide a complete picture of the needs of educators regarding what constitutes adequate preparation and support prior to and during SEL

program implementation. Although current research has not yet painted a full picture of what teachers need to be adequately supported and prepared, much research has been devoted to the factors that support or inhibit successful SEL program implementation.

Factors of Successful Implementation

Level of Preparation

The level of SEL preparation an educator possesses influences the success of SEL program implementation (Domitrovich et al., 2019; Hemmeter et al., 2016; Low et al., 2016; Poulou, 2017; Poulou et al., 2018; Zinsser et al., 2015). Preparation can encompass many factors. Poulou (2017) discovered that the level of teacher preparation and their beliefs and views regarding SEL learning and program implementation are correlated with students' emotional and behavioral difficulties. Teachers who are better equipped and feel comfortable with implementing SEL in their classrooms have a positive effect on student behavior and relationship development and can offer direct benefits to students through SEL programming (Poulou et al., 2018). Zinsser et al. (2015) echoed these findings, noting that teachers who are knowledgeable regarding the basis of children's emotions are more likely to engage in teaching practices that are supportive of these emotions. Educators who are equipped with this knowledge are better able to support children's SEL during implementation (Zinsser et al., 2015).

Offering teachers the opportunity to gain knowledge and equip them to be successful during implementation may lead them to feel more comfortable and engage in higher levels of program implementation (Hemmeter et al., 2016). Poulou et al. (2018) discovered that teachers' comfort level with SEL program implementation can influence

relationships between teachers and students and can have an overall impact on the program. Teachers' comfort level may add to or detract from engagement in the SEL implementation process. Low et al. (2016) found that teacher engagement in the SEL program implementation process strongly influenced programmatic outcomes.

Fidelity

Fidelity is another factor that can affect SEL program outcomes and implementation. Low et al. (2016) found that teachers who were supported throughout the implementation process were more likely to teach SEL lessons and buy-in to the implementation process. Teacher buy-in could be affected by how educators perceive SEL programming and whether they find value in it (Domitrovich et al., 2019).

Domitrovich et al. (2019) discovered that teachers who have positive attitudes regarding SEL are more likely to frequently teach SEL lessons. Anyon et al. (2016) echoed the previous researchers' findings, noting that buy-in to SEL programming from school leaders plays a role in how teachers perceive SEL programming and their commitment to implementing SEL programs. Support from school leadership for SEL programming can positively impact program implementation (Anyon et al., 2016).

It is important to note that while these studies have demonstrated contributing factors to successful program implementation and made specific mention of features of preparation that contribute to successful implementation, there are limitations to these studies, which took place in contexts different from the current study. Additionally, the methodologies employed failed to provide educators with the platform to offer detailed, in-depth responses regarding the ways they were prepared and supported and how those

methods contributed to successful implementation. Out of six studies (Anyon et al., 2016; Domitrovich et al., 2019; Low et al., 2016; Poulou, 2017; Poulou et al., 2018; Zinsser et al., 2015), only one (Zinsser et al., 2015) utilized a mixed-methods approach; the others adopted quantitative methodology with the researchers using scales and checklists as a means to collect information. Greece was the site of Poulou's (2017) study. Poulou et al. (2018) conducted their study in the United States and Greece and focused on preschool teachers and students. Zinsser et al. (2015) focused on Head Start teachers, while Anyon et al. (2016) examined K-8 grade levels with the participants comprised of teachers, administrators, behavioral specialists, and social work interns.

Barriers to Successful Implementation

Even though certain factors lead to successful implementation, barriers have been uncovered. One potential barrier to successful SEL program implementation is the level of preparation that an educator possesses. An additional obstacle is a teacher's use of SEL strategies. A final barrier that could impinge the success of SEL program implementation is an educator's beliefs regarding SEL.

Teacher Preparation

Schonert-Reichl et al. (2017) discovered that teacher preparation programs are not providing preservice teachers with skills to support the SEL needs of students. This lack of preparation could be a contributing factor to Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin's (2017) discovery that some teachers are unaware of the existence of SEL education or programming for students. This lack of education and awareness can impact SEL program implementation. Van Huynh et al. (2018) found that a teacher's educational

background and years of teaching experience have a significant influence on their application of SEL education in the classroom and perception of the need to provide SEL education to students. This lack of preparation is a barrier to successful implementation, because if teachers are not provided with the opportunity to increase their SEL competency and do not see the value in SEL education, then they may not implement SEL programming as intended.

Administrative Support

An additional factor that could potentially inhibit the success of SEL program implementation is a lack of administrative support. Collie et al. (2015) discovered that the perception of support from school leadership and administrators might contribute more to teacher stress during the implementation process than teachers' comfort level with SEL. Furthermore, Low et al. (2016) argued that administrators who fail to establish the importance of SEL programming to increase teacher buy-in, explain the benefits of SEL programs to teachers, and who are not supportive throughout the implementation process contribute to teacher disengagement. This disengagement leads to low implementation fidelity and negatively impacts program outcomes (Low et al., 2016).

Educator Use of Social and Emotional Learning Strategies and Beliefs

Teachers' use of SEL strategies and their beliefs about SEL present barriers to SEL program implementation. Buettner et al. (2016) discovered that educators who lacked the SEL skills to manage their own emotions were prone to react punitively to children's negative emotions rather than teaching them the SEL skills necessary to navigate these emotions. Not only do an educator's SEL skills influence SEL

programming, but their beliefs about SEL influence implementation as well (Hanson-Peterson et al., 2016). Hanson-Peterson et al. (2016) found that the beliefs teachers hold about SEL education and students' SEL skills influenced the frequency of implementation. For example, Hanson-Peterson et al. discovered that educators in their study who possessed strong beliefs that children should be shielded from strong emotions and that they did not have the ability to regulate or show emotions in a socially acceptable manner were less likely to teach SEL lessons or integrate SEL content in multiple subject areas.

Teachers' Perspectives

Because educators play an influential role in student attainment of SEL skills, their perspectives on SEL are essential to take into consideration when discussing SEL program implementation (Cho et al., 2019; Scheirer, 1987). The existing knowledge concerning teacher perspectives, while helpful, is incomplete. The literature related to the perspectives of educators regarding their thoughts about the SEL skills students possess; their beliefs about SEL programs; their comfort with, support of, and commitment to SEL; and how they view their role in the SEL process have recently grown (Collie et al., 2015; Dobia et al., 2019; Humphries et al., 2018; Low et al., 2016; Martínez, 2016; Norman & Jamieson, 2015; Poulou, 2017; Poulou et al., 2018; Van Huynh et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2018; Zinsser et al., 2015). There is much less research conducted in the past 5 years related to the perspectives of educators concerning the preparation and support that they need to be effective contributors in the SEL program implementation process (Anyon et al., 2016; Buzgara & Giurgiuman, 2019; Goegan et al., 2017; Martinsone &

Vilcina, 2017b; Norman & Jamieson, 2015). Most of these studies regarding the perspectives of educators have focused on preschool, upper elementary grades, and middle schools rather than K-2.

Administrative Support

Teachers have asked for administrative support throughout the process of implementing SEL (Norman, & Jamieson, 2015). Specifically, teachers want knowledgeable administrators who help them in the implementation process, promote a school climate of inclusivity, are supportive by providing knowledge, and champion their efforts to improve the SEL skills of students (Humphries et al., 2018; Norman & Jamieson, 2015). This need for support may be a natural outgrowth of teachers' lack of knowledge of SEL programming as they have asked for more training and professional development (Buzgara & Giurgiuman, 2019; Dobia et al., 2019; Norman & Jamieson, 2015).

Administrative guidance and support as well as the availability of resources are critical factors for successful implementation (Humphries et al., 2018). Anyon et al. (2016) and Barnes and McCallops (2019) discovered that buy-in from the school community, especially the administrator, is critical for SEL programming's sustainability and success. Collie et al. (2015) found that teachers who worked in environments where administrators were invested in SEL programming and created a school culture focused on fostering students' SEL skills felt they could thrive in teaching SEL lessons. Allbright et al. (2019) echoed these findings and noted that administrators that devote a portion of the school year to building a positive school culture where SEL skills, such as the

building of positive relationships, are encouraged contribute to the overall success of SEL programming and outcomes.

Summary and Conclusions

The benefits of SEL programming for students have been demonstrated in multiple studies (Coelho & Sousa, 2018; Correia & Marques-Pinto, 2016; Kehoe et al., 2018; Martinsone & Vilcina, 2017a; McCormick et al., 2015). With the benefits so distinctly exhibited in the literature, it is in the best interest of students both affectively and academically that SEL programming is well-implemented (Abry et al., 2017; Coelho & Sousa, 2018; Correia & Marques-Pinto, 2016; Duncan et al., 2017; Kehoe et al., 2018; Low et al., 2016; Martinsone & Vilcina, 2017a; McCormick et al., 2015; Zhai et al., 2015). However, at present, educators are not properly supported and prepared to adequately implement SEL programming (Norman & Jamieson, 2015; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). To understand this gap, it is essential to explore the current state of implementation, and what factors and issues lead to its success or failure. Furthermore, because educators play an influential role in implementation, their perspectives on SEL programming are essential when discussing implementing SEL programming.

While much is known about SEL program implementation, current research still falls short in several key ways. Therefore, exploring teachers' perspectives can potentially address the previously identified gap in SEL program implementation regarding the preparation and support teachers need before and during SEL program implementation. In Chapter 3, I provide a complete description of the research design and

rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, data analysis plan, and trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support they need to implement SEL programming. In this chapter, I justify using a basic qualitative study design, engage in reflexivity as I examine my role in the research process, and describe the methodology used in this study. Chapter 3 also includes a description of the participants, recruiting procedures, the data collection instrument, and the data analysis plan. I end the chapter with an explanation of how I established trustworthiness and followed ethical guidelines.

Research Design and Rationale

RQs serve as the foundation of a study and are essential to the research design (Blaikie & Priest, 2019). Two RQs guided this study:

- RQ 1: What are the perspectives of K-2 educators regarding their preparation for SEL program implementation?
- RQ 2: What are the perspectives of K-2 educators regarding the support they needed for SEL program implementation?

In this study, *preparation and support* are defined as the accessibility to training, professional development, tools, resources, curricula, or other forms of assistance needed to succeed during SEL program implementation (Zinsser et al., 2019). I used a basic qualitative research design to answer the RQs.

I chose a basic qualitative research design for several reasons. First, this design allows the researcher to understand how teachers make sense of and interpret their

experiences throughout SEL program implementation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Second, adopting a basic qualitative design allows the researcher to understand the perspectives of educators by collecting detailed data through interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Third, this design permits the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis of responses to identify recurring patterns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These aspects of the basic qualitative design helped me reach the goal of interpreting and understanding how teachers perceive the support and preparation they need for SEL program implementation (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Although I considered other research designs for this study, I disregarded them for many reasons. The focus of quantitative research is on numbers and statistical analysis, which would not have allowed me to gather in-depth responses from participants to explore their unique perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I eliminated case study as a design option because the purpose of this approach is to explore a person(s) or group within a bounded system, which did not align with the focus of my study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also rejected a narrative inquiry because this would require that the participant(s) tell full stories about their experiences with a beginning, middle, and end (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A narrative inquiry did not align with my study because participants provided information about specific aspects of their experiences with SEL program implementation regarding preparation and support rather than in-depth stories about their entire experiences. Through this consideration and dismissal process, I ultimately decided that a basic qualitative research design would be the most appropriate for this study.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative researchers need to examine their position within the research by engaging in reflexivity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By practicing reflexivity, the researcher examines how they influence or are influenced by the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participating in reflexivity adds to the integrity of the research and helps the reader gain a better understanding of how the researcher made specific conclusions or interpreted data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A reflexive researcher scrutinizes their role in the study, relationships with the participants, power relationships within the research, biases, and ethical issues within the study.

An important part of the reflexivity process is examining one's role in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I have taught students in several grade levels as an elementary school instructor for the past 9 years. I have been a fine arts director and a grade-level teacher during my career, and I have taught a single subject for an entire year. When I conducted the study, I worked with gifted students and served as the gifted resource teacher for students in first through fifth grades. When students visited my classroom during their gifted resource time, I taught them specially designed lessons that met their specific SEL needs. When students returned to their classrooms, their homeroom teachers taught them additional SEL lessons. This study's participant pool was composed of homeroom teachers from kindergarten, first, and second grades at the school where I worked.

Positionality

Part of my reflexivity was to consider my positionality as a researcher and how this may have affected my relationships with the study's participants. I served as a marginal insider in this study (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I worked as a teacher in the same building as the participants; however, I did not have the same involvement as the participants in this study in teaching SEL lessons that are part of the school's SEL program implementation efforts. I did not serve as a leader on the SEL leadership team when I conducted the study, nor did I work with teachers to prepare or support them in their SEL program implementation efforts. Besides learning alongside teachers in SEL book studies, I did not have any interactions with teachers related to SEL program implementation, nor did I hold any power over them in a supervisory or instructional role. After completing data collection and analysis and finalizing the study, I served on the school's SEL leadership team. I did not let the fact that I would serve on the leadership team in the future affect the analysis of the data or the interpretation of the findings of my study.

Ethical Issues and Bias

To mitigate potential ethical issues and bias associated with insider research, I used several strategies to maintain credibility. I continually contemplated the role that I played throughout the research process and maintained an appropriate distance with the research participants (see Greene, 2014). I maintained distance by conducting interviews via video conferencing and by not contacting teachers for nonstudy-related purposes during this research. I kept a journal to engage in reflection throughout the research

process, record field notes before and after meetings with the participants, and maintain notes regarding any potential biases that may have arisen on behalf of the participants or myself (see Greene, 2014). I also participated in debriefing sessions by sharing segments of the study with others, such as my dissertation committee or coach (see Greene, 2014). Engaging in the debriefing process allowed me to think critically about the research process and provided me with the opportunity to reflect on actions or thoughts that may have affected my judgment (Greene, 2014).

Methodology

In this section, I outline the research design and plan for conducting the study and the research methods used. I also detail the procedures for participant selection, recruitment, participation, and data collection. I conclude this section with information regarding the data analysis plan, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Participant Selection

I selected participants using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling was appropriate for this study because it allowed me to choose participants that matched a particular set of selection criteria (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To be included in this study, the participants needed to have met the following inclusion criteria: (a) be a practicing K-2 teacher, and (b) have participated in a full year of an initial implementation of SEL programming geared toward their students. I sent the participants an invitation and a detailed consent letter to review before deciding to participate in the study. The consent form indicated the study's criteria, and by replying with "I consent," the participants verified that they meet the study criteria.

Malterud et al. (2016) recommended using the concept of information power to guide the selection of an adequate sample size. Malterud et al. argued that the more relevant information a sample holds, the smaller the sample size of participants can be. To achieve information power, a researcher must narrow the topic focus of the study, select a sample of participants with a specific set of characteristics, and apply elements of a theory to the planning and analysis phases of a study (Malterud et al., 2016).

My study met the criteria Malterud et al. (2016) described achieving optimum information power. My study's focus was narrow, emphasizing the support and preparation aspects of the broader topic of SEL program implementation. The sample of participants had a specific set of characteristics: K-2 educators who participated in a full year of an initial implementation of an SEL program. Also, I used the elements of the PIT to ground the study in the planning phase and as provisional codes in the data analysis phase of this study. Therefore, this study's small sample size of five participants was appropriate to achieve optimum information power (see Malterud et al., 2016).

I invited potential participants to participate by sending a recruitment email containing a detailed letter of invitation and a consent request. Because I worked with the educators who could have potentially participated in this study, I identified them using a staff list of grade-level teacher names and emails. The teachers who agreed to be a part of the study replied to the recruitment email with a statement of consent statement and with the understanding that they would participate in an online interview that lasted 45 to 60 minutes.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I followed a set of procedures to recruit participants. First, I contacted the school principal to obtain permission to conduct the study with members of her staff to conduct interviews. Next, I contacted the superintendent to submit a formal request to conduct research within the school district. After receiving approval from both the principal and superintendent, I identified possible participants by utilizing a staff list of grade-level teacher names and emails. After I identified potential participants, I sent an email to all kindergarten, first-, and second-grade teachers I worked with who met the study criteria using their professional email addresses. Teachers who were interested in participating sent me their personal email addresses via text message. After I received the participants' email addresses, I emailed them the consent form. The consent form explained the purpose of the study, voluntary nature, timeframe, and benefits. It also detailed the participant criteria, responsibilities, right to withdraw at any time, my contact information, and that I would maintain the participants' privacy and confidentiality. I reached out to potential participants to answer any questions or address any concerns they may have had. Once the participants indicated that they understood the study well enough to make a decision to participate, they responded to the email with "I consent." I asked the participants who provided consent to schedule a 45 to 60-minute online interview at their convenience. Before the interview, I reminded the teachers that they would be recorded and that their confidentiality would be upheld throughout the duration and completion of the study.

When the interview was complete, I guided the participants through the debriefing process. I informed the teachers that they would receive a copy of this study's findings to review and that their identities would remain confidential. During the review, participants examined the findings to evaluate the accuracy of the interpretations and conclusions that I drew. Next, I asked the participants if they had any questions and informed them that I might ask for a follow-up call if needed for clarification or to provide additional information. Finally, I thanked each for their time and participation. If a follow-up call was required, I planned to contact the participants via email, schedule a call, and provide an estimate of the time the call would take to complete. This was the case with one participant whom I asked questions for clarification or to obtain information to supplement incomplete data. I made changes to the findings based on the information obtained from the follow-up call.

Instrumentation and Operationalization

The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and can use different means to gather data for a study (Malterud et al., 2016). I followed a semistructured interview protocol using questions that I developed to conduct an open-ended online interview with each teacher participant (Appendix A). I conducted the interviews using ZOOM and video recorded these using Monosnap. I recorded the audio from the semistructured interviews using an iPhone XS Max.

Semistructured interviews were sufficient to collect data in this study for several reasons. This interview type allowed me to gather specific information from the participants while providing the flexibility to respond as their worldview emerged and

they provided new ideas about the topic (see Malterud et al., 2016). Utilizing a semistructured interview format also provided me with the opportunity and flexibility to ask open-ended questions that went with the conversation's natural flow (see Malterud et al., 2016). Adopting a semistructured interview format also gave me the option to ask probing questions to collect new information I may not have had before the interview (see Malterud et al., 2016). When conducting the interviews, I used a list of questions that I developed for this study based on the elements of the PIT and the RQs (Appendix A). Throughout the process of conducting semistructured interviews and collecting data, I used strategies to establish validity.

I used member checks and peer examination strategies to establish validity within the study. Utilizing member checks in a study prompts the researcher to share emerging or preliminary findings with the participants (Malterud et al., 2016). I allowed the participants to validate my interpretation of the findings by providing feedback (see Malterud et al., 2016). I used this feedback to confirm the findings or make changes to capture participants' perspectives better (see Malterud et al., 2016). Engaging in member checks also provides an opportunity to examine potential misunderstandings or biases on behalf of the researcher (Malterud et al., 2016). To accomplish this, I sent an email containing the findings to participants along with a set of instructions. I asked the participants to examine the findings and evaluate the accuracy of the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the data. I requested a follow-up call with one participant to ask questions for clarification and obtain more information. In addition to using member checks, I also utilized peer examination strategies.

Researchers can use peer examination strategies to establish a study's validity (Malterud et al., 2016). When utilizing peer examination, the researcher reaches out to colleagues or individuals familiar with the study's topic to gain their feedback (Malterud et al., 2016). During the peer review process, colleagues or other individuals review and assess the researcher's work (Malterud et al., 2016). The peer whom I selected was a counselor with 10 years of experience with SEL education. This colleague assessed the data and findings for plausibility (see Malterud et al., 2016).

Data Analysis Plan

Researchers must make important decisions about the procedures they will adopt to analyze data to answer the RQs central to a study (Blanca et al., 2018). I used both initial and provisional coding to analyze the data obtained from semistructured interviews (see Saldaña, 2013). Elliott (2018) argued that using codes developed before examining the data in conjunction with codes that emerge from the data ensures that the researcher considers all the participants' data.

I utilized initial and a provisional coding to engage in both inductive and deductive analysis. I developed interview questions to answer the RQs by using elements of the PIT theory, such as support from administration or school leadership, characteristics of program deliverers, or organizational structure (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Each interview question stem was a derivative of the provisional codes developed using the PIT and connected the data to the RQs used in the study. The provisional codes included the following: program deliverers, training amount, preparation amount, organizational structure, administrative support, resources, staff, and support. To ensure

proper consideration of all data generated from the interviews, I utilized initial coding to analyze data that may not have aligned with the established provisional codes (see Saldaña, 2013).

I engaged in two cycles of coding. I selected the coding methods for each cycle based on the plausibility of each method to identify the types of responses necessary to answer the RQs (Saldaña, 2013). During the first cycle of coding, I used attribute, provisional, and initial coding methods (Saldaña, 2013). Attribute coding is the process of assigning codes to descriptive information regarding the setting, characteristics of the participants, or demographic information (Saldaña, 2013). Provisional coding is the use of a predetermined set of codes developed from a study's conceptual framework or RQs (Saldaña, 2013). Initial coding is the process of breaking down large pieces of information into smaller parts to examine the similarities and differences among the data when assigning codes to each line of data (Saldaña, 2013). The combination of attribute, provisional, and initial coding allowed me to do the following: (a) identify important descriptive information, (b) use elements of the PIT theory as provisional codes, and (b) identify new codes for data that may not have fit the established provisional codes.

To transition from the first to the second cycle of coding, I engaged in code mapping. Code mapping is the procedure of recording coding process iterations to illustrate how codes are analyzed and changed throughout each coding cycle (Saldaña, 2013). I listed the full set of codes from the first cycle of coding and then reorganized them in the second cycle (see Saldaña, 2013). During the second cycle of coding, I used axial coding to group codes into categories and subcategories by examining how each

code related to one another (see Saldaña, 2013). The first and the second coding cycles helped me analyze the data to create a set of findings for the study.

I used computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to support the coding and data analysis process (see Malterud et al., 2016). Once I completed the interviews, I used Otter to convert the audio into text automatically. After the Otter software generated a transcript of each interview, I read each transcript and completed revisions to correct grammatical errors. Afterward, I uploaded the transcripts to NVivo's CAQDAS platform, which helped me manage, organize, code, and analyze the data obtained from participants during the interview process (see Malterud et al., 2016).

I looked for variants during the data collection process (see Malterud et al., 2016). I looked for data that may have supported alternative explanations to the emerging findings (Malterud et al., 2016). I also looked for discrepant data that would disconfirm or challenge the emerging findings (see Malterud et al., 2016; McPherson & Thorne, 2006). There was one discrepancy based on one participant's response that was distinctly different. To clarify, I requested a follow-up call from one participant to ask questions and obtain additional information. See below in the credibility section.

Trustworthiness

When discussing the trustworthiness of a study, one examines the extent to which the findings are reliable and can be trusted (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The trustworthiness of the research is based on the researcher's use of quality criteria and the rigor of the study's execution (Malterud et al., 2016). I applied four concepts to increase

rigor and establish trustworthiness in my research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility is the confidence in the research findings' plausibility (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). One can also think of credibility in terms of the extent to which the findings match reality (Malterud et al., 2016). I utilized two strategies to establish credibility: member checks and looking for discrepant pieces of data. When researchers engage in member checks, they provide participants with the opportunity to review their findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). During the review process, the participants confirm the findings, make corrections, or challenge perceived errors in a researcher's interpretation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Afterward, the researcher revisits the findings to make changes based on participants' feedback if needed and then sends the updated findings back to the participants for confirmation. In addition to member checks, I also used discrepant case analysis. During the data analysis, I looked for data that challenged the overall study findings and sought more information from one of the participants to clarify or resolve the discrepancy (see Malterud et al., 2016).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which a study can be generalized or applied to other contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher must provide a rich description so that a potential user of the results can make an informed transferability judgment (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers can establish transferability in a study by providing a thick description of the participants, setting, sample size, demographics,

research process, and findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Malterud et al., 2016). Another way to establish transferability is by utilizing a modal sample that represents the typical population (Malterud et al., 2016). The participants in my study matched the typical population of early childhood and secondary teachers across the nation. The percentage distribution of teachers by race for my research was 80% Caucasian and 20% African American compared to the national percentage distribution of 80% Caucasian and 20% African American, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, or two or more races (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and credibility of the data and findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Malterud et al., 2016). I demonstrated dependability in my study by engaging in peer examination (see Malterud et al., 2016). Peer examination is the process of sharing parts of one's research with colleagues, mentors, or other individuals with the intent to solicit an assessment regarding the accuracy, completeness, or plausibility of the information (Malterud et al., 2016). I shared my research findings with my dissertation committee and a counselor with 10 years of experience in SEL education so that they could evaluate the plausibility of my findings by scanning some of the raw data (see Malterud et al., 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which others can confirm the study's findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). When discussing confirmability, emphasis is placed on the researcher's neutrality and the study findings being rooted in and derived from the

data instead of personal predispositions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I established confirmability by engaging in reflexivity throughout the research process. Reflexivity is the researcher's awareness of how the research process influences them and how they influence the study (Malterud et al., 2016). I engaged in reflexivity by exploring personal beliefs and assumptions, recognized the study's limitations, examined potential effects, and maintained a journal to engage in self-reflection throughout the research process (see Malterud et al., 2016).

Ethical Procedures

Many organizations have instituted a code of ethics or policies for researchers. Still, actual ethical practice comes down to the values and ethics of the individual researcher (Malterud et al., 2016). Malterud et al. (2016) argued that researchers should engage in self-reflection regarding their values and ethics and think about potential ethical issues that may arise when conducting qualitative research. While engaging in self-reflection, I thought about issues related to the treatment of human participants and the management of data in my study.

I was concerned with keeping the identity of participants who consented to be a part of this study confidential. School leadership may have had an idea who chose to participate in the study as they were aware that I was conducting research at the school site and that the focus of the study is on K-2 educators. I avoided sending messages using the district-wide email platform (except for the initial invitation email). Instead, I used the participants' personal email addresses and phone numbers to communicate with them..

I adhered to specific procedures to alleviate any concerns related to the research activities. I used participants' personal email addresses when recruiting and engaging in the research process to avoid the possibility that confidential information exchanged between the participants and myself being made public at the request of a school administrator or other school official. During the recruitment and research process, the participants were made aware and reminded that they could exit the study at any time without penalty or prejudice and with the assurance that I would maintain their confidentiality and that their information would remain private. Potential participants who refused to participate were thanked for their time and excluded from the study.

To further protect the confidentiality of participants, I implemented strategies to safeguard the data. I assigned each participant a unique code and a pseudonym to protect their identity. I stored all interview data in a password protected folder on a computer in my home office so that I could be the only person who has access to it. The data will be kept in the secure folder and deleted 5 years after completion of the study to minimize future risks to confidentiality.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I provided a full description of the research methods used in this study. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support they need to implement SEL programming. Therefore, the use of a basic qualitative research design was appropriate as it allowed me to understand how teachers make sense of and interpret their experiences throughout SEL program implementation (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used

purposeful sampling in this study as this type of sampling allowed me to choose participants that matched the study criteria (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I contacted the participants through text messages or a phone call to obtain their personal email addresses used in the recruitment process. I emailed the participants a detailed letter so that they could provide informed consent. After I received consent, the teachers participated in an online interview, which was audio recorded. I obtained data from the semistructured interviews, which I analyzed using a combination of initial and provisional coding. I shared my findings with the participants so they could have an opportunity to confirm, correct, or challenge the data and findings. To maintain trustworthiness throughout the study, I used member checks and peer debriefing, identified discrepant data, utilized a typical population sample, and engaged in reflexivity throughout the research process. I maintained the confidentiality of participants, and kept the data secure throughout the study and after the conclusion of the research process. In Chapter 4, I will provide information regarding the setting of this study, data collection and analysis, results of the study, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support they need to implement SEL programming. Two RQs guided this study:

- RQ1: What are the perspectives of K-2 educators regarding their preparation for SEL program implementation?
- RQ2: What are the perspectives of K-2 educators regarding the support they needed for SEL program implementation?

In this chapter, I describe the study's setting and discuss how I collected the data. Chapter 4 also includes sections that address codes, themes, and trends that emerged from the data during data analysis, as well as a discussion of the results. The chapter ends with a discussion of evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

I conducted this study at an elementary school in a southeastern state. Five K-2 teachers who engaged in an initial year of SEL program implementation agreed to participate in this study. During the data collection phase, teachers experienced additional challenges due to COVID-19. As a result of the pandemic, the school system faced budget cuts and a shortened school calendar; educators took on extra workloads, teaching both digitally and traditionally. The implementation of SEL programming during the first year was not affected by the pandemic.

I emailed the invitation to participate in this study in September 2020 to the potential participants' work email addresses. Five K-2 teachers responded to the email by

sending a text message expressing interest and consented to participate in the study after reading a detailed consent form. All participants were K-2 teachers who engaged in an initial year of SEL program implementation. The consent form indicated the study's criteria, and by replying with "I consent," the participants and verified that they met the study criteria. Participant 1 had a master's degree and was a second-grade teacher with 16 years of experience. Participant 2 had a bachelor's degree and was a kindergarten teacher with 7 years of experience. Participant 3 had a master's degree was a second-grade teacher with 24 years of experience. Participant 4 had a master's degree and was a second-grade teacher with 2 years of experience. Participant 5 had a bachelor's degree and was a second-grade teacher with 7 years of experience.

Data Collection

I conducted semistructured interviews with five educators who participated in an initial year of SEL program implementation to collect data. After receiving consent from each participant, I assigned a participant number to each to ensure confidentiality and privacy. Each participant engaged in one ZOOM interview that lasted at least 45 minutes; one teacher participated in a follow-up interview lasting approximately 10 minutes. I scheduled the follow-up interview to gather additional information to explore a discrepancy identified in the data analysis process. I encouraged the participants to schedule the interview during a time that would allow them to participate in the ZOOM meeting from the comfort of their own homes. In doing so, I protected the identity of individuals involved, as the only people who knew that the interview was being

conducted were myself, the participant, and those the participant chose to have in their home.

Before each interview began, I made sure that the Otter app was recording correctly, and the computer audio was sufficiently loud enough for the Otter app to record and transcribe the interview. At the start of each interview, I reviewed pertinent parts of the consent form with the participant and expressed my sincere appreciation for their willingness to take part in the study. I thanked them for the effort, dedication, and time they had taken to implement SEL programming and explained the purpose of the study. I reminded the participants that the interview would be audio recorded and explained the format of the interview. During the interviews, I followed the interview protocol and used follow-up questions to ensure I obtained sufficient information from each interview. After I completed each interview, I documented my observations and thoughts in a reflective journal. Finally, I read each transcript and listened to the audio recordings to correct grammatical errors in the transcripts autogenerated by Otter. There were no variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3. I did not encounter any unusual circumstances in data collection.

Data Analysis

I used both initial and provisional coding to engage in inductive and deductive analysis to identify codes and themes throughout data obtained from semistructured interviews. Because I was the sole researcher, I familiarized myself with the data by reading each transcript and listening to the audio recordings several times. To keep organized throughout the coding process, I used NVivo to code each transcript.

Following the deductive analysis during the first cycle of coding, I used provisional coding to identify data that fit the predetermined codes derived from the PIT theory (see Appendix B for an example of provisionally coded data). I used the following list of provisional codes: *program deliverers, training amount, preparation amount, organizational structure, administrative support, resources, staff, and support*. Utilizing inductive analysis during the first cycle of coding, I used initial coding to identify new codes for the data that may not fit with the established provisional codes. I compared and contrasted phrases, individual words, and parts of the text to identify initial codes. Codes that I found in common across most of the transcripts included, *lack of follow-up, lack of training, lack of support, lack of preparation, request for additional support, lack of check-in, requests for preparation, request for response training, request for meetings, request for point of contact, and request for knowledgeable staff*.

During the second cycle of coding, I used code mapping to record coding process iterations. I analyzed the list of codes generated during the first cycle and reorganized them into categories and subcategories by examining how they related to one another (see Saldaña, 2013). I organized coded excerpts from each interview transcript into groups to indicate similarities in the codes. For example, I sorted some of the codes into the groups *support* and *preparation*. Upon completion of the second step of the analysis process, I reread each transcript and looked at all the coded data, paying attention to patterns in words, codes, and phrases, which allowed me to transform the raw data into themes representative of teachers' perspectives regarding the preparation and support they need to implement SEL programming (see Appendix C for an example of the progression of

data to theme). I chose to present the themes by RQ when discussing the study's findings. I also found discrepant data that challenged the overall findings of the study. I provide information on how I explored this discrepancy in this chapter in the section on credibility later in this chapter.

Results

The RQs of the study were answered through careful examination of the participants' responses and through coding the data. I analyzed the provisional and initial codes to establish themes for each RQ. This section is organized by the two RQs to present the identified themes. The RQs for this study are:

- RQ 1: What are the perspectives of K-2 educators regarding their preparation for SEL program implementation?
- RQ 2: What are the perspectives of K-2 educators regarding the support they needed for SEL program implementation?

The themes for the first RQ include: (a) teachers need targeted and thorough training by knowledgeable professionals who have experience in SEL, (b) the minimum training that was offered for implementation was inadequate, and educators need more support from administration or program deliverers so that teachers can be adequately prepared. The themes for the second research question are: (a) teachers need monthly check-ins or SEL professional learning community (PLC) meetings, and (b) educators need support from an individual who is knowledgeable about SEL to serve as a point of contact.

Research Question 1 Theme 1: Thorough Training

According to the perspectives shared by the teachers interviewed in this study, there is a desire for more thorough training conducted by knowledgeable staff who have experience or expertise in SEL. Participant 3 described how teachers should be given more thorough and specific training by individuals who have experience:

I do think that we should have much more specific training than we do. . . . I also went to a . . . training. . . . That kind of training, to me, makes a huge difference. . . . I think that it [training] usually comes [*sic*] better if it is from . . . someone, for instance, like . . . who you know has been there and done that, or from a fellow teacher who has used something in her classroom, and it has been proven—she knows it works. She understands it. It should come from someone who has a lot of experience. . . . I really think teachers need to be more thoroughly trained on the child and how their brain develops.

Participant 2 articulated a need for thorough training regarding how to respond to students as they express emotions in the classroom by professionals with proper training:

As far as to prepare us to implement it to our kids, I would just say more training . . . more background knowledge of things that we needed to be prepared for . . . I would say like to kind of prepare us more of [*sic*] how to react to the kids' reactions. . . . What do we expect them to say in the response of how they're feeling and those types of things? . . . How are we supposed to react to when they tell us that they are sad or have problems?

Participant 1 shared a need for more training regarding the vocabulary used in lessons in previous grade levels and an opportunity during training to ask someone with program experience to share what they think are the most important parts of a lesson:

I think it would have been nice for someone to sort of, I mean, it wouldn't need to be a long training but just walk us through some of the terminology being used.

We didn't get to see previous lessons . . . [from] previous years, so I think our kids and ourselves missed out on some of those terms, and we sort of had to learn those on our own. . . . If you had . . . someone who knew the program . . .

someone you could go to and say, "What's the most important part?"

Participant 4 expressed a need for more in-depth training regarding how teachers can help students with specific social and emotional situations that arise in the classroom by individuals with appropriate training and experience with SEL programming:

I think when we're doing preplanning, like, to have, like, a school counselor or psychiatrist or somebody that is trained in dealing with the social-emotional program will help us be better prepared to deal with [students' social-emotional needs]. . . . So, to actually have something to help support the teachers and to teach them how to deal with the social and emotional things. We had the emotional poverty study, which helped, but it was teachers teaching it, not someone that was really trained in it. So, to have like a more in-depth conversations about how teachers can deal with different things that arise would help. Then, someone from the program that actually wrote the program or works

with the program that we use to come in and train us on how to do the program [and this] would prepare us to do it.

Participant 5 noted the need for more thorough training from staff who have expertise in SEL in the form of response training, to establish why SEL programming is needed, and the opportunity to watch model SEL lessons:

I think we need training from a counselor; they would have, I would think, the most expertise in this area. . . someone that gives more background into what an SEL program is. . . . Explain what that is. “Why do you think it's important? Why do we need to do it?” Give us some ideas or ways to approach those situations that come up; suggestions of how to help students if they are dealing with frustration or dealing with loneliness, those kind of things. . . . I'd say to see model lessons taught or how to do it instead of just saying, “Here's your box. Hop to it!”

The participants indicated that they can be prepared for SEL program implementation by receiving more thorough training conducted by knowledgeable staff who have experience or expertise in SEL.

Research Question 1 Theme 2: Minimum Training With No Follow-Up

According to the perspectives shared in the interviews by the teachers, the minimum training offered for implementation was inadequate. There was also a desire for more support from administration or program deliverers so that teachers can be adequately prepared. Participant 1 shared that teachers were provided materials without

any training or adequate preparation. Participant 1 offered the suggestion that the purpose and importance of SEL program implementation should be explained to teachers:

We weren't given any training. We were just given materials. . . . The preparation was very limited. . . . Let us know that they feel it's just as important as teaching math or reading. . . . They should also kind of set the standard for the teacher; . . . let the teachers know this isn't just something new for this year. . . . Honestly, I think even just making it seem like it's important and not just a side note . . . saying, "Hey, this is why it's important." This is, you know, "Give us a reason, a purpose."

Participant 2 expressed that educators had not received any preparation or specific training for SEL program implementation. Furthermore, program deliverers did not follow-up with teachers to ask if they needed more support to prepare them to teach more SEL lessons in their classrooms:

I wouldn't really say we had any preparation. They just kind of said, you know, "We're gonna start SEL lessons" and to read up about it. Kind of on your own but no formal training. . . . I really wouldn't say there was any specific training because once we started the program and reading those lessons, there really wasn't even any follow-up of how they were going, or was it helping our kids, you know, or "What do you need help with?" It was nothing like that.

Participants 3, 4 and 5 shared similar sentiments when they expressed that they did not receive any preparation or adequate training for SEL program implementation.

Participant 3 stated, "We really did not have any preparation. . . . We really didn't

have any specific training unless you could call that book study specific. . . . They threw us in the deep end and told us to swim.”

Participant 4 had a similar response:

I had the emotional poverty lessons and, like, the book lesson . . . but it wasn't enough to help me adequately deal with different behaviors and situations that came up with some of my students. . . . So, I think, like more support on helping the teachers deal with it would be great. . . . I didn't have any training besides the book study.

Participant 5 echoed the responses of other participants when she shared: “We had, like, a faculty meeting that introduced the program, and that was kind of it.”

Although most participants expressed there was no follow up in the form of someone checking in with them and a lack of support throughout the implementation process, one participant shared that she felt supported by administrators and program deliverers in this way:

Our administration is supportive—our counselor, our instructional coach, our principal—they are always checking in with us to see how we are. They've always been there so we're able to feel comfortable implementing [the program] even without the proper training.

The discrepancy was explored by scheduling a follow-up interview.

Research Question 2 Theme 1: Monthly Check-Ins and Professional Learning

Community Meetings

The participants expressed a desire for monthly check-ins or SEL PLC meetings. Participant 4 noted that they wanted monthly meetings, similar to grade-level PLCs, where teachers could give implementation feedback and have a chance for someone to follow-up with them to check if teachers needed any support or additional training:

I think just coming in and having grade-level PLCs [would be useful] if we would talk about how well we are implementing SEL programming. Covering any concerns that we have—like how effective did we think the program actually was. We didn't have, like, there was no follow-up about how well the program—how we feel about the program. Like we weren't able to say, “Okay, we think it's really working,” or “We think it's a great program,” or “This program is not really working; it needs to be geared more towards this.” So, I think, like just a follow-up would be great. . . . So, just like a follow-up would have been like once a month. “How's it going? Do you need any additional resources? Do you need any additional training? Do you think it's an effective program?” I think we've been great.

Participant 3 had views similar to Participant 4 regarding PLC meetings:

I think that they probably need, throughout the year, kind of like the way we have our PLCs. Maybe one focused on SEL lessons and how are they going, “What's coming up when you discuss it. The lessons that you've taught so far—are there some that just seemed like they weren't that great? Maybe you shouldn't do them

the next year,” or “Is there something that you haven't talked about so far that you think should have already been addressed?”

Participant 1 reiterated the previous participants' thoughts:

I think when it comes—support would be better in the sense of just a regular check-in. It doesn't have to be often. It might be once a month, and like I said, add it to a meeting and say, “Okay, we're checking in, you know. Remember so and so is here to help you if you need it.” If you come up with a concern, you know, something pops up because you never know what they're gonna say. “Do you need extra assistance?” Just something. Just talking about it. It just seemed like here it is, and then the rest of the year it was like nothing.

Participant 2 shared similar sentiments regarding the need for meeting opportunities to gather new insights on how to use the SEL program to help students in the classroom:

“[In regard to training, we should] have short meetings to have key points of things that we can do in the classroom to help; . . . maybe more specifically towards this program.”

The participants indicated that educators can be supported throughout SEL program implementation by having monthly check-ins and PLC meetings. Teachers shared that meetings and PLCs would help them gather insight from others and have an opportunity to provide feedback or get more support.

Research Question 2 Theme 2: Knowledgeable Point of Contact

The participants expressed a desire for support from an individual knowledgeable about SEL to serve as a point of contact. Participant 3 expressed a need for a point of

contact that teachers could go to for advice and support in handling situations that arise during SEL lessons:

I think that you need to have a contact person . . . to say in our class discussion during this SEL lesson, this topic came up. “How should I handle this?” Or, “I noticed this child said, ‘x y and z.’” I think it needs to be looked into further, which some of those things would go to the counselor, but sometimes you're just not quite sure if it's crossed the line to the counselors or not.

Participant 1 stated a need for a knowledgeable point of contact to serve as an outlet to turn to when teachers need more support or guidance:

An outlet to say, “Hey, this is what I see. What do you want me to do now? Should I do anything? Should I be making a parent contact? Is this a guidance counselor thing?” You know what I mean. I don't, I don't want to sit there for, I hate to be ugly, a separate training on the basics. I'm saying, in addition to how to do it, just what's the extra stuff I might need to be doing? If something big comes up socially and emotionally. . . . Knowing that someone is there with the information and the knowledge, more, more in-depth knowledge so if we see something would help.

Participant 4 requested a professional, such as a counselor, to serve as a point of contact to help teachers better serve students before, during, and after SEL program implementation:

I think that if we would sit down and have a session with our school counselor, since she has been trained to deal with different types of behaviors, this problem,

not this, like, bad behavior, but like, emotional, like dealing with people from different cultures. They come from different backgrounds, or children that might be having a hard time at home. They also just know how we can help our students. They know how to deal with what the student says in a classroom that might have these type of behaviors. So, I think that that will help us be prepared to implement the program, when we implement the program, and also throughout the day when we're not actually doing the program, we'll have those skills to deal with those students.

The participants indicated that educators could be supported throughout SEL program implementation by having support from an individual knowledgeable about SEL to serve as a point of contact.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I followed the guidelines provided by Walden University's Institutional Review Board and the research recommendations from the literature shared in Chapter 3 to ensure that I maintained quality criteria and integrity in this study (see Malterud et al., 2016). I applied practices that established credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in this study to ensure that I executed my research with rigor and trustworthiness.

Credibility

Credibility is the extent to which the findings match reality (Malterud et al., 2016). I used two strategies to establish credibility: member checks and looking for discrepant data. During the member checking process, I shared a one-page summary of

my findings along with a copy of supporting data gathered from interviews with participants. I did not need to revise my findings as all participants confirmed them and did not submit corrections or challenges.

In addition to member checks, I also looked for discrepant data. While analyzing the data, I found a response by one participant that challenged the overall study findings. The participant shared that they felt supported by the administration because they are constantly checking in on teachers to see how they are doing. The rest of the participants indicated that they did not feel supported throughout the implementation process. When asked to provide more information about the statement related to the perception of support regarding implementation, the participant shared that they experienced an overall sense of support in the school building. Administrators, they explained, seemed concerned with how teachers felt and how they are doing, not that there was adequate support throughout the SEL implementation process.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree that the results of a study can be generalized or applied to other contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher must provide a rich description so that a potential user of the results can make an informed judgment regarding transferability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I established transferability by providing a detailed description of the participants, setting, sample size, demographics, research process, and findings (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Malterud et al., 2016). I shared a detailed description of participants to allow the reader to determine if the study is transferable to their situation. The participants in my study match the typical

population of early childhood and secondary teachers across the nation as the percentage distribution of teachers by race for my study is 80% Caucasian and 20% African American compared to the national percentage distribution of 80% Caucasian and 20% African American, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, or two or more races (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Utilizing a modal sample representing the typical population of teachers in the United States helped me establish this study's transferability (see Malterud et al., 2016).

Dependability

When discussing dependability, one focuses on the consistency and credibility of the data and findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Malterud et al., 2016). I demonstrated dependability in my study by having the participants evaluate the study's data and findings, having a peer review of the findings, and by keeping accurate records (see Malterud et al., 2016). Korstjens and Moser (2018) noted that dependability includes the participants' evaluation of a study's findings as supported by the data. I followed Korstjens and Moser's recommendation to strengthen dependability by sharing the study findings and raw data with participants and asked them to complete an evaluation to determine if the findings needed to be corrected, supplemented, or if they were acceptable as presented. All participants confirmed that the raw data and study findings were consistent, acceptable, and accurate. I also had a peer, a counselor with 10 years of experience in SEL education, review the summary of findings. I bolstered dependability in my study by ensuring that the data is credible, as I have kept careful records of audio recordings, transcripts, notes, and journal entries.

Confirmability

When discussing confirmability, emphasis is placed on the researcher's neutrality and study findings that are rooted in and derived from the data instead of personal predispositions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I used strategies to ensure confirmability, such as reflexivity; I took reflective notes of my observations, assumptions, and impressions throughout the data collection process. I conducted member checks to ensure that the findings resonated with the participants' perspectives and were accurate. The raw data (the audio recordings and transcripts) from the interviews will be archived and preserved for 5 years as required by Walden University's Institutional Review Board to strengthen confirmability.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented themes that served as answers to each RQ. Regarding preparation for SEL program implementation, the K-2 educators in this study expressed a desire for more thorough training conducted by knowledgeable staff who have experience or expertise in SEL. The participants also shared that the minimum training offered for implementation was inadequate and there is a need for more support from administration or program deliverers so that they can be adequately prepared. Regarding the support K-2 educators needed for SEL program implementation, they noted the need for monthly check-ins, SEL PLC meetings, and support from an individual knowledgeable about SEL to serve as a point of contact. In the next chapter, I discuss the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, and implications of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support they need to implement SEL programming. This study could potentially fill the gap in practice regarding implementation of SEL programming concerning what is known about the perspectives of teachers and what they need to be prepared for and supported during SEL program implementation. I conducted interviews with educators to obtain their perspectives and coded the data. I reported the findings, discussing the themes that emerged. The themes for the first RQ included (a) teachers need targeted and thorough training by knowledgeable professionals who have experience in SEL, (b) the minimum training that was offered for implementation was inadequate, and educators need more support from administration or program deliverers so that teachers can be adequately prepared. The themes for the second RQ are: (a) teachers need monthly check-ins or SEL PLC meetings, and (b) educators need support from an individual who is knowledgeable about SEL to serve as a point of contact.

Interpretation of the Findings

Interview data provided answers to the two RQs used in this study. I reported the answers to the RQs as overarching themes. These themes aligned with the peer-reviewed literature on SEL program implementation and findings from prior research. In this section, I present an interpretation of this study's findings, describing the ways that they connect to, confirm, and extend what has been found in the existing literature.

Research Question 1 Theme 1: Thorough Training

A need for targeted and thorough training was a theme identified in this study. The findings indicate that the participants wanted more thorough training conducted by knowledgeable staff that have experience or expertise in SEL so they can be better prepared to be successful during SEL program implementation. Findings from the related literature and several prior studies confirm that the level of training and preparation a teacher possesses influences the success of SEL program implementation (Domitrovich et al., 2019; Hemmeter et al., 2016; Low et al., 2016; Poulou, 2017; Poulou et al., 2018; Zinsser et al., 2015). Offering teachers the opportunity to gain knowledge and equipping them to be successful during implementation may lead them to feel more comfortable and engage in higher levels of program implementation (Hemmeter et al., 2016). Teachers who are trained and possess knowledge regarding children's emotions are better able to support their SEL during implementation (Zinsser et al., 2015).

The findings revealed that teachers in this study thought that specific and targeted training by an experienced professional was an effective way to help them be prepared to be successful during SEL program implementation. The findings indicated that study participants wanted training related to children's emotions and how to respond to these in the classroom. The findings confirm information found in existing literature. Participants in Norman and Jamieson's (2015) study expressed a strong desire for training regarding how to respond to students and provide counsel to them when they demonstrated intense emotions or shared information about what was happening in their lives. Findings from this current study also revealed that the participants thought effective training should

include helping teachers understand new terminology and administrators sharing the importance of SEL programming. This confirms findings from the study by Anyon et al. (2016) in which the researchers discovered that teachers were more invested in the SEL implementation process and likely to teach SEL lessons when administrators shared the importance of SEL programming with them.

Research Question 1 Theme 2: Minimum Training With No Follow-Up

The need for support and follow-up from program deliverers was a theme identified in this study. The participants' responses indicated that support from administration or program leaders in the form of following up with them as well as laying a foundation for the importance of SEL program implementation are important parts of SEL program implementation that can help teachers be adequately prepared and supported. Findings from the literature and prior studies confirm that support from administrators and program deliverers are important for overall SEL program implementation success (Anyon et al., 2016; Domitrovich et al., 2019; Low et al., 2016). When administrators show that they are invested in SEL programming and have shared with staff how important SEL programming is, teachers are more likely to buy-in to the implementation process and teach more SEL lessons (Anyon et al., 2016). The participants' responses in this study echoed the findings of Anyon et al. (2016), as they stated it would have been helpful if administrators or program leaders shared the importance of SEL programming with the staff and provided reasons or a purpose for implementation.

Teachers in this study noted that support from program leaders by following up would have positively affected SEL program implementation. This would have given these educators the opportunity to share their thoughts regarding the assistance they needed to be successful, if the SEL program was truly benefiting students, or recommendations for changes in programming. This lack of support and follow up left the participants feeling that program leaders “threw [them] in the deep end and told us to swim” (Participant 3). Collie et al. also found that the perception of a lack of support from school leadership and administrators may contribute more to teacher stress during the implementation process than teachers’ comfort level with SEL.

Research Question 2 Theme 1: Monthly Check-Ins and Professional Learning Community Meetings

A need for monthly check-ins or PLC meetings was a theme identified in this study. The findings indicated that an effective way to support teachers throughout the implementation process would be to have monthly check-ins or SEL PLC meetings so that educators can gather insight from others and have an occasion to provide feedback or receive additional support. The findings from my study align with those in a study by Humphries et al. (2018) in which the researchers found that teachers wanted to learn from knowledgeable program leaders who supported them in the implementation process and provided them with opportunities to impart their knowledge and expertise. The participants in my study expressed a desire to have opportunities in monthly meetings to ask for resources, acquire additional strategies to help students during SEL lessons, and learn from the experiences of program leaders.

Research Question 2 Theme 2: Knowledgeable Point of Contact

A desire for a point of contact to provide support throughout SEL program implementation was the last theme identified in this study. Findings demonstrated that the participants need support from a knowledgeable and experienced staff member who can serve as a point of contact to offer advice, secure resources, or provide answers to questions that they have so they can be best supported to be successful during SEL program implementation. Findings from related literature and prior studies confirm that offering teachers support from knowledgeable and experienced staff members is a critical factor in successful implementation (Humphries et al., 2018; Norman & Jamieson, 2015). Offering support from knowledgeable program leaders has been found to help teachers feel more comfortable and engage in higher levels of program implementation (Hemmeter et al., 2016).

Limitations of the Study

Possible limitations to this research study include a small sample size, my role as a partial inside researcher; and personal bias. Purposeful sampling constrained the study as well as the implementation of a strategy to control participant bias, which resulted in a small sample size. I eliminated one teacher from the potential participant pool as I had formed a close relationship with them outside of school. Out of the remaining eight participants, only five teachers committed to participate in the study. Although data saturation was reached, the number of teachers who participated in the study could have limited the interpretation of the findings.

As the sole researcher, I was responsible for collecting, coding, analyzing, and interpreting the data. I am a partial insider researcher, which means that I am a teacher at the school that the study took place, but I am removed from the community that was the focus of the current study (see Fleming, 2018). While I did not make any decisions that influenced the implementation of the SEL program at the study site or hold any power over the teachers who participated in this study, I have established professional relationships with all participants. Consequently, this may have influenced the participants' responses. However, partial insider research had advantages to help overcome limitations. As an insider, I had access to participants who were willing to offer comprehensive information to someone who understood their practice and had familiarity with the culture of the school, which provided for a better interpretation of the data (see Greene, 2014).

I followed ethical guidelines, Walden University's Institutional Review Board recommendations, and used several methods to mitigate my bias and personal influence in the study. I engaged in debriefing as I shared elements of my study with others, such as my dissertation committee and coach, to help me think critically about the research experience and reflect on thoughts or actions that may have affected my judgement (see Greene, 2014). I also kept a detailed journal in which I maintained notes about any potential biases that arose on behalf of myself or participants, recorded field notes about interactions with participants, and engaged in self-reflection. I also participated in reflexivity as I constantly evaluated the relationship I had with each participant while maintaining appropriate social and emotional distance (see Greene, 2014). Although I

employed these strategies, there is always a possibility that personal assumptions, bias, or experiences could have influenced the results of the study, thus creating another limitation to the study.

Recommendations

I recommend that this study be replicated in other elementary school settings in different parts of the United States to further understand the perspectives of K-2 educators regarding the preparation and support they need to implement SEL programming. Broadening the geographical region would allow for the addition of more perspectives from teachers with characteristics that differ from those in the current study. Perspectives regarding preparation and support may be different in schools with more diversity among staff members. The study could also be replicated in elementary schools that serve populations of students from a different demographic or economic background than the current study to determine whether the perspectives of teachers would be similar or vary.

Implications

This study contributes to the field of early childhood education by illuminating the voices of educators—allowing them to share ways that they were underprepared and undersupported to deliver SEL programming. This study may promote positive social change by providing professionals who implement SEL training with the perspectives of educators. The implications for practice based on the findings concerning K-2 educators' perspectives regarding the preparation and support they need to implement SEL programming include the following:

- Teachers need experienced professionals to serve as a point of contact prior to and during SEL program implementation so they can offer support, share best practices, and answer questions teachers may have.
- Educators need training that is ongoing, program specific, thorough, offers opportunities for teachers to ask questions, and led by knowledgeable staff who have experience or expertise in SEL.
- Teachers need monthly check-ins or SEL PLC meetings so they can receive support from experienced professionals, ask questions, express concerns, gather tips from other educators, and provide an opportunity for program leaders to follow-up with teachers throughout the SEL program implementation process.

Preparing and supporting educators through these actions may help leaders modify training and support systems to better prepare and support teachers, which in turn increases the likelihood that teachers will be equipped to improve the SEL competencies of students (Humphries et al., 2018). Ultimately, the positive social change that this study may create benefits the students who are engaged in the SEL programming and provides ways that professionals can support and prepare teachers who are implementing these programs.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the field of education by helping fill the gap in practice regarding implementation of SEL programming related to what is known about the perspectives of teachers concerning what they need to be prepared for and supported

during SEL program implementation. Providing educators with the opportunity to share their perspectives has given me the opportunity to present ways that educators can be supported and prepared prior to and during SEL program implementation, which contributes to potential positive social change. The teachers in this study indicated that they need (a) ongoing and specific training; (b) support from an experienced SEL professional, who can serve as a point of contact; (c) monthly opportunities to meet with SEL professionals and other teachers to gather new insights and ask questions; and (d) program deliverers who will check-in and follow up with teachers throughout SEL program implementation. The insight gained from the participating teachers in this study can be used by SEL program leaders to better prepare and support teachers by modifying training and support systems designed to help educators. By helping educators be prepared and supported for SEL program implementation, they can achieve success and impart the benefits of SEL programming to the students they serve.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Teacher Interview Protocol

Participant Pseudonym: _____

Grade Level: _____

Interviewer: _____

Prior to the interview, I will send an email to participants to inform or remind them that:

- the interview will be recorded
- the information and data obtained from participants will be confidential
- the confidentiality of participants will be upheld throughout the duration and after the completion of the study
- they may choose to stop the interview at any time and or no longer participate without any repercussions

A. Introduction

- Thank you so much for volunteering to take part in this study and speak with me today. I appreciate all the hard work you have put in this year to meet the SEL needs of the students in your classroom. I know how much work it takes to start a new program, and I commend you for your dedication and the effort you have put in this school year!
- My research study focuses on teachers' perspectives of the preparation and support they need for SEL program implementation. My goal is to learn more about what resources, training, or other support educators need so that they can be prepared to implement SEL programs. Also, I am trying to learn about how teachers can be supported throughout program implementation.

B. Participant's Background

How long have you been teaching ____ grade?

How many years of teaching experience do you have?

What is your highest degree?

C. Interview Questions

RQ 1: What are the perspectives of K-2 educators regarding their preparation for SEL program implementation?

I would like to start off the interview by asking you questions regarding the preparation of teachers before the implementation of SEL programming in your classroom.

1. What type of pre-preparation did the school or district offer teachers prior to SEL training and implementation? [for example: teaching meetings or an introduction to SEL programming session] (preparation amount)

Prompt:

- Who conducted these meetings? (program deliverers)
2. What specific training or professional development was offered to you to prepare you for SEL program implementation? (training amount)

Prompts:

- Who delivered the training or professional development? (program deliverers)
- What were the qualifications of the individuals who delivered the training or professional development? (program deliverers)
- How long before implementation were these trainings offered? (How long did this last? If multiple events, over what time frame? (administrative support, organizational structure, preparation amount, resources, training amount)

3. What other types of training or resources were offered to teachers to equip them to implement SEL programming in their classrooms? (administrative support, organizational structure, preparation amount, resources, training amount)
4. What specific training or professional development should be provided to teachers to properly prepare them for SEL program implementation? (administrative support, preparation amount, resources, support climate, training amount)

Prompts:

- Who should deliver this training or professional development? (program deliverers)
 - How long before implementation should this training or professional development be offered? (preparation amount)
 - How frequently should educators be offered training or professional development before implementation to prepare them for SEL program implementation? (training amount)
5. What resources were you given to prepare you for SEL program implementation? (resources)
 6. What resources should be provided to teachers to properly prepare them for SEL program implementation? (resources, preparation amount)

Prompts:

- When does a teacher need these resources? (resources, organization structure)
 - Why does a teacher need these resources? (administrative supports, climate of support, resources)
7. What type of support did members of your school's organizational staff structure offer teachers prior to SEL program implementation? (administrative support, climate of support, organizational structure)
 8. What type of support do you think should be provided to teachers to properly prepare them for SEL program implementation? (administrative support, climate of support, organizational structure)

Prompts:

- When does a teacher need access to these supports?
- Why does a teacher need these supports?
- Which staff members should be available to support teachers in properly preparing them for SEL program implementation? (climate of support, staff, support)

RQ2: What are the perspectives of K-2 educators regarding the support they needed for SEL program implementation?

9. How did the school or district support teachers as they implemented SEL programming in their classrooms? (organizational structure, staff, support climate)

Prompts:

- What contributed to your feeling of support? (administrative support, organizational structure, staff, support climate)
- How did school leaders or other personnel make you feel supported?

10. What resources do you think a teacher needs to have access to feel supported they implemented SEL programming in their classrooms? (organizational structure, support climate)

Prompts:

- When does a teacher need these resources?
- Why does a teacher need these resources?

11. What specific training or professional development should be provided to teachers to support them as they implement SEL programming in their classrooms? (support climate)

Prompts:

- When does a teacher need this training or professional development?
- What type of staff should be available to deliver this training or professional development? (organizational structure, program deliverer, staff)

12. How would you describe the climate of support for SEL program implementation at your school? (support climate)

13. What type of support do you think a teacher needs from an administrator during SEL program implementation? (administrative support)

Prompt:

- Why does a teacher need this support from an administrator?

(administrative support)

14. What type of staff were available to support teachers at your school as they implemented SEL programming in their classrooms? (organizational structure, program deliverer, staff)
15. What type of staff do you think should be available to support teachers as they implement SEL programming in their classrooms? (organizational structure, program deliverer, staff)

Prompts:

- Why does a teacher need access to these staff members?
16. Please describe how you think teachers could be supported most effectively as they implement SEL programming in their classrooms. (RQ2: administrative support, organizational structure, preparation amount, resources, staff, support, support climate, training amount)
17. Please describe what you think the ideal training or preparation program would look like to adequately prepare a teacher for SEL program implementation. (RQ1: administrative support, organizational structure, preparation amount, resources, staff, support, support climate, training amount)
18. What other information would you like to share with me about this topic?

D. Conclusion

- I have learned so much from you during this interview!
- I will send you a copy of the findings to review, along with a set of directions to follow. If I need to schedule a follow up call, I will send you an email to coordinate a date and time. The purpose of the follow up call is to clarify information and obtain more information to supplement incomplete pieces of data.
- Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me. I sincerely appreciate it!

Appendix B: Provisional Coding Example

Provisional code	Participant code	Interview data excerpt
Administrative support	I1	“There was really no support, just reminders. You need to be doing this program once--I think we did it once or twice a week. Just remember to do it.”
Training amount	I4	“I didn't have any training besides the ones that the teacher's did [the book study].”
Training amount	I3	“Really nothing specific. Unless you could call that book study specific.”
Preparation amount	I2	“I wouldn't really say we had any preparation.”

Appendix C: Moving From Codes to Themes Example

