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Approaches School Leaders Employ Regarding Students Who Experience Socioemotional Crises

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Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Ronald Stephen Gorney

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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2021

Abstract

Approaches School Leaders Employ Regarding Students Who Experience
Socioemotional Crises

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Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

Many students in the local school district in a northeastern state suffer from socioemotional challenges that negatively influence their academic success. In the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study, researchers found negative socioemotional outcomes resulting from ACEs. Risk factors associated with ACEs, and the influence of ACEs on poor school outcomes form the framework of this project study. To determine measures school leaders take to meet the needs of students in socioemotional crisis, a sample of semi-structured interview participants was selected based upon their roles in addressing students in socioemotional crisis, also forming the basis of this basic qualitative study. The participant sample consisted of three elementary school principals, one junior high school principal, two elementary assistant principals, and two high school assistant principals. Also, Response to Intervention (RtI) meeting minutes, records examinations from school social worker entries in the district student databases, and intervention team meeting minutes served as data for qualitative records reviews. After thematic coding was completed, the need for a shared definition of socioemotional crisis emerged. Also, there is not a clear consensus in terms of strategies when approaching students suffering from a socioemotional crisis or meeting the needs of these students. In addition, inconsistencies in data storage practices were discovered during the records collection. This research project will help school leaders align interventions for students with socioemotional and behavioral disabilities and improve data storage practices helping to inform practice. The improved practices will help school leaders address the needs of students in socioemotional crisis more effectively and help promote positive social change within the educational community.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project study to every employee and volunteer in my school district who works tirelessly to meet the needs of students, who need the help the most.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my wife Jennifer for sticking by me through this six-year journey and making the sacrifice of our time precious time with one another. Without her love, support, and prayers, this lifetime goal never would have been accomplished.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Many students suffer from mental health challenges that can negatively influence their success academically, socially, and emotionally (King-White, 2019). McKelvey et al. (2018) said exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) brought on by factors associated with poverty at an early age adversely influenced child cognitive, socioemotional, and health outcomes in middle childhood. In addition, 14-20% of all students experience behavioral, mental, or emotional challenges at some point in their school career (Mitchell et al., 2019). Murphey and Sacks (2019) said school leaders should intentionally develop and foster universal school-wide strategies addressing the challenges brought on by ACEs. Some system-level strategies for school leaders addressing student needs around ACEs are promising; however, research regarding system-level strategies is sparse.

According to Paccione-Dyszlewski (2016), few students enter school buildings without some degree of trauma, and young children are particularly vulnerable to trauma that can result in dysregulation and difficulty in the classroom. According to the local school district in the northeast, socioemotional trauma and ACEs are interchangeable terms and events. In addition, according to the Director of Technology at the local school district, school social workers had 151 interventions during the 2017-2018 school year, 184 interventions during the 2018-2019 school year, and 199 interventions during the 2020-2021 year for students undergoing ACEs. Also, in this district, superintendent disciplinary hearings have increased steadily in spite of administrative interventions for

students with behavioral and emotional trauma. The problem for this study is instances of student socioemotional crisis are increasing and students continue to experience socioemotional crises after administrative interventions. Therefore, it is essential to identify approaches used by principals and assistant principals in this local school in the northeast to address the needs of students in a socioemotional crisis.

Rationale

The superintendent in the local school district in the northeast said lack of strategies for teaching students to self-regulate during crises is a growing concern of administrators and teachers in the district. According to this superintendent, the social and emotional needs of students in this district is a growing concern for teachers and administrators. In addition, superintendent disciplinary hearings have increased by 58% since the 2017-2018 school year resulting from students acting out because of their severe socioemotional needs. It is important to note students receiving superintendent hearing disciplines have a history of socioemotional crises.

The purpose of this qualitative project study is to explore approaches used by principals and assistant principals in a local school district in the northeast to address the needs of students in socioemotional crises. The results of this project study may lead to an alignment of strategies used by school personnel to address the needs of students with severe socioemotional needs. According to Traverso-Yepetz et al. (2017), researchers studying preventative measures involving adverse childhood experiences and their impact on children need to share research outcomes with frontline practitioners in schools. Locally, the results of this project study will lead to a more consistent system of

socioemotional supports for students impacted by physical, sexual, and emotional trauma during childhood.

Definition of Terms

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Events such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, family dysfunction, parental divorce, or effects associated with poverty which have adverse psychological or physical effects on children and their development (McKelvey et al., 2018).

Discipline Disposition: Record of consequences or punishments issued by principals which address violations of the district code of conduct.

Emotional Trauma: An extreme form of stress that affects the brain development of children (Plumb et al., 2016).

Socioemotional: A person's feelings around social relationships and self-regulation of feelings (Murphey & Sacks, 2019).

Student Disciplinary Hearing: This is a legal process whereby a student suspension occurs beyond 5 days for violating the district code of conduct.

Significance of the Study

This project study and evaluation report seeks to inform district education practice for students with socioemotional and behavioral difficulties by aligning approaches principals and assistant principals take when intervening during socioemotional crises. Vaughn (2015) said practitioners should better understand interventions they put in place to see better academic and behavioral outcomes for students. The project study and evaluation report will contribute locally to the alignment and application of interventions

for students with socioemotional and behavioral disabilities in a large school district. The results will also include original contributions in the field for other large school districts regarding alignment of services designed to provide support for students impacted by physical, sexual, and emotional trauma during childhood.

Research Question

The research question for this study was:

RQ1: What approaches do state and assistant principals in a local school district in the northeast use to address the needs of students during socioemotional crises?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework considered for this project study is ACEs. According to Felitti et al. (1998), children exposed to repeated ACEs exhibit anxiety, anger, and depression. These traumatic events include physical abuse, sexual abuse, family dysfunction, parental divorce, and effects associated with poverty. Crouch et al. (2019) said these traumatic events can have long-lasting effects that can last into adulthood.

The purpose of this study is to explore what measures principals and assistant principals use to address the needs of students in socioemotional crises resulting from ACEs. Iachini et al. (2016) said principal perspectives regarding nonacademic barriers related to student mental health are an essential part of school improvement efforts. Subsequent research related to ACEs helped guide the formation of the research instrument for this project study, and informed analysis of data resulting from

interactions between the instrument and principals and assistant principals who made up the study group.

Researching Topics in this Review of the Literature

To search for topics related to this review of the literature, I used search engines that are found in the Walden Library. The databases I chose to search were ERIC, SAGE Journals, and Education Source. Before entering specific terms in the search fields, I set publication dates from 2015 through 2020. Key terms I chose were: *socioemotional, trauma, trauma-informed care, schools, principal, programs, programming, ACEs, adverse childhood experiences, children, students, PBIS, teachers, and interventions*. Typically I used a blend of these terms. Terms entered in the three search fields yielded 15-30 sources from periodicals or academic journals. I scanned through titles that resulted from searches, and when I found particular sources which were relevant to the search, I opened the source and read the abstract to determine if the source was relevant to the topic.

Frequently, this yielded literature focused on emotional and behavioral disorders in school children. Also, many sources involving ACEs among adults and children resulted from the search. Studies on systems-based interventions involving socioemotional trauma were common, as were scholarly articles on local or classroom interventions for students exhibiting dysregulated behavior due to socioemotional trauma. A topic I did not expect to find but appeared in the literature was intergenerational aspects of ACEs. Besides literature on strategies or steps, principals' perspectives regarding ACEs or socioemotional trauma was sparse.

Intergenerational Transfer of ACEs

According to Sexton et al. (2018), the data revealed the burden ACEs have on families from an intergenerational standpoint. Cooke et al. (2019) said psychosocial factors during prenatal and postnatal periods contribute to the intergenerational transfer of ACEs. Sexton et al. (2018) said it was common for parents to describe how their own trauma history transfers to their children. However, there is a possible risk for intergenerational transfer of ACEs, which is preventable. Sexton et al. (2018) said children raised in safe, supportive, and nurturing environments have a reduced risk of negative health outcomes that are associated with ACEs. Also, parenting practices and familial strengths may help to break intergenerational transfer of ACEs.

ACEs and Children

For socioemotional health, any exposure to ACEs during the early stages of development leads to negative outcomes (McKelvey et al., 2018). One of these negative outcomes is emotional dysregulation (McKelvey et al., 2018). McKelvey et al. (2018) said toxic stress results from chronic exposure to extreme adversities in infancy and childhood, such as maltreatment, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, and exposure to violence. Plumb et al. (2016) said the impact of ACEs on children involves attachment difficulties, lack of trust, stress management, and inability to regulate emotions.

ACEs and Educational Outcomes

According to Cooke et al. (2019), children exposed to ACEs can experience complications like poor school readiness and low academic achievement. Murphey and

Sacks (2019) said ACEs can cause toxic levels of stress that negatively affect school performance for children. Economic hardship and parental divorce are the most common ACEs. Murphey and Sacks said 45% of all children have suffered at least one ACE. Plumb et al. (2016) said children who experience complex trauma are not able to reach their full academic potential. For educators and other practitioners, supporting student mental health needs and reducing practices that may retraumatize students is important (Murphey & Sacks, 2019).

Educational Interventions and Socioemotional Trauma in Students

School-based interventions may help in terms of addressing ACEs via positive coping skills and support for students and teachers (Plumb et al., 2016). Interest in understanding and treating ACEs is growing, leading to the development of trauma-informed care or trauma-informed education practices. Trauma-informed care involves interactions with children that acknowledge trauma history for the child and responses to trauma via practices and policies designed to prevent retraumatization (Murphey & Sacks, 2019). A majority of children in the United States have experienced ACEs, and making trauma-informed practices the norm should be a reasonable and pragmatic step (Plumb et al., 2016). Plumb et al. (2016) said trauma-informed practices in schools allow students with ACEs a more adequate level of support and increased access to educational opportunities.

Frydman and Mayor (2017) said there is a need to mitigate the impact of social, emotional, and cognitive consequences for developmental milestones associated with socioemotional trauma. McCurdy et al. (2016) said school-wide positive behavioral

interventions and supports (PBIS) is a systems-level approach designed to address behaviors across the school.

Hirsch et al. (2018) said there were three instructional strategies that increase engagement in mathematics instruction: opportunities to respond, a token economy, and self-monitoring. Griffin et al. (2017) said maintained while all students could benefit from a buddy bench, the primary reason for the buddy bench is to help students who are at risk for social and behavioral disorders.

Frydman and Mayor (2017) said the Positive Behavioral and Interventions and Supports (PBIS) tiered approach is necessary for the school setting but recommended school social workers broaden their links with communities to meet the socioemotional needs of students. McCurdy et al. (2016) said school-wide PBIS is a systems-level approach designed to address behaviors across the school, leading to a reduction in behavioral referrals over 3 years. According to McDaniel et al. (2018), students who are at risk require efficient behavioral interventions like the tier 2 PBIS strategy. Also, McDaniel et al. said while Tier 2 is a critical component of PBIS, and more research will be required which is targeted in terms of how to best provide Tier 2 support, especially for children who have socioemotional behavioral disorders. Interventions were effective in decreasing emotional and behavioral risk (McDaniel et al., 2018).

For classroom-based or local interventions, Ramirez et al. (2019) said group contingency intervention decreased off-task behavior, and slightly increased engagement for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. Students with socioemotional behaviors demand time and resources; generalization is cost-effective and easily

implemented. Rush et al. (2017) said a 12-week mindfulness program decreased off-task behaviors and improved on-task behaviors with elementary aged students when compared to a control group of peers. Griffin et al. (2017) said the buddy bench, where students can go when seeking companionship decreases social isolation for emotionally disturbed students, and there was a decrease in social isolation from 24% to 19%. Students reported they felt the buddy bench was helpful with their peers, while only about 50% of teachers felt the bench should be used the following year (Griffin et al., 2017). Weeden et al. (2016) said group contingencies were easy and cost-effective to implement. With group contingencies, rewards or incentives are contingent on all students meeting behavioral expectations in a group or classroom.

Socioemotional Trauma in the Local School District

In the local school district, because students act out resulting from socioemotional trauma, there has been an increase in superintendent disciplinary hearings associated with disciplinary referrals. In addition, the district database shows a steady increase in social work interventions because of ACEs. From the academic year 2017-2018 to 2020-2021, interventions entered into the district database increased by 24%.

Principals, Programs, and School Mental Health

According to Iachini et al. (2016), even though principals play a central role in education, they are an underrepresented voice in literature in terms of school social work and improvement efforts. Papa (2018) said schools have continually invested and implemented multitier support systems. However, school leadership preparation programs are devoid of content designed to prepare principals for the mental health needs

of children. Papa said there is sparse literature involving school leadership and school mental health.

Implications

This project study involved exploring what approaches principals and assistant principals use to address the needs of students in socioemotional crises. Several data sources informed the project study. Sources of data included interviews of principals and assistant principals, meeting minutes from response to intervention (RtI) meetings, minutes from intervention team meetings between principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school social workers, and records entered into the district data management system from social workers regarding students experiencing socioemotional crises or ACEs. Data sources used to inform this project study revealed different approaches used by principals and assistant principals with success, as well as what approaches may not have been successful. The project study will help principals and assistant principals align their practices district-wide. In addition, recommendations may include systems-based programming regarding instructional interventions and programs designed from a trauma-informed perspective.

Summary

In Section 1, the existence of dysregulated students in the local school district in a northeastern state was established and supported with evidence. In addition, the cause of socioemotional trauma was established. The problem is these incidents are increasing, and it is important for the district to understand what approaches principals and assistant principals are using to address the needs of students in socioemotional crises. The

literature indicated how ACEs adversely influence children socioemotionally. The literature also reveals ACEs can be intergenerational and prevent students from reaching their academic potential because of academic barriers. Several systems-based programs and local classroom programs have shown progress in the literature. Also, researchers and authors have indicated the importance of continued study related to socioemotional health and academic performance. In addition, a gap in the literature is apparent related to school leadership and school mental health practices.

In Section 2, I describe the qualitative approach which was used in this project study. Qualitative data came from semi-structured on-on-one interviews with three elementary principals, one junior high principal, two elementary principals, and two high school assistant principals in the local school district. In addition, qualitative data resulted from observations of documents and records of RtI meetings, intervention team meetings, and records from the district student database. In Section 3, I complete an evaluation report that addresses local needs and major outcomes involving the problem of student dysregulation and alignment of administrative practices around student dysregulation.

In Section 4, I discuss project limitations involving the problem and deliverables that will help address systems-based programming and local classroom level programming related to administrative level student mental health practices and strategies.

Section 2: The Methodology

In this project study, I explored what approaches principals and assistant principals use to address the needs of students who are experiencing socioemotional crises. Data for this project study came from qualitative sources to determine approaches principals and assistant principals at a local school district in a northeast state use to address the needs of students who experience socioemotional crises.

Data to inform this project study resulted from a thorough examination of transcripts and notes from semi-structured interviews with principals and assistant principals, RtI meetings data, minutes from intervention team meetings, and anecdotal records entered into the district student database related to ACEs. I engaged in an inductive process guided by the research question. I asked what measures principals and assistant principals take to address students during socioemotional crises.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The project study I engaged in had a basic premise. I was seeking what measures principals and assistant principals use to address students who are experiencing socioemotional crises. All qualitative studies involve how individuals construct their realities via their interactions with their social world (Sharan & Tisdall, 2016). According to Sharan and Tisdall (2016), basic qualitative studies are the most common qualitative study design with data collected via interviews, observations, and document analysis. In a basic qualitative study, the researcher identifies common patterns that characterize the data (Sharan & Tisdall, 2016). Taking a constructive approach, I arrived at conclusions by using data deductively to address the research question.

The case study design involves much of the same data sources and characteristics of the current project study. Case studies involve deductive strategies, and the unit of analysis is finite. However, the current project study is basic in that it seeks to answer one question. Sharan and Tisdall (2016) said the case study design involves rich descriptions of bounded systems. According to Freebody (2003), case studies involve theoretical or professional insights. The current project study does not seek depth of understanding in terms of the case study design.

Ethnographies involve looking at how people live and work within a cultural context (Saldana, 2011). According to Sharan and Tisdall (2016), ethnographers look at their subjects through a cultural lens in order to get a thick description of a phenomenon. Ethnography involves looking at phenomena through a cultural lens. The current project study does not involve this strategy.

Phenomenology involves meaning in terms of lived experiences and understanding how humans experience phenomena (Saldana, 2011). Action research involves interventions and measures of changes (Freebody, 2003). Grounded theory is inductive in nature and derives meaning from qualitative data (Sharan & Tisdall, 2016).

Selecting and Accessing Participants

For semi-structured interviews, the sample consisted of three elementary principals, one junior high school principal, two elementary assistant principals, and two high school assistant principals, totaling eight participants. According to Luciani et al. (2019), researchers should pick their sample based on participants' ability to answer interview questions adequately, making the sample purposeful. The administrators in this

project study were a purposeful sample who were chosen based upon their responsibilities in terms of addressing the needs of students in socioemotional crises.

To gain access to participants, I located each principal and assistant principal name on the district web site. After I secured participants' email addresses, I sent out an introductory email informing each participant about my research. After informing participants of the research, I followed up with another email using the Walden University Gmail server to schedule interviews with phone calls several days before the interview. Six interviews transpired over Zoom, and two interviews were done face-to-face in interviewees' offices with social distancing protocols.

The Walden Capstone Guidebook requires anonymity for locales and participants, and all participants were informed as such. In addition, each participant signed a consent form outlining their rights and further assurances regarding their anonymity during and after the interview process. I communicated with each interview participant as a Walden University doctoral student. In addition, each participant received a gift card to a local restaurant.

Data Collection

To determine what approaches principals and assistant principals take to address the needs of students who are experiencing socioemotional crises, I used four data sources. These were semi-structured interviews, RtI meeting notes, intervention team meeting records, and district student database records.

Semi-Structured Interviews

I interviewed each participant separately using semi-structured interviews. I followed the interview protocol suggested by Lambert using a simple start, meaty middle, and then rounding off the interview. The simple start entails questions to help me get to know participants. The meaty middle involves specifics and possible follow-up questions. To round off interviews, I asked if they had anything to add and thanked them for their participation. Burkholder et al. (2016) said probing questions should follow interview questions during semi-structured interviews in order to gather deeper information from each participant. I developed seven semi-structured interview questions.

The semi-structured interview questions were used to produce data that indicates approaches principals and assistant principals used to address the needs of students in socioemotional crises. An Olympus DM-2 digital recorder was used to record semi-structured interviews of principals. In addition, I used Dragon Software voice to text software on an iPhone 7 to transfer interviews to text form. I emailed transcripts to my laptop computer where I saved each document as a Word file. Also, I took hand-written notes during interviews.

RtI Meetings

According to the local school district's policy manual, RtI is an early intervention and prevention multitiered approach designed to improve outcomes for all students. RtI teams are comprised of a school social worker, school psychologist, and teacher who meet bimonthly to develop strategies to address behavioral difficulties or academic gaps among students. The student enrollment database contains designed interventions which

are made available immediately to staff working with associated students. RtI meetings related to behavioral interventions may also drive decisions of principals and assistant principals regarding approaches they choose to address the needs of students in socioemotional crises. Therefore, data from RtI meetings were relevant to this project study.

Data search began with performing a RtI records search of 30 students with the highest behavioral referral rate across all levels. 10 students from each level were represented in the group of 30. A search of sample student names, then the User Defined tab in the RtI field led to RtI documents for each student. I transferred RtI interventions for each student suffering from ACEs to a Word document.

All identifying student information was confidential during this process. It is important to note I had access to RtI information for all students in the local school district based upon the position I hold within the district.

Intervention Team Meeting Records

Every month, a team consisting of the school principal, assistant principal, school social worker, school nurse, and school resource officer (SRO) convene an intervention team meeting. The team discusses students who are experiencing attendance and behavioral difficulties and possibilities for interventions that may include counseling, a Mobile Outreach Services Team (MOST), referral to community agencies, referral to Child Protective Services, or principal hearings. School social workers take notes for meetings, and those minutes are recorded on an Excel spreadsheet. Intervention team

meeting notes include recommended measures for principals or assistant principals take to address student in socioemotional crises.

Data from this process were included in the current study as qualitative data. Before accessing intervention team meeting notes, I received permission from the superintendent of the local school district.

To access meeting notes, I contacted with each social worker by locating their names on the district web site phone index, then sent them an email requesting access via the district Gmail server. I asked that each social worker send electronic documents to my Walden email address. In several cases, I was given hand- written notes. I transferred intervention team meeting data to Word documents. These documents contained student names and types of intervention used to address students in crises resulting from ACEs. All identifying student information remained confidential during this process.

District Student Database Records

This database contains phone contact records, meeting records between parents and principals, meeting records between parents and assistant principals, and meetings between parents and school social workers. Events that may trigger a meeting or phone call include student socioemotional crises, inconsistencies in student attendance, and student disciplinary issues. Data from the district student database were included in the current study as qualitative data.

The data search for district student database intervention records began with performing a record search of the sample student group. I opened the district student database program and completed a census search with identified student names. I

accessed data relevant to measures principals and assistant principals used to address students in socioemotional crises by clicking the interventions tab within the identified student's file.

I transferred district student database data to Word documents. The documents contain student names and types of interventions used to address students in crises resulting from ACEs. All identifying student information was confidential during this process.

Limitations

While mining data from the RtI database, I found sparse information regarding the student group. In addition, the sample size of principals and assistant principals is a limitation of this project study. This smaller sample size may impact saturation in terms of possible responses.

Role of the Researcher

I have worked in a local school district in a northeastern state for over 17 years. In my first role, I served as an assistant principal in a junior high school, which lasted four years. I received a promotion to principal at the elementary level where I served in that capacity for 10 years before voluntarily transferring to a high school principal position for students with socioemotional behaviors. The district discontinued that school after one year, and I transferred to another elementary principal position which I currently occupy. I have extensive experience and access regarding the district student database and student enrollment databases.

Data Analysis

Recording and Organizing Data

Word documents contain data from semi-structured interviews with principals as well as records examinations of RtI minutes, interventions documented in the district student database, and intervention team meeting minutes. Principals were referred to as P1, P2 and so on, while assistant principals were labeled AP1 and AP2. For interventions documented via RtI meetings, the district student database, and intervention team meeting minutes, each de-identified student was referred to as S1, S2, S3 and so on.

Coding

According to Lambert (2012), it is important to use the same system for coding across all qualitative data sources. Beginning the coding process, I focused on approaches principals and assistant principals use to address students during socioemotional crises. I manually coded each semi-structured interview transcript and recorded my impressions and observations to identify early patterns or themes in data. Also, by manually coding several documents, I recognized emergent themes in data which helped me identify themes while coding the remaining data. Because I searched for approaches principals use to address students during socioemotional crises, it was important I looked for similarities and differences in approaches.

I used QDA Miner Lite, a qualitative data software program to complete data coding from semi-structured interviews and sample student intervention data. I continued to write memos regarding data documents involving deductively identifying themes, patterns, frequencies, similarities, and differences.

Quality of Procedures, Accuracy, and Credibility

The records examination for this project study involved documentation from RtI records, district database records of interventions logged by school social workers, and minutes from intervention team meetings. Examination of these three sources resulted in data as well as information and types of intervention.

The data and documentation for the project study is stored and cataloged on a password protected Hewlett-Packard Spectre laptop computer and a password-protected external thumb drive. The two data files contain Word-Perfect documents, audio files from interviews, and any other Word-Perfect files generated during the writing process. All files stored electronically receive the common name “Project Study” with an identifying tag for me to quickly identify and access the file.

I detached from my role as principal to prevent deliberate bias when analyzing the results. Also, because I engage in the process studied in the research project, I eliminated professional expectations before engaging in the data collection and coding processes.

I have never been in any supervisory capacity or worked in the same location of any principals or assistant principals that will be participating in the semi-structured interviews. I do not socialize with the elementary principals beyond a professional capacity. The junior high principal I interviewed has been in their jobs for considerably longer. However, I have a strictly professional relationship with the principal. A high turnover rate has not allowed me to develop strong professional or personal relationships with the four assistant principals in the sample group. I did not detect bias in the responses in the semi-structured interviews resulting from my relationships with the

principals or assistant principals. However, Blair (2015) mentions the difficulty of reading the transcripts from interviews and hearing the subject's voices while reading responses that makes it difficult to code the information in a detached manner. Keeping objectivity in the process was important as I moved through the coding process to keep the accuracy and credibility part of the process.

Data Analysis Results

Semi-structured interviews of three elementary principals, one junior high school principal, two elementary assistant principals, and two high school assistant principals generated data to inform this project study. In addition, data resulting from a record search of RtI records, district student database records, and intervention team meeting records related to adverse childhood experiences informed this project study. Guided by the research question and through coding the data from these data sources, I identified measures assistant principals and principals took to address students in socioemotional crisis.

Contacting and Recruiting Semi-Structured Interview Participants

I began the participant recruitment process by identifying what school leaders from the local school district in the northeast responsible for addressing the needs of students in socioemotional crisis. Each potential participant received an invitation email and the Informed Consent Form. The invitation emails ask potential participants to take their time to think over the possibility of participating, and if they decided to participate simply reply to the invitation email with the words "I consent". I sent invitation emails to 13 potential participants.

The group receiving the email consisted of two secondary principals, five elementary principals, three secondary assistant principals, and three elementary assistant principals. I received responses from eight school leaders to participate in the semi-structured interviews. Once I contacted each participant, I began corresponding with the participants through the Walden Gmail server. To finalize arrangements, I contacted participants through the district's phone system.

The semi-structured interview sample for this project study was comprised of three elementary principals, one junior high school principal, two elementary assistant principals, and two high school assistant principals totaling eight participants. Six participants chose semi-structured interviews by the Zoom platform and two chose face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

During each semi-structured interview, I took field notes by hand. Also, an Olympus DM-2 digital recorder recorded all semi-structured interviews whether face-to-face or by phone. When each semi-structured interview was complete, I uploaded digital recordings from the Olympus DM-2 by hardwiring to a password-protected Hewlett Packard Spectre Laptop computer. Also, I used an Apple iPhone 7 with Dragon software to transcribe the semi-structured interviews to RTF format.

To ensure the accuracy of the transcribed semi-structured interview transcripts, I listened to each digital audio file while proofreading the semi-structured interview transcripts and making corrections. Because the Provalis PQA Miner Lite reads Word-Perfect documents, it was necessary to convert semi-structured interview transcripts to Word-Perfect files. Interview transcripts existed on separate documents and I de-

identified the transcripts as P1 or AP1 as examples. I de-identified all audio files of the interviews before storage with the same designations. A file on the Hewlett Packard Spectre laptop and password-protected thumb drive contains all digital audio recordings and transcribed transcripts.

Coding Semi-Structured Interview Transcripts

After the editing was finished, I hand-coded each document without the use of the PQA Miner Lite software on each transcript. While hand-coding I began to identify similarities in the responses to the interview questions that became the codes. I the next step of the coding process I uploaded each de-identified interview.

I uploaded the eight interview transcripts to Provalis PDQ Miner Lite coding software. The program asks researchers to identify categories and codes, which appear in a category and code tree. The semi-structured interview questions served as a category and I identified themes or interventions in the responses. After accomplishing this task, I coded each interview by highlighting themes and interventions. I completed this step by highlighting the chosen text and then clicking the code on the category on the category and code tree. As I continued through the interview transcripts, I identified other codes as they appeared in the Intervention category and question.

Data Analysis of Semi-Structured Interview Codes

By choosing the analyze menu in PQA Miner Lite and choosing to analyze all lines of the code the program moved all categories and codes to a table where I identified and labeled five headings. The first heading represented the intervention category shared by the question theme. The specific code, numbers of respondents per code, percentage of

interventions for each code, and percentages of leaders identifying the strategy followed respectively. To convert the table into a usable format to create tables and graphs for the Research Project, I saved the table as an Excel Spreadsheet. I generated all tables and charts related to patterns and themes in the data for the research project.

The seven semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix B) focus on the actions school leaders take in a crisis, their knowledge of resources and plans, and general knowledge of such an event-based upon experience. The data collected from the semi-structured interviews will inform the findings of the project study by revealing information related to a school leader's action to address a student in a socioemotional crisis.

Question 1. It is critical school leaders identify the emotional characteristics and signs of a student in a socioemotional crisis. Question 1 asks respondents to define a socioemotional crisis generating nine codes for a socioemotional crisis. Six of the eight respondents described a general occurrence with students in turmoil. Four of the respondents talked about situations that manifest in the home as a socioemotional crisis. Three respondents described how the socioemotional crisis manifests itself in the lack of focus in school, and two respondents talked about student withdrawal during a socioemotional crisis (see Table 1).

Table 1

Definition of Socioemotional Crisis

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Disrupts Learning	2	25.00%
Focus and Participation	3	37.50%

General Turmoil	6	75.00%
History That Causes Behavior	2	25.00%
Crisis in Home	4	50.00%
Physical Violence	2	25.00%
Self-Abuse	1	12.50%
Victim of Abuse	1	12.50%
Withdrawal	2	25.00%

Question 2. How a principal or vice-principal sees their role in different situations within the school day will shape the way they approach a student in a socioemotional crisis. Question 2 asks the participants what their role is to address students in socioemotional crisis. Roles relating to the delegation was coded 50% of the time and being the first responder to the student in crisis was coded 50% of the time. Two leaders indicated their role was to de-escalate the student in socioemotional crisis. Participants identified two other roles, a multi-faceted role and to listen and support (see Table 2).

Table 2

Roles in Student Socioemotional Crisis

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
De-Escalate	2	25.00%
Delegate Responsibility	4	50.00%
First Responder	4	50.00%
Multi-faceted Role	1	12.50%
Support Listen	1	12.50%

With the variety of principal levels, principals and vice-principals participating in the semi-structured interviews, the variation between school leader's role perceptions is predictable. Interestingly, only two participants mentioned their role is to de-escalate the

socioemotional crisis. A question for future research is why does this group of school leaders do not see their role as a de-escalator in the socioemotional crisis of a student?

Question 3. The approach a school leader takes towards students in socioemotional crisis is critical in de-escalating a crisis and can influence the safety of the staff and student in crisis. Approaching a student in a socioemotional crisis can be an everyday occurrence for some school leaders. Therefore, understanding approaches a school leader takes in these instances is critical for meeting the emotional needs of students in the Local School District in a Northeastern State. Nine codes representing approaches emerged from the interviews. The greatest number of participants identified approach calmly at 50% of the responses. Four responders also mentioned redirecting the student. Giving space, investigating the cause, and talking to the student emerged three times each in the semi-structured interviews. Moving the student to a safe space, giving love, and affirming the student emerged two times each. One school leader identified using common knowledge as an approach (see Table 3).

Table 3

Approaches to Student Socioemotional Crises

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Approach Calmly	4	50.00%
Give Space	3	37.50%
Investigate Cause	3	37.50%
Love/Care/Affirming	2	25.00%
Move Student to Safe Space	2	25.00%
Redirect	4	50.00%
Talk to Student	3	37.50%
Use Prior Knowledge	1	12.50%

What stands out with the responses for question three is the variety of strategies principals and assistant principals use to approach students in socioemotional crisis. The eight approaches mentioned in the participant's responses reveal the need for alignment in the approaches school leaders uses to address students in socioemotional crisis.

Question 4. It is important principals and assistant principals have knowledge of and can implement strategies to address the needs of students in socioemotional crisis. Researched-based strategies, training, or understanding how to implement resources will enable the school leader to meet the needs of students in socioemotional crisis. Six of the eight respondents spoke of searching for a strategy and finding a strategy that works. Five of the eight of the school leaders indicated they attempt to connect to the student in some form. Four of the eight leaders acknowledged investigating a student's background was one strategy they used to address the needs of a student in a socioemotional crisis. Three leaders talked about PBIS strategies and three school leaders indicated they would use Therapeutic Crisis Intervention Strategies (see Table 4).

Table 4

Strategies for a Student Socioemotional Crisis

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Connect with Student	5	62.50%
Find Staff/Professional to Assist	2	25.00%
Investigate Background of Student	4	50.00%
PBIS Strategies	3	37.50%
Try Combinations of Strategies- What Works	6	75.00%
TCI Therapeutic Crisis Intervention	3	37.50%

Several of the school leaders talked about the training they had with Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions or PBIS. Elementary leaders were more likely to use these strategies because of PBIS implementation at that level. While 75% of the participants mentioned trying several strategies at once, a consistent strategy did not emerge from this question.

Question 5. Students that have a history of socioemotional crisis may have formal intervention plans in the event of a socioemotional crisis. It is important principals and assistant principals identify if a student has a behavior plan and can access that plan in the event of a socioemotional crisis. Question 5 asks the participants if they rely on those behavioral plans in these instances. For this question, plans were not a specific point of emphasis for this group of school leaders. Only one school leader indicated they would go directly to a plan. Six of the participants indicated they would respond to needs. Four indicated difficulty determining if students had plans (see Table 5).

Table 5

Use of a Formal Intervention Plans

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
No plans, respond to needs	6	75.00%
Does Not Use Plans Or never has	2	25.00%
Difficult to determine May not Have Direct Knowledge	4	50.00%
Follow Existing Plan/BIP	1	12.50%

Students having repeated patterns of socioemotional crisis typically would have a Behavior Intervention Plan to address the socioemotional crisis. The participants did not speak of prioritizing behavior plans if any in their responses. Only one participant mentioned following a BIP or any student-specific plan. The responses warrant further investigation in future studies regarding the use of Behavioral Intervention plans.

Question 6. School leaders frequently turn to other professionals to help meet the needs of students in socioemotional crisis. Keeping the student safe when in socioemotional crisis is the main priority and oftentimes the principal or assistant principal will alert staff trained and qualified to meet the student’s safety and emotional need. Question 6 asks school leaders if they rely on these school professionals to address the needs of students in socioemotional crisis. All school leaders indicated they would go directly to the school social worker or the school psychologist for support when a student is in a socioemotional crisis. Four out of the eight participants mentioned outside counseling services. Three principals claimed they would contact the assistant principal and three assistant principals mentioned turning to the principal for support. One school talked about finding another adult that may have a connection with the student (See Table 6).

Table 6

Reliance on Other School Professionals

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Access Counselor/Social Worker/Psych	8	100.00%

Contact Assistant Principal	3	37.50%
Contact Outside Agency	4	50.00%
Contact Principal	3	37.50%
Other Trusted Adult	1	12.50%

School leaders unanimously spoke of immediately turning to a school psychologist or school social worker for help assisting the needs of a student in socioemotional crisis. This question is the only question participants fully aligned their responses.

Question 7. Identifying triggers or antecedents to behaviors will help principals, assistant principals, and other school professionals to prevent the onset of a socioemotional crisis. Question 7 asks school leaders what types of antecedents they have noticed before the onset of a socioemotional crisis in a student. Seven of eight participants mentioned some type of home factors. Five respondents mentioned peer issues. Two leaders talked about school-related tasks as a trigger and Chronic trauma. School leaders pointed to lack of consistency, family death or illness, and too many adults involved one time for each of the codes (see Table 7).

Table 7

Antecedents and Triggers Leading to Student Socioemotional Crisis

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Chronic Trauma	1	12.50%
Family Illness/Death	1	12.50%
Lack of Consistency in Life	1	12.50%
Manifests at Home	7	87.50%
Peer Issues	5	62.50%
School Work Related	2	25.00%
Too Many Adults Involved	1	12.50%

Triggered Away From School	3	37.50%
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Home factors emerged as the main antecedent for students in socioemotional crisis aligning to exposure to traumatic events in the home environment that result in ACES. Also, peer issues emerged in a majority of the responses as a cause of socioemotional crisis.

Identifying Students to Select Student Intervention Records

To access student records for the three RtI, district student database, intervention team meeting data sources, I identified students with records that indicated they were suffering from ACEs. To accomplish this, I used the “dashboard” function in the district student enrollment database to identify 10 students with the highest suspension rates resulting from behavioral referrals from the elementary, junior high and high school levels. This method of record selection focuses on features within the group selected (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2013). In this case the main feature is the suspension rate of the students. A search of these names in the RtI, district student database, and intervention team data sources revealed the decisions the school leaders made for each student to address students in socioemotional crisis.

Irregularities in Data Storage

I found inconsistencies regarding data recording at the district level. I discovered very few of the students had records entered into the RtI database. In addition, minutes from the intervention team meetings were not stored uniformly from school to school. Some social workers kept those minutes on an excel spreadsheet, housed in google docs,

others kept handwritten notes, and others uploaded those minutes to the district student database. My records search of the 30 students revealed intervention records resulting from intervention team meetings for all the students. All students in the group had records in the district student database.

Mining Data from the RtI Data Source

By entering the student enrollment database using my district credentials and conducting a search in the Census Menu in the Main Menu, I located the main page for each of the students the sample population of students. Off the main page for each student, I located the User Defined tab and from that tab, I was offered several data sources on drag down. By clicking the drag down from the user-defined tab, I was able to access RtI behavioral meeting data.

Mining Data from the District Student Database

I entered the district student database using my district credentials and searched in the Student Profile tab in the Main Menu. Choosing the “Interventions” tab and clicking “Scripts” opens the menu where I can perform a search for any student. I typed each student’s name in the search prompt to locate the intervention data for each student in the sample population.

Mining Data from the Intervention Team Meeting Data Source

To access the meeting notes I contacted each social worker by locating their names on the district phone index, then sending them an email requesting access through the district Gmail server. I asked the school social workers to send me a copy of the meeting notes to my Walden email account. Much of the data from the intervention team

meetings was transferred to the district student database at the completion of those meetings. I was able to access those notes by accessing the district student database. During this process, I found data recording inconsistencies between the social workers.

Preparing Student Intervention Data for Coding

After securing the intervention data for the student record sources I transferred the RtI, intervention team, and district student database data to Word-Perfect documents. To simplify the coding process, and to avoid duplicating the same interventions across two or more data sources, I transferred student data to one Word-Perfect document followed by de-identifying each student in the sample assigning a number to each student. All interventions for each student would be associated with only the student number.

While reviewing the intervention document for accuracy I began to identify themes in intervention texts. After the editing was finished, I coded each document without the use of the PQA Miner Lite software. While hand-coding, four main categories of interventions school leaders employ towards students in socioemotional crisis emerged. The four themes I identified were Disciplinary Dispositions, Counseling Strategies, County/Court Related Intervention, and District Level Interventions.

The tables chart overall occurrences among the 30 students in the population for each intervention. Each intervention, when compared to the overall number of interventions with the percentage indicated. The total number of interventions is 187 for the student group. There were 20 different interventions combined in the four categories.

Discipline Dispositions

Principals and assistant principals are frequently compelled to move a student to a superintendent’s hearing as a result of a severe socioemotional crisis. In the group of 30 students, school leaders made that decision 24 times. Several students have experienced two superintendent hearings so the number of students brought to this type of disposition is under the count of 24 occurrences. School leaders brought students to principal hearings 10 times and principal meetings two times (see Table 8).

Table 8

Discipline Dispositions

Disciplinary Intervention	Occurrences	% of Overall Interventions
Superintendent's Hearing	24	12.80%
Principal's Hearing	10	5.30%
Principal's Meeting	2	1.10%

With 30 students in the group 24 superintendent’s suspension hearings represents a majority of students in the group. This data point reveals the expulsion of students suffering with an ACE from the regular school environment for weeks or months at a time.

Forms of Counseling and Case Management

Resulting from intervention team meetings, principal hearings, principal meetings, or RtI meetings, principals and assistant principals make decisions to refer students to counseling and case management services as interventions. This type of intervention occurred by an outside agency, or within the district with school personnel.

Principals and assistant principals recommended family-group counseling referrals 26 times for the group of 30 students. Family case management was identified as an intervention 19 times and individual case management 12. General mental health services were used 10 times for the group of students, counseling away from the school seven times, inside the school counseling 3, and parent advocacy was recommended once (see Table 9).

Table 9

Forms of Counseling and Case-Management

Counseling Type	Occurrences	% of Overall Interventions
In School Individual Counseling	3	1.60%
Away From School Individual Counseling	7	3.70%
Case Management	12	6.40%
General Mental Health Services	10	5.30%
Family Group Counseling	26	13.90%
Parent Advocacy	1	0.50%
Family Case Management	19	10.20%

Two family-based interventions emerged at a higher rate than other forms of counseling, which would suggest principals and assistant principals focused interventions within the home environment. This suggests school leaders connected the socioemotional crisis to the student's home environment.

County and Court-Related Interventions

Resulting from further breakdowns in socioemotional health of the student or family-related supports for the student is referred county and county court action. The

actions result from conversations in the intervention team meetings, or general conversations where the school social worker takes the action based on school leader directions. Child Protective Reports were common under the category with 10 referrals. Also, court-ordered supervision appeared in the coding 10 instances. Court-ordered respite followed with 3 instances, a court-ordered therapeutic placement with two instances, and a family court hearing with one instance (see table 10).

Table 10

County and Court Related Interventions

County/Court Intervention	Occurrences	% of Overall Interventions
CPS Report	10	5.30%
Family Court	1	0.50%
Court Ordered Respite	3	1.60%
Court Ordered Supervision	10	5.30%
Court Ordered Therapeutic Placement	2	1.10%

Rates of CPS “hotline” reports and Court Ordered Supervision indicate school leaders identified issues within the student homes that may be triggering a socioemotional crisis. CPS reports arise from lack of supervision, psychological abuse, or emotional abuse. Court-ordered supervision occurs at the secondary level resulting from the lack of adequate supervision in the household.

District Level Interventions

Before rising to a County or Court level decision, principals and assistant principals make decisions to address the needs of students in socioemotional crisis on the

district level. School Social Workers will get involved with any student experiencing a socioemotional crisis. The code Social Worker Involvement implies an extra step taken reflected in the School Social Worker notes. School Social Worker Involvement appeared 36 times during the coding process. Home visits by a district employee whether social worker or administrator occurred six instances. Alternative School Referrals and Attendance Letters appeared two times during coding. District Ordered Therapeutic Placement appeared one time during coding (see Table 11).

Table 11

District Level Interventions

District Intervention	Occurrences	% of Overall Interventions
Home visit/District Employee	6	3.20%
Alternative School Referral	2	1.10%
SSW Involvement	36	19.30%
Attendance Letter	2	1.10%
District Ordered Therapeutic Placement	1	0.50%

School social worker involvement is a first step intervention. This code appeared 36 times across the three databases. Typically, no other steps can move forward without the involvement of the school social worker as coordinators of interventions when directed by principals and assistant principals.

Procedures for Dealing with Discrepant Cases

The variety of data sources allowed for adequate triangulation in this project study. I compared the RtI database, district student database, and intervention team

meeting notes for accuracy in the recording of the data. As the sole interpreter of the data sources, I eliminated any duplication between the sources. Besides, audio recording, voice-to-text recording, and handwritten notes to record the semi-structured interview responses increasing accuracy during the transfer process. I was the single coder for the data, which helped to increase accuracy in the coding and themes.

Evidence of Quality

This project seeks to identify what measures principals and assistant principals take to address the needs of students in socioemotional crisis. Data collection procedures outlined in the project study proposal consisted of semi-structured interviews, data sources from RtI records, district student database records, and intervention team meeting notes. The collection of data proceeded as outlined in the research proposal with fidelity for all data sources.

Semi-Structured Interviews

I used the local school district in the northeast Gmail server to send the introductory email (see Appendix B). Once participants accepted, the invitation correspondences happened through a telephone conversation or Walden Gmail. All potential participants received identical invitations.

Six of the eight interviews took place by the Zoom platform identically. Two interviews took place in my office with identical procedures. The Olympus DM-2 Digital Recorder recorded each interview. Dragon voice-to-text software digitally converted the interviews to text. To ensure the accuracy of each interview transcript I listened to each digital recording while editing each transcript on Word-Perfect Software. I completed

member checks by emailing each participant the completed and edited transcript. I received several replies from participants indicating accuracy in the transcripts. After uploading each edited transcript to PQA Miner-Lite coding software, I coded each transcript producing several code categories for each question. Each transcript coded by question produced an Excel spreadsheet with all coding categories. With the Excel spreadsheet, I transferred the data from each question to produce tables for analysis.

District Student Database/RtI and Intervention Team Meeting Notes

Through the dashboard function of the district enrollment database I identified 30 students that made up the sample for the RtI, district student, and intervention team records. I chose 10 students from each level with the highest suspension rates resulting from disciplinary referrals as the criteria. I listed the students from the three levels on a Word-Perfect document that would be used for field notes. I went into the RtI database, the district student database and requested intervention team meeting spreadsheets and notes from each school social worker. I transferred what data I found on each student relating to an ACEs intervention to the Word-Perfect document. In doing so, I was able to eliminate duplicate interventions that typically happened with the district student database and the school social worker notes. The double intervention records were eliminated while other double records, dated superintendent hearings which could be identified as separate events for a single student were retained as such on the Word-Perfect document.

After uploading the Word-Perfect PDQ Miner Lite coding software, I coded the Word-Perfect sheet. The coding process revealed four categories of interventions with

several intervention codes in each category. After downloading an excel spreadsheet with the categories and codes, I constructed tables with the relevant data for this project study.

Findings

Inconsistency of responses emerged from several of the semi-structured interview questions. There is not a strong consensus on a definition of student socioemotional crisis among principals and assistant principals. Also, there is not a clear consensus of a strategy in approaching students suffering from a socioemotional crisis or a consistent strategy to meet the needs of a student in a socioemotional crisis. Principals and assistant principals mentioned the student's home when defining socioemotional crises in Question 1, and again citing the student's home when discussing the antecedents of a socioemotional crisis. Given these responses, it is not surprising that home-based interventions are a stronger theme that emerged from the intervention data. Question 2 revealed a surprising theme; only two leaders saw their role as a de-escalator.

Utilizing specific behavior plans is not a strategy this group of school leaders turns to. Only one school leader talked about using a specific plan designed for the student in a socioemotional crisis. The emergence of this theme may relate to the lack of Behavior Intervention Plans used as an intervention strategy. However, this is the question that should be addressed in future studies. The strongest consensus of principals and assistant principals emerged in the final two questions. All school leaders would immediately turn to their school social worker and school psychologist when a student suffers socioemotional crisis and 87.50% talked about the home environment as a trigger, a theme I mentioned emerged in Question 1.

The analysis of the RtI, district student database, and intervention team meeting data revealed three types of interventions reoccurring at much higher levels than other interventions prescribed by the local school district in a northeastern State school leader. The superintendent's hearing intervention is a disciplinary approach that is the result of the principals and assistant principals following the district code of conduct. The use of the superintendent's hearing typically results in expulsion or long-term suspension. Two other codes emerged from the Counseling and Case Management category. Family Group Counseling and Family Case Management occurred at higher rates than other interventions in the category. This suggests principals and assistant principals decided to intervene at the home environment level.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

My purpose in Section 3 is to offer an overview of the project (see Appendix A). In Section 3, I state the rationale for the project, review professional literature related to project themes, describe the project, discuss the project evaluation plan, and look at implications of the project.

When considering conclusions of this study, I saw a need to submit an evaluation report based on my findings to the district superintendent outlining the conclusions of the project study. Based on my findings, I hope the local school district will take further steps to modify practices to address the needs of students suffering from the socioemotional crisis brought on by ACEs.

Rationale

I chose to create an evaluation report for this research project. An evaluation report is an appropriate choice of project to deliver the results of this project study. My goal with the project study was to identify approaches assistant principals and principals take to address the needs of students in socioemotional crises. My findings indicated assistant principals and principals do not define student socioemotional crises in the same manner and do not approach students uniformly or share the same practices when addressing the needs of these students. Two administrators saw themselves as deescalators in a crisis, and 24 superintendent hearings occurred in the last 3 years among the group of 30 students. Also, while collecting data, I discovered social workers use different methods for documenting interventions. While not within the original scope of

the project study, this conclusion merits inclusion in the evaluation report. In the evaluation report, I report my findings in terms of categories and themes identified during analysis of assistant principal and principal intervention data.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study is to explore what measures assistant principals and principals use to address the needs of students in socioemotional crises resulting from ACEs. Coding and analysis of semi-structured interview responses revealed principals and assistant principals do not share a definition of socioemotional crises in students. In addition, administrators do not approach students in socioemotional crises in a consistent manner, and they do not share the same strategies for meeting the needs of those students. Two participants revealed roles as de-escalators for student in socioemotional crises. RtI Minutes, district student database notes, and intervention team meeting notes revealed inconsistencies regarding approaches to students in socioemotional crises as well as high rates of long-term suspensions resulting from superintendent hearings within. The research exposed inconsistencies in terms of intervention documentation among the three student data sources.

I will share the findings of the project study with the superintendent of the local school district via an evaluation report of my findings. The evaluation report includes a more consistent system of socioemotional supports for students impacted by physical, sexual, and emotional trauma in childhood.

Appropriateness of Genre Selection

The genre I chose for this research project is an evaluation report. The purpose of the project study is to explore what measures assistant principals and principals take to address the needs of students in socioemotional crises resulting from ACEs. For my project, I will submit an evaluation report based upon my conclusions to the superintendent of the local school district.

Researching Articles Related to the Project

To search for topics related to this review of the literature, I used search engines found in the Walden Library. The databases I chose to use were ERIC, SAGE Journals, and Education Source. Before entering specific terms, I set publication dates from 2016 through 2020. The key terms I chose for the search related to findings from semi-structured interviews and data from the RtI database, district student database, and intervention team meeting notes. The terms I chose to search were: *crisis, teams, student crisis management, evaluation, discipline, decision crisis roles, student trauma intervention strategies, best practices for interventions, trauma interventions, evaluation report, inconsistency, incongruence, continuity, misalignment, schools, principals, assistant principals, and superintendent.*

An exhaustive search revealed a gap in research involving my project study findings.

Though approaches principals and assistant principals take to address students in socioemotional crises have been inadequately researched, search terms were used to help locate studies and research related to my findings. The themes that emerged in my review

of the literature were school leader decisions and race, roles within school crisis and safety teams, trauma-informed practice and policy development, and research, policy, and practice.

School Leader Decisions and Race

One theme that emerged in my review of literature is race and how it impacted decisions of school administrators. According to Manassah et al. (2018), racial inequities manifest themselves via discrepancies in terms of school discipline. Federal and state authorities recommended schools use restorative practices instead of suspending students.

Gullo and Beachum (2020) said little attention has been paid to implicit bias of school administrators while disciplining students. Gullo and Beachum measured the impact of implicit bias on racial disparity gaps in discipline rates between Black and White students. Ambiguous descriptions of offenses by students towards teachers lead to discipline decisions which are susceptible to implicit bias (Gullo & Beacham, 2020). Bias is a contributor to the racial discipline gap, and there exists institutional biases in terms of school discipline policies, but objective decision making can override impacts of administrative bias (Gullo & Beacham, 2020).

DeMatthews (2016) said by applying critical race theory (CRT), school leaders can be advocates for change and adopt equity-oriented practices. Also, they should acknowledge causes of inequity, authentic connections need to be formed, and mismatches between practice, policy, and the culture of students need to be corrected.

Trauma-Informed Practice and Policy Development

Court-involved youth experience high rates of expulsion when compared to noncourt-involved peers, leading to lower academic achievement (Crosby et al., 2016). Crosby et al. (2016) examined the use of a trauma-informed alternative to suspension called the Monarch Room (MR). Through the use of the MR, the researchers used real-life narratives to gauge strengths and weaknesses of the intervention. Aspects of this particular intervention such as trends and experiences have never been studied. Quantitative results indicated a reduced use of the MR room throughout the year and qualitative results indicated participants viewed the room as a positive resource.

Edge et al. (2018) said specific subgroups of children suffer disproportionate rates of expulsions and suspensions when compared to other subgroups. Edge et al. said the state of Arkansas addressed high rates of suspension and expulsion among subgroups within the state's early childcare settings. Approaches involved policy establishment, readying highly skilled workers, increasing access to specialized support, promoting family partnerships developmental and behavioral screening, and goal setting combined with data tracking. Also, Edge et al. reviewed formative assessment data to determine the effectiveness of the state's efforts. The data revealed support is needed for challenging behaviors, program directors are open to policy change and training, and more than one-fourth of the directors have concerns about the readiness of teachers. In one-third of the cases, directors and teachers reported traumatic events experienced by the preschool children, a finding that emerged early and clearly for the researchers.

Grassley-Boyd et al. (2019), evaluated the effectiveness of a systems based behavioral intervention model School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) in reducing disciplinary exclusions and suspensions, and said disciplinary exclusion continues to negatively impacts student outcomes. Grassley-Boyd et al. examined the consequences of the implementation of SWPBIS in 593 Florida schools. When implemented with fidelity, schools using the SWPBIS model made significantly fewer referrals for students with disabilities to alternative settings than comparison schools. Also, the same schools using the SWPBIS model with fidelity experienced significant decreases in terms of out-of-school suspensions.

According to Rafa (2018), many states are exploring alternatives to punitive disciplinary measures. It is hoped strategies like restorative practices and PBIS are used to target root causes of student misbehavior and improve learning environments through stronger healthier relationships. State legislation that targets exclusionary practices involves three areas of policy: professional development, committees to study alternatives to suspension, and requiring restorative practices and PBIS.

The state of Illinois enacted Public Act 99-0456 to implement alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices. Public Act 99-0456 has six key provisions designed to either eliminate expulsions or lessen negative impacts of expulsions through opportunities to make up missed work and providing reentry plans for students. Gahungu (2019) said administrators may have been defensive and embellished surveys, creating a positive façade. Teachers and other staff members appeared eager to expose how policies enacted by the state created hardships on them.

Though policies had been in effect for 2 years, administrators and teachers said exclusionary practices remained prevalent. Also, respondents did not feel reform improved the climate and safety of schools (Gahungu, 2019). Gahungu (2019) said responses could be a result of respondents not fully understanding policies. Also, Gahungu said heeding poorly informed voices, based on misunderstanding policy and embellishing answers may mislead policymakers in terms of promising yet-to-be-tested policies.

Research involving exclusionary practices does not support the use of exclusionary practices to reduce school discipline. Proactive classroom management is critical to improving climate and cultures of classrooms and schools. According to Green et al. (2018), three misconceptions prevalent regarding school suspensions are that they can improve teaching and the environment, act as a deterrent for other students, and improve the behaviors of suspended students by alerting behaviors. Green et al. said it is the administrator's role to implement professional development involving proactive strategies like teaching behavioral expectations, behavior-specific praise, and meaningful school-family relationships.

Roles Within School Crisis and Safety Teams

Eklund et al. (2018) said many of the functions undertaken by safety team members may be unfamiliar for SROs. Eklund et al. said there was a lack of research examining the roles of SROs. After a four-day school safety training, school safety team members completed a school safety assessment and team safety survey. Based upon significant differences in responses between crisis team members' experiences with crisis

events, different roles needed assigning to team members to address the crisis. For example, an SRO may be better equipped to address or follow up with students after an assault event, whereas he or she may have much less involvement in the area of discipline.

Research, Policy, and Practice

Penuel et al. (2018) said district practitioners have different views of what research is when compared to researchers. This reoccurring theme in the literature motivated this study. Penuel et al. said district leaders find a broad range of research useful. In addition, district leaders are likely to access material that is prescriptive or conceptual. Also, it is clear district leaders prioritize their research to target specific local initiatives as well.

Implementing trauma-informed practices can be time-consuming and costly, making it prudent to assess the effects of implementing a trauma-informed approach. While guidance documents around trauma-informed practices exist, it is not clear what trauma-informed practices are being used when schools maintain they engage in a trauma-informed approach (Maynard et al., 2019).

Project Description

The project I have chosen is an evaluation report of my project study. I have identified what approaches principals and assistant principals take to address students in socioemotional crisis and I will share my findings with the superintendent of schools, the superintendent's cabinet, and the administrators of the Local School District in a Northeastern State. I will request time to present my findings at a School District in a

Northeastern State Board of Education meeting. The meeting date will be determined after my Doctoral program concludes. I will make an initial submission to the superintendent of schools when I request to present my findings. I will present my findings utilizing a PowerPoint presentation.

I will require superintendent support and endorsement from the Local School District in a Northeastern State to complete this project. Minimal resources are required to complete the project except for time. I will be using the Hewlett Packard Spectre computer and Microsoft Office word Perfect and PowerPoint Software. Organized by the district board of education clerk, the board of education space and time is available without any organizing on my part. I do not see any barriers to the completion of this project. The superintendent of the local school district in the northeast has fully supported my journey through the doctoral program, and my completion of the research project.

After completing the evaluation report, I will submit the evaluation report to the superintendent of the local school district in a northeastern state requesting permission to present at the district board of education meeting. Once receiving permission from the superintendent to present at the board of education meeting, I will generate a PowerPoint presentation outlining the findings of my project study. The board of education meetings occurs on the second Tuesday of every month.

My role in this project will be as a presenter and will present the findings of the project study from a position of an expert on the findings and subject matter. The board of education members, the executive team of the school district, other district administrators, and community members will be audience members.

Project Evaluation Plan

Designed to inform principals and assistant principals what decisions they make to address students in socioemotional crisis, the goal is to inform a more consistent system of socioemotional supports for students impacted by physical, sexual, and emotional trauma in childhood. The long-term effects of this project will come in the form of a continued discussion regarding intervention practices of school leaders when addressing the needs of students in socioemotional crisis. I completed the evaluation report and submitted it to the superintendent of the Local School District in a Northeastern State. In addition, I requested to present the findings of the report in a PowerPoint to the district board of education.

A goal-based evaluation technique was appropriate for this evaluation report. The evaluation process measured whether I clearly communicated project study findings in the evaluation report and included all relevant information. Also, I will determine if the evaluation report was submitted in a timely fashion, and if the PowerPoint presentation aligned with the evaluation report and the project study.

Project Implications

The project is an evaluation report of my project study findings growing from the research question that asks what approaches do principals and assistant principals take to address the needs of students in socioemotional crisis? This evaluation report addresses this question for the first time in the local school district in a northeastern state. At the completion of the project, study, school district leaders will have the answer to the question. With the answers, principals and assistant principals will align and apply

interventions for students with socioemotional and behavioral disabilities. This original contribution in the field represents a topic scantily studied and can be used as a model for other school districts to follow regarding the alignment of services designed to provide support for students impacted by physical, sexual, and emotional trauma in childhood.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

Researchers studying interventions involving ACEs and their impact on children need to share research outcomes with frontline practitioners in schools. It is clear a gap in literature exists involving measures principals and assistant principals use to address students in socioemotional crises.

Local data generated via interviewing principals and assistant principals were authentic and accurate. Analysis and findings from data were used to fill a gap in knowledge locally. Also, it serves a greater purpose by filling a gap in research. In addition, the sample size of students was extensive. I mined 3 years of data from 30 students, producing rich data from two data sources: intervention team meeting notes and the district student database.

Lack of data resulting from the RtI database is a limitation in this study. It is a possibility the RtI database is being underused for data storage purposes. In addition, the sample size of principals and assistant principals is a limitation of this project study. This project study and evaluation were used to answer a single question: What measures do principals and assistant principals take to address students in socioemotional crises? The

narrow but focused nature of the study will lead to other issues that will need to be studied locally and in a broader context.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

In this study, I derived data from four sources: semi-structured interviews with principals and assistant principals, a district RtI database, a district student database, and intervention team meeting notes from school social workers. An alternative approach could have involved focusing on data and how they were presented. Instead of coding data, identifying themes, and presenting data in tables, presenting data in text form anecdotally followed by a discussion is an alternative approach. As indicated, a limitation of the project study was the sample size of principals and assistant principals. If I broadened the overall scope of the study while asking the same research question, this could have mitigated this limitation.

By changing the study sample, I may have gotten results from a different perspective. Also, using this approach most likely would have increased the sample size of participants, as the number of principals and assistant principals was limited to begin with.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

During my journey through the Doctor of Education program at Walden University, I had many opportunities to produce scholarly work. However, this project offered the opportunity to create an original study with authentic data. While doing this, I learned valuable lessons about the research process. I learned the importance of ethics in research. I learned how to recruit participants, mine, code data, and use data to build a

deliverable product that will have an impact on my educational community. In addition, I learned about students that need help the most, and how a group of my peers helps these students.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

This project study was about district education practice for students with socioemotional difficulties resulting from ACEs. This work will inform the practices of principals and assistant principals as they reflect on their practices and search for ways to address needs of students in socioemotional crises. I chose to study approaches principals and assistant principals take to address these needs because I see it as a problem that needs to be addressed in my community. My findings from this qualitative research project indicate a need for principals and assistant principals to align their approach to students suffering from socioemotional crises as well as practices to meet needs of students. In addition, my findings point to a need for alternatives to superintendent hearings and expulsions from school.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

I see the potential for positive social change resulting from this evaluation project. In the local school district in the northeast, a growing concern of administrators, teachers, and staff is rising instances of students in socioemotional crises resulting from ACEs. The first step to address this problem is to understand what approaches principals and assistant principals use to address students in socioemotional crises. The next step of this process is to use answers to better inform practices resulting in the alignment of

approaches principals and assistant principals employ to address socioemotional needs of students in socioemotional crises.

In addition to informing practice, findings revealed a need to better define socioemotional crises for principals and assistant principals and pointed to a need to improve how data is stored in various district databases. It will be important to determine what alternatives to suspensions are available and effective. Finally, the influence of students' home environment was a strong theme in the data as a contributor to socioemotional crises resulting from ACEs.

Conclusion

As leaders in schools, principals and assistant principals owe students opportunities to succeed in school and after they leave. Many students experience traumatic events in their lives. These make it difficult for children to function in schools, which leads to socioemotional crises. Rates of socioemotional crises are growing in this school district despite efforts and interventions. This formed the basis of my research which will allow the local school district to help students in socioemotional crises resulting from ACEs.

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Appendix A: The Project

Approaches School Leaders Employ Regarding Students Who Experience Socioemotional Crisis

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Version March 2021

Introduction

Many students in the Local School District in a Northeast State suffer from socioemotional trauma brought on by adverse childhood experiences. The students, who experience socioemotional trauma, often experience dysregulation that results in disciplinary action that reduces valuable time in the classroom.

Based on the conceptual framework of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study by (Fellitti et al. 1998) this evaluation report summarizes findings from a project study based upon four data sources revealing measures principals and assistant principals took to address the needs of student in socioemotional crisis brought on by ACES.

Purpose of Evaluation

Superintendent hearings have increased in the local school district in the northeast in spite of administrative interventions. In addition, interventions targeting students suffering from socioemotional crisis have steadily increased between 2017 and 2020. This illustrates instances of students in socioemotional crisis are increasing and requiring administrative interventions. Therefore, it is essential to identify what approaches used by

principals and assistant principals in the local school in the northeast to address the needs of students in a socioemotional crisis. I completed an evaluation report that addresses a local need and produces major outcomes around the problem of student dysregulation and the alignment of administrative practices around student socioemotional crisis as a result of ACEs.

Criteria

This project study utilized a qualitative research design and approach. Qualitative data resulted from semi-structured interviews of four principals and four assistant principals, three years of RtI data from RtI data meeting minutes, three years of district student database notes, and notes resulting from intervention team meetings. The RtI, district student database, and intervention team meeting minutes were generated from database searches of a purposive sample including 10 elementary students, 10 middle school students and 10 high school students. The students were identified for the sample because of high occurrences of disciplinary referrals.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The Evaluation report included qualitative data generated by eight semi-structured interviews of four principals and four assistant principals. Each semi-structured interview consisted of seven questions. Semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed and codes assigned to the responses. Each of the seven questions resulted in several response codes.

Question 1- How would you define a social-emotional crisis of a student?

This question generated many responses. It is likely answers are based on the school leader's experiences. (see Table 1).

Table 1

Definition of Socioemotional Crisis

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Disrupts Learning	2	25.00%
Focus and Participation	3	37.50%
General Turmoil	6	75.00%
History That Causes Behavior	2	25.00%
Crisis in Home	4	50.00%
Physical Violence	2	25.00%
Self-Abuse	1	12.50%
Victim of Abuse	1	12.50%
Withdrawal	2	25.00%

Question 2- What is your role in dealing with a student in socio-emotional crisis?

It is interesting only two participants mentioned their role is to de-escalate the socioemotional crisis. A question for future research is why does this group of school leaders do not see their role as a de-escalator in the socioemotional crisis of a student (see Table 2).

Table 2

Principal and Assistant Principal Roles in Student Socioemotional Crisis

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
De-Escalate	2	25.00%
Delegate Responsibility	4	50.00%
First Responder	4	50.00%
Multi-faceted Role	1	12.50%

Support Listen	1	12.50%
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Question 3- How do you approach a student experiencing a social-emotional crisis?

The eight approaches mentioned in the participants responses reveal the need of alignment in the approaches school leaders use to address students in socioemotional crisis (see Table 3).

Table 3

Principal and Assistant Principal Approaches to Student Socioemotional Crisis

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Approach Calmly	4	50.00%
Give Space	3	37.50%
Investigate Cause	3	37.50%
Love/Care/Affirming	2	25.00%
Move Student to Safe Space	2	25.00%
Redirect	4	50.00%
Talk to Student	3	37.50%
Use Prior Knowledge	1	12.50%

Question 4-What strategies do you use to address the needs of a student experiencing a socioemotional crisis?

While 75% of the participants mentioned trying several strategies at once, a consistent strategy did not emerge from this question.

Table 4*Principal and Assistant Principal Strategies for Student Socioemotional Crisis*

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Connect with Student	5	62.50%
Find Staff/Professional to Assist	2	25.00%
Investigate Background of Student	4	50.00%
PBIS Strategies	3	37.50%
Try Combinations of Strategies- What Works	6	75.00%
TCI Therapeutic Crisis Intervention	3	37.50%

Question 5- How often do you turn to specific plans to work with a student in crisis?

The responses warrant further investigation in future studies regarding the use of Behavioral Intervention plans (see Table 5).

Table 5*Principal and Assistant Principal Use of Formal Intervention Plans*

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
No plans, respond to needs	6	75.00%
Does Not Use Plans Or never has	2	25.00%
Difficult to determine May not Have Direct Knowledge	4	50.00%
Follow Existing	1	12.50%

Question 6- Do you rely on any services or personnel to aide students during a socioemotional crisis?

School leaders unanimously spoke of immediately turning to a school psychologist or school social worker in for help assisting the needs of a student in socioemotional crisis. This question is the only question participants fully aligned their responses (see Table 6).

Table 6

Principal and Assistant Principal Reliance on Other School Professionals

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Access Counselor/Social Worker/Psych	8	100.00%
Contact Assistant Principal	3	37.50%
Contact Outside Agency	4	50.00%
Contact Principal	3	37.50%
Other Trusted Adult	1	12.50%

Question 7- Have you noticed any antecedents (triggers) leading to a socioemotional crisis? Describe some typical antecedents.

Home factors emerged as a main antecedent for students in socioemotional crisis aligning to exposure to traumatic events in the home environment that result in ACES. Also, peer issues emerged in a majority of the responses (see Table 7).

Table 7*Antecedents and Triggers Leading to Student Socioemotional Crisis*

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Chronic Trauma	1	12.50%
Family Illness/Death	1	12.50%
Lack of Consistency in Life	1	12.50%
Manifests at Home	7	87.50%
Peer Issues	5	62.50%
School Work Related	2	25.00%
Too Many Adults Involved	1	12.50%
Triggered Away From School	3	37.50%

RtI, District Student Database and Intervention Team Meeting Intervention Data Analysis Results

The evaluation report included data mined from the district RtI Database, district student database and intervention team meeting notes. A group of students with high disciplinary rates represented the sample of students that provided the target for the data mined from the three sources. Ten students from each of the three school levels represented the sample for this evaluation report totaling 30 students. Searches of the three databases occurred using student names. When the data search concluded the data was transferred to a single document for coding. The coding process resulted in four themes.

Theme 1- School Leader’s Decision for Intervention in Discipline Disposition

Category

With 30 students in the target group 24 superintendent’s suspension hearings is tragically high. This data point reveals the expulsion of students suffering with an ACE from the regular school environment for weeks or months at a time (see Table 8).

Table 8

Discipline Dispositions

Disciplinary Intervention	Occurrences	% of Overall Interventions
Superintendent's Hearing	24	12.80%
Principal's Hearing	10	5.30%
Principal's Meeting	2	1.10%

Theme 2 - School Leader’s Decision for Intervention in Counseling and Case

Management Category

Two family-based interventions emerged at a higher rate than other forms of counseling which would suggest school leaders and social workers focused interventions within the home environment. This suggests school leaders connected the socioemotional crisis to the student’s home environment (see Table 9).

Table 9

Forms of Counseling and Case-Management

Counseling Type	Occurrences	% of Overall Interventions
In House Individual Counseling	3	1.60%

Out of House Individual Counseling	7	3.70%
Case Management	12	6.40%
General Mental Health Services	10	5.30%
Family Group Counseling	26	13.90%
Parent Advocacy	1	0.50%
Family Case Management	19	10.20%

Theme 3- School Leader’s Decision for Intervention in County/Court Related

Category

Rates of CPS “hotline” reports and Court Ordered Supervision indicate school leaders identified issues within the student homes that may be triggering a socioemotional crisis. CPS reports arise from lack of supervision, psychological abuse or emotional abuse. Court ordered supervision occurs at the secondary level resulting from the lack of adequate supervision in the household (see Table 10).

Table 10

County and Court Related Interventions

County/Court Intervention	Occurrences	% of Overall Interventions
CPS Report	10	5.30%
Family Court	1	0.50%
Court Ordered Respite	3	1.60%
Court Ordered Supervision	10	5.30%
Court Ordered Therapeutic Placement	2	1.10%

Theme 4 School Leader’s Decision for intervention at the District Level

School social worker involvement would be a first step intervention. This code appeared 36 times across the three databases. Typically, no other steps can move forward

without the involvement of the school social worker as coordinators of interventions when directed by school leaders (see Table 11). In addition, only 25% of the respondents indicated they saw their role as de-escalator when a student is in socioemotional crisis. To a great extent principals and assistant principals rely on the superintendent's hearing which results in long term suspension as an intervention. (see Table 11).

Table 11

District Level Interventions

District Intervention	Occurrences	% of Overall Interventions
Home visit/District Employee	6	3.20%
Alternative School Referral	2	1.10%
SSW Involvement	36	19.30%
Attendance Letter	2	1.10%
District Ordered	1	0.50%
Therapeutic Placement		

Address Local Needs

Locally, the results of this project study will inform a more consistent system of socioemotional supports for students impacted by physical, sexual, and emotional trauma in childhood.

Recommendations

Resulting from this project study, the Local School District in a Northeastern State should take the necessary steps to align intervention practices for students with socioemotional and behavioral disabilities. A shared approach while addressing a student suffering a socioemotional crisis needs to be determined. While collecting data from the

RtI Database, district student database and intervention team meeting notes I discovered social workers and administrators inconsistently stored the data. A uniform system and practice for storing data and documentation is recommended.

Project PowerPoint slides

Slide 1

Evaluation Report- The Local School District in a Northeast State

Measures Principals and Assistant Principals Take to Address the Needs of Students in Socioemotional Crisis

The slide features a dark background with faint, light-colored illustrations of educational items such as a globe, a microscope, a book, and various geometric shapes. A white rectangular box contains the main title, and a yellow rectangular box below it contains the subtitle.

Slide 2

Introduction

Many students in the Local School District in a Northeast State suffer from socioemotional trauma brought on by adverse childhood experiences. The students, who experience socioemotional trauma, often experience dysregulation that results in disciplinary action that reduces valuable time in the classroom.

Based on the conceptual framework of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study by (Fellitti et al. 1998) this evaluation report summarizes findings from a project study based upon four data sources revealing measures principals and assistant principals took to address the needs of student in socioemotional crisis brought on by ACES.

The slide has a dark background with a yellow horizontal bar at the top. The title 'Introduction' is centered in the dark bar. The main text is on a light background below.

Slide 3**Purpose of Evaluation**

Superintendent hearings have increased in the local school district in the northeast in spite of administrative interventions. In addition, interventions targeting students suffering from socioemotional crisis have steadily increased between 2017 and 2020. This illustrates instances of students in socioemotional crisis are increasing and requiring administrative interventions. Therefore, it is essential to identify what approaches used by principals and assistant principals in the local school in the northeast to address the needs of students in a socioemotional crisis. I completed this evaluation report that addresses a local need and produces major outcomes around the problem of student dysregulation and the alignment of administrative practices around student socioemotional crisis as a result of ACES.

Slide 4**Criteria**

The project study that resulted in this project evaluation utilized a qualitative research design and approach. Qualitative data resulted from semi-structured interviews of four principals and four assistant principals, RtI data from RtI data meeting minutes, district student database notes, and notes resulting from intervention team meetings. The RtI, district student database, and intervention team meeting minutes were generated from database searches of a purposive sample including 10 elementary students, 10 middle school students and 10 high school students. The students were identified for the project study because of high occurrences of disciplinary referrals resulting in suspensions.

Slide 5

Semi-Structured Interviews

The Evaluation report included qualitative data generated by eight semi-structured interviews of four principals and four assistant principals. Each semi-structured interview consisted of seven questions. Semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed and codes assigned to the responses. Each of the seven questions resulted in several response codes.

Slide 6

Question 1

Question 1-

How would you define a social-emotional crisis of a student?

This question generated many responses. It is likely answers are based on the school leader's experiences. (see Table 1).

Table 1

Definition of Socioemotional Crisis

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Disrupts Learning	2	25.00%
Focus and Participation	3	37.50%
General Turmoil	6	75.00%
History That Causes Behavior	2	25.00%
Crisis in Home	4	50.00%
Physical Violence	2	25.00%
Self-Abuse	1	12.50%
Victim of Abuse	1	12.50%
Withdrawal	2	25.00%

Slide 7

Question 2

Question 2- What is your role in dealing with a student in socio-emotional crisis?

It is interesting only two participants mentioned their role is to de-escalate the socioemotional crisis. A question for future research is why does this group of school leaders do not see their role as a de-escalator in the socioemotional crisis of a student (see Table 2).

Table 2

Principal and Assistant Principal Roles in Student Socioemotional Crisis

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
De-Escalate	2	25.00%
Delegate Responsibility	4	50.00%
First Responder	4	50.00%
Multi-faceted Role	1	12.50%
Support Listen	1	12.50%

Slide 8

Question 3

Question 3- How do you approach a student experiencing a social-emotional crisis?

The eight approaches mentioned in the participants responses reveal the need of alignment in the approaches school leaders use to address students in socioemotional crisis (see Table 3).

Table 3

Principal and Assistant Principal Approaches to Student Socioemotional Crisis

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Approach Calmly	4	50.00%
Give Space	3	37.50%
Investigate Cause	3	37.50%
Love/Care/Affirming	2	25.00%
Move Student to Safe Space	2	25.00%
Redirect	4	50.00%
Talk to Student	3	37.50%
Use Prior Knowledge	1	12.50%

Slide 9

Question 4

Question 4-What strategies do you use to address the needs of a student experiencing a socioemotional crisis?

While 75% of the participants mentioned trying several strategies at once, a consistent strategy did not emerge from this question.

Table 4

Principal and Assistant Principal Strategies for Student Socioemotional Crisis

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Connect with Student	5	62.50%
Find Staff/Professional to Assist	2	25.00%
Investigate Background of Student	4	50.00%
PBIS Strategies	3	37.50%
Try Combinations of Strategies- What Works	6	75.00%
TCI Therapeutic Crisis Intervention	3	37.50%

Slide 10

Question 5

Question 5- How often do you turn to specific plans to work with a student in crisis?

The responses warrant further investigation in future studies regarding the use of Behavioral Intervention plans (see Table 5).

Table 5

Principal and Assistant Principal Use of Formal Intervention Plans

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
No plans, respond to needs	6	75.00%
Does Not Use Plans Or never has	2	25.00%
Difficult to determine May not Have Direct Knowledge	4	50.00%
Follow Existing Plan/BIP	1	12.50%

Slide 11

Question 7

Question 7- Have you noticed any antecedents (triggers) leading to a socioemotional crisis? Describe some typical antecedents.

Home factors emerged as a main antecedent for students in socioemotional crisis aligning to exposure to traumatic events in the home environment that result in ACES. Also, peer issues emerged in a majority of the responses (see Table 7).

Table 7

Antecedents and Triggers Leading to Student Socioemotional Crisis

Code	Respondents	% of Leader Response
Chronic Trauma	1	12.50%
Family Illness/Death	1	12.50%
Lack of Consistency in Life	1	12.50%
Manifests at Home	7	87.50%
Peer Issues	5	62.50%
School Work Related	2	25.00%
Too Many Adults Involved	1	12.50%
Triggered Away From School	3	37.50%

Slide 12

Question 7

Question 7- Have you noticed any antecedents (triggers) leading to a socioemotional crisis? Describe some typical antecedents.

Finding. Home factors emerged as a main antecedent for students in socioemotional crisis aligning to exposure to traumatic events in the home environment that result in ACES. Also, peer issues emerged in a majority of the responses (see Table 7).

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Manifests at Home	7	87.50%
Peer Issues	5	62.50%
School Work Related	2	25.00%
Too Many Adults Involved	1	12.50%
Triggered Away From School	3	37.50%

Slide 13

RtI, Filemaker and At-Risk Meeting Intervention Data Analysis Results

The evaluation report included data mined from the district RtI Database, Filemaker Database and at-Risk Meeting Notes. A group of students with high disciplinary rates represented the sample of students that provided the target for the data mined from the three sources. Ten students from each of the three school levels represented the sample for this evaluation report totaling 30 students. Searches of the three databases occurred using student names. When the data search concluded the data was transferred to a single document for coding. The coding process resulted in four themes.

Slide 14

Theme 1

Theme 1- School Leader's Decision for Intervention in Discipline Disposition Category

With 30 students in the target group 24 superintendents suspension hearings is tragically high. This data point reveals the expulsion of students suffering with an ACE from the regular school environment for weeks or months at a time (see Table 8).

Table 8

Discipline Dispositions

Disciplinary Intervention	Occurrences	% of Overall Interventions
Superintendent's Hearing	24	12.80%
Principal's Hearing	10	5.30%
Principal's Meeting	2	1.10%

Slide 15

Theme 2

Theme 2 - School Leader's Decision for Intervention in Counseling and Case Management Category

Two family based interventions emerged at a higher rate than other forms of counseling which would suggest school leaders and social workers focused interventions within the home environment. This suggests school leaders connected the socioemotional crisis to the student's home environment (see Table 9).

Table 9*Forms of Counseling and Case-Management*

Counseling Type	Occurrences	% of Overall Interventions
In House Individual Counseling	3	1.60%
Out of House Individual Counseling	7	3.70%
Case Management	12	6.40%
General Mental Health Services	10	5.30%
Family Group Counseling	26	13.90%
Parent Advocacy	1	0.50%
Family Case Management	19	10.20%

Slide 16

Theme 3

Theme 3- School Leader's Decision for Intervention in County/Court Related Category

Rates of CPS "hotline" reports and Court Ordered Supervision indicate school leaders identified issues within the student homes that may be triggering a socioemotional crisis. CPS reports arise from lack of supervision, psychological abuse or emotional abuse. Court ordered supervision occurs at the secondary level resulting from the lack of adequate supervision in the household (see Table 10).

Table 10*County and Court Related Interventions*

County/Court Intervention	Occurrences	% of Overall Interventions
CPS Report	10	5.30%
Family Court	1	0.50%
Court Ordered Respite	3	1.60%
Court Ordered Supervision	10	5.30%
Court Ordered Therapeutic Placement	2	1.10%

Slide 17

Theme 4

Theme 4- School Leader’s Decision for intervention at the District Level

School social worker involvement would be a first step intervention. This code appeared 36 times across the three databases. Typically, no other steps can move forward without the involvement of the school social worker as coordinators of interventions when directed by school leaders (see Table 11).

Table 11
District Level Interventions

District Intervention	Occurrences	% of Overall Interventions
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SSW Involvement	36	19.30%
Attendance Letter	2	1.10%
District Ordered Therapeutic Placement	1	0.50%

Slide 18

Recommendations

A shared approach while addressing a student suffering a socioemotional crisis needs to be determined. Local School District in a Northeastern State should take the necessary steps to align intervention practices for students with socioemotional and behavioral disabilities. A more uniform data storage practice is needed for Rtl, district student database, and intervention team meeting minutes.

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

**Approaches School Leaders Employ Regarding Students Who Experience
Socioemotional Crisis- Interview Questions**

RQ1: What approaches do local school district in the northeast state principals and assistant principals use to address the needs of students in a socioemotional crisis?

Research Project Questions:

1. How would you define a socioemotional crisis of a student?
2. What is your role in dealing with a student in socio-emotional crisis?
3. How do you approach a student experiencing a social-emotional crisis?
4. What strategies do you use to address the needs of a student experiencing a socioemotional crisis?
5. How often do you turn to specific plans to work with a student in crisis?
6. Do you rely on any services or personnel to aide students during a socioemotional crisis?
7. Have you noticed any antecedents (triggers) leading to a socioemotional crisis?
Describe some typical antecedents.