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Teacher Perceptions of Second Step in Third and Fourth Grade

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Abstract

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MA, Hampton University, 2005

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Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Behavior problems among third- and fourth-grade students have become an issue of concern among stakeholders in the education sector. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore teachers' perceptions of Second Step, a socioemotional curriculum with practices used to address behaviors with third and fourth graders. The study's theoretical framework was Bandura's social learning theory. Research questions focused on third and fourth-grade teachers' perceptions of Second Step's benefits on student behaviors and socioemotional practices. Interviews, document reviews, and photographs were used to collect data from 10 third- and fourth-grade teachers. Open coding and thematic analysis were used to analyze data. The findings revealed that teachers perceived that students felt their voices were valued when teachers were empowered to validate their emotions, which gave teachers an easy-to-implement, engaging way to teach social-emotional skills and concepts in Second Step. In addition, socioemotional practices were used to address the behavioral needs of the third- and fourth-grade students. Teachers were empowered to validate students' emotions, conflict resolution was improved, teacher mediation of problem-solving was used, the problem-solving wheel was used, and scenario practice was used. Findings could result in positive social change by highlighting different curricula and interventions that work best for students struggling behaviorally in similar grades and neighborhoods. Recommendations include providing teachers with ongoing coaching so they can balance content time while addressing the emotional concerns of students when they need support.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

In the target school for my research study, a history of extreme disrespect and incidences of physical altercations by children plagued this elementary school. The dean of students who collected daily data on students' behavioral performance identified that the number of send-outs, or class removals, for extreme disrespect to others or physical altercations had plateaued in the past five years across kindergarten, first and second-grade classes of this public charter school. Similar incidents were also occurring in third and fourth grade (Achievement First, 2017). The dean of students stated that many kindergartens through second-grade teachers expected certain misbehaviors from four- to seven-year-olds and, therefore, did not request behavioral support for their students as often as third- and fourth-grade teachers. However, according to an on-site academic dean, the lack of attention to the social and emotional needs of students in the classroom was still a problem because many of those behavior support needs were only attended to when the student misbehaved and behavioral support was formally requested.

Internal school documents showed that those behaviors led to time out of the classroom, thereby potentially lowering students' academic achievement because of missed class time (Achievement First, 2017). Time out of the classroom for misbehaviors was categorized either as a removal or a suspension depending on the amount of time spent. Although this approach may teach students a lesson in the moment, time out of the classroom fails to teach students how to balance their experience and their emotion thereby allowing the misbehaviors to continue (Blewitt et al., 2021).

The dean of students and the school social worker decided to train their teachers and introduce their students to a new social-emotional learning (SEL) program, Second Step, in the

2017–2018 school year. This program seeks to curtail the behavioral issues of those students most frequently removed from the classroom. In the current study, I explored (a) how teachers used this program and (b) their perceptions of the program's benefits among urban charter students. Pharis et al. (2019) noted that the New York public charter schools had lower student populations but 8% higher suspension rates than traditional public schools. However, nonviolent causes for suspension and removal comparable to the causes at the study site (verbal abuse, disrespect to teachers and others) have increased across all school types (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). According to the same study, the year that an urban school in the eastern United States decided to utilize a social-emotional approach to address misbehaviors, citywide suspensions were 35,234.

Furthermore, the National Center for Education Statistics (2017) indicated that suspensions have increased by 1,434 incidents and chart-topping trends like disrespect of teachers and others for verbal abuse are their highest in over 17 years. Upper elementary episodes account for 8% of those events (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). These data show these misbehaviors and similar behaviors are occurring not only in urban charters but also across academy levels. I conducted a qualitative case study to explore how SEL impacts the misbehaviors identified in an urban school, as perceived by the teachers, so that similar methods could be used across comparable student populations.

Definition of Terms

The definitions ensured uniformity and understanding of the terms used throughout this study.

Behavioral issues: Any student disruptive misconduct in the classroom that ranges from screaming and angrily walking around the classroom to actions that cause physical or emotional harm to themselves and others (Wenz-Gross et al., 2018).

Behavioral support: Intervention provided by an experienced on-site professional that reinforces teacher expectations and builds skills with students to prevent further misbehaviors and more formal consequences like suspension (Wenz-Gross et al., 2018).

Push-in: A method used to proactively address a minor disruptive behavior before it escalates and calls for a send-out (Quach et al., 2020). This level of support is usually provided by another teacher or behavior specialist to work with the child in the classroom, build skill, and keep them on task.

Second Step: A program developed by the Committee for Children to be used with kindergarteners through eighth graders to assist with emotion management, reaction control, problem-solving capabilities, and decision-making skills students need to be considered social-emotionally literate (Quach et al., 2020).

Send-outs: A term used to describe the measure by which SEL may be necessary. Teachers rely on send-outs in times when a child's behavior is such that others in the classroom cannot learn in a safe and calm enough environment (Baker, 2018). Children sent out of the classroom walk to or with a behavior specialist for skill building.

Social-emotional: The child's experience, expression, and management of emotions and the ability to establish positive and rewarding relationships with others (Quach et al., 2020). Social-emotional and SEL were used interchangeably. According to The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020), further evidence of useful SEL is

when a child can feel and show empathy for other people, start and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Social-emotional curriculum benefits: The gains related to teaching socioemotional skills (Quach et al., 2020).

Suspension rate: The percentage of students who received disciplinary actions taken by a school or district in response to a student's behavior. These disciplinary actions are often associated with negative outcomes, such as an increased risk of dropping out of school early on.

Significance of the Study

This research addressed the reality of disruptive behavior in the school setting. The dean of students at the study site stated there is a challenge among children to control or adjust their responses in social interactions, and there is a risk of impacting the overall learning environment within the school. Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin (2017) established that a conducive learning environment is characterized by positive relationships and support and is likely to improve the learning process. A teacher is a person in a child's life who provides those relationships, belief, parameters, and pushes. In response to the high number of behavioral issues among third and fourth graders, teachers reported that they are struggling to address students' needs at the social and emotional level while teaching (Singh, 2020). The SEL program that this school hoped to implement was being instituted to improve students' control over their emotions. The current project study's results may provide valuable information on how to improve support to children with emotion and social problems in their learning institutions (Esen-Aygun & Sahin-Taskin, 2017).

Further, the project's results may reveal approaches to fill the need for emotional connections and sense of belonging in students, thereby improving learning opportunities and promoting greater academic success. The limitations of this study will depend on the aspects of the program teachers choose to use, the children with whom they implement the program, and the transferability of the program to other urban schools. Parents of frequently suspended students have informally commented that they believe the reason for the removals or suspensions is stricter expectations in classrooms and more attention to the smaller behaviors that are sometimes unnoticed in larger populations. However, according to the end-of-year internal school data (Achievement First, 2017), the suspension rate was still higher in the upper elementary grades.

Two years ago, the charter school used in the current study chose a social-emotional approach via Second Step based on a suggestion from another school leader. Committee for Children (2020) identified Second Step as having infused curriculum components into lessons, hallway bulletin boards, classroom design, and school culture policies. The current study was designed to discover the extent to which the teachers believe the curriculum is working to better support efforts to lower suspension rates among students.

Research Questions

There are a few factors that may play a role in why a SEL program would be successful. These factors are critical to determining the success of the program at the school site and the modifications needed to provide stronger outcomes among third and fourth graders. The research questions (RQs) for this study were the following:

RQ1: What are third- and fourth-grade teachers' perceptions of Second Step's benefits on student behaviors in an urban charter school environment?

RQ2: What socioemotional practices are used to address the behavior needs of the third- and fourth-grade students?

Knowing which social-emotional practices improve student behavior most in this urban institution may lead to social change at the studied school and similar schools.

Review of the Literature

Social-emotional development refers to how children learn to express their feelings, develop relationships, and practice social skills (Singh, 2020). The SEL program can either justify or refute Bandura's (1977) theory that is based on the premise that children learn by observing others' behaviors and the attitudes, reactions, and outcomes of those actions. Scholars have argued that all children have specific and similar needs that require certain behaviors be evident during certain stages of their growth and development (McMullen & McMullen, 2018). However, growth and development changes in children are distinct and take place differently from one child to another, especially when it comes to their emotions and behavioral changes (Singh, 2020).

College and Career Readiness and Success Center (2021) at American Institutes for Research found that there are at least 3 active elementary school indicators that speak directly to postcollege success: reading by the third grade, less than 10% absenteeism, and social competence. Students with poor attendance, poor reading skills, and the inability to navigate social experiences and their emotions will not achieve the same level of success as children who meet these criteria (McMullen & McMullen, 2018). Diener et al. (2016) focused on the social behaviors of preschool-age children and how their creative potential develops through those social experiences. Baker (2018) also found that managing behaviors help students be less aggressive toward their peers.

The trend of SEL studies has been that children who master SEL skills and competencies are likely to achieve greater success, have better careers, and have a better mental and physical health as adults. Lofthouse (2019) conducted a qualitative study to explore how scaffolding influenced students' emotional learning in elementary classrooms. The researchers found that scaffolding positively influenced students' behavior. Furthermore, many students in the study developed friendships and gained the ongoing support of their peers based on mutual respect built through social-emotional learning. McMullen and McMullen (2018) extended Bandura's (1977) theory to report that students in learning institutions learn by observing other students' behaviors, attitudes, and actions, which could have an impact on their overall behavior and emotional well-being.

Different databases were searched for articles on the study topic: PubMed, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and ResearchGate, ScienceDirect, and JSTOR. The key words used to search the databases included *social-emotional impact* in *elementary schools* on *third and fourth grade social emotional learning programs* that led to a case for professional development grounded in state learning standards. The review of the literature was grounded in the understanding that teachers are one of the most significant positive reinforcements and Bandura's (1977) conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

Studies on how human beings learn are grounded in a variety of theorists including Bandura, Vygotsky, Denham, Bassett, and Zinsser. The conceptual framework of the current study was Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which is also used in Second Step. In 2008, Second Step released its fundamentals grounded in Bandura's social learning theory. Bandura's school of thought claims human beings learn by observing others' behaviors and the attitudes,

reactions, and outcomes of those actions. As a result, humans form an idea of what behaviors are acceptable and that idea serves as a guide for action. Learned behavior from the environment through the process of observational learning includes children observing the people around them behaving in several ways and taking on those qualities (Bandura, 1977). Other researchers have examined links between emotion and cognition in the classroom and have viewed teachers as the ones who lead that charge (Skiba et al., 2002; Wentzel & Ramani, 2016). The impact is significant about children's feelings, classroom engagement, and learning (Bandura, 1977).

Bandura's (1977) framework constructs and related literature helped me develop the research instrument and observational protocol for the current study. The interview questions I asked about SEL programming and Second Step techniques connected to Bandura's belief that children can learn when given techniques that teach them regulatory functions. Capturing teachers' reflections of SEL curricula and practices through document reviews and photographs linked to Bandura's theory that a child learns mostly from their surrounding behavioral reinforcements.

Teacher Roles

Building on Bandura's (1977) research, Singh (2020) conducted a literature review on the possible teacher roles in the development of young children's emotional competence. McMullen and McMullen (2018) found that teachers were important socializers of emotion by providing children experiences that promote or deter the development of emotional competence in the learning environment. McMullen and McMullen found that teachers have a significant role in influencing emotions, attitudes, and behaviors that students have in their early stages of life. After conducting a qualitative study on the role that teachers have in emotional growth in children using a sample of 312 K–12 teachers, Fitzgerald (2020) found that teachers are the engines that

drive these practices in schools and classrooms, making their perceptions of a working SEL program key to improving social-emotional learning in schools. Fitzgerald also found that teachers have a direct impact on social-emotional learning of children in school because they influence every aspect of children's behaviors through learning. The implications are that teachers have an important role to play in the successful implementation of social-emotional learning programs among children in the early stages of life. As an illustration, Schonert-Reichi (2017) reported that, regardless of the program used, if educators are not efficient in the practices themselves, the fidelity of the program will be low and the SEL class-wide and school-wide will be less successful. Thus far, researchers have established that teachers have an important role in SLE programs because they influence social and emotional learning programs and practices in learning environments, and their social-emotional competence and well-being directly influence their students' emotional growth.

McMullen and McMullen (2018) also investigated the effectiveness of teacher-led interventions on emotional and social well-being of students. A sample of 123 teachers in K–12 were recruited to take part in the study. According to the findings, teachers play an important role in teaching key issues relating to self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness among learners, which directly affect their communication and improve behavior outcomes among learners. Similarly, Blewitt et al. (2021) investigated Australian early childhood educators' views on children's social and emotional development. The focus was to explore the main approaches educators use to support children's social and emotional skills, including the enablers and barriers to SEL within the preschool environment. Blewitt et al. found that leaners' social-emotional development is a major tenet of instructor planning, practice, and reflection. Participants noted different strategies they used to support learners' social and emotional skills that were integrated with social interactions and relationships with learners and families. The main roles that teacher

shared in prompting social and emotional learning in children were nurturing students' emotional behaviors and supporting SEL through daily activities. Quach et al. (2020) explored the benefits of early childhood experiences of instructors and caregivers as a foundation for social and emotional skills in children. According to the findings, children face hostilities in the school setting and need to deal with peer pressure in other settings, and the teacher's role is to help them manage these challenges (Quach et al., 2020).

Rae et al. (2017) agreed that SEL in the classroom is significant for both the student and the teacher because it influences students' emotions and social skills through different reinforcement approaches instituted by instructors to bolster students' self-awareness and social relationships. Based on an exploratory study of teachers' supervision of social-emotional programming in two of England's special schools, Rae et al. found that student outcomes are enhanced by teacher well-being and are critical for the school's educational and economic outcomes. Several researchers have also investigated the influence of teachers' role in the implementation of SEL. For instance, Harvey et al. (2016) noted that the emotional climate of the classroom is determined by teachers who improve in leadership, friendliness, understanding, responsibility, and encouragement.

Review of the Broader Problem

The implementation of SEL programs in schools is an emerging trend across the United States (Pharis et al., 2019). This movement is driven by many factors including several indications that incoming young children are without the social and behavioral skills needed to thrive in school (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Nationally, calls for SEL programs in schools can be linked to a surge in violence among learners including bullying and harassment (Fitzgerald, 2020). For some schools that have already adopted an SEL program, few are cohesively

integrated into classrooms and schools in meaningful ways or embedded in the daily interactions of students and staff (Omasta et al., 2020). As Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin (2017) reported, challenges associated with this have included competing demands, limited professional development time or structures, and the need for more data to determine the exhaustive need for SEL at the school site.

Collaboration among stakeholders to implement SEL programs could reduce violence among learners. For instance, Pharis et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study on a sample of 135 K–12 educators on the benefits of SEL on students' discipline and reported that collaborating to implement SEL programs in schools significantly reduced discipline issues among learners. According to Bozgün and Akın-Kösterelioğlu (2020), the reasons contributing to the broader problems of increased violence among leaners include many leaning situations underestimating the benefits of SEL skills as a key aspect of the learning mission and vision; rather, SEL is viewed as extracurricular or secondary (Ross & Tolan, 2018). Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin (2017) noted that there has been an increase in the number instructors circumventing this issue by integrating SEL skills within academic content by using social studies, language arts, and humanities curricula to build cultural understanding, respect for difference, and social and ethical awareness. Yang et al. (2020) reported that several schools dedicate limited time for training teachers, school staff, and adults who staff out-of-school settings on how to promote SEL skills, deal with negative peer pressure or conflict, or address other SEL-related issues.

SEL Impact in Schools

Primary teachers have found social and emotional skills more convenient to implement. A veteran kindergarten teacher at the study site, who has been employed before and after Second Step was implemented, stated "[we] use actual scenarios to address things real-time and hand-

select books that highlight certain character traits. To be honest, lower school teachers tend to be more nurturing in general than those in upper school" (Achievement First, 2017, p.9). According to Barnes (2019), social emotional learning is needed in early stages years of development, ranging from four to five years. However, Yang et al. (2020) underscored that some school situations lend themselves to social-emotional learning through experiences with tattling, loneliness, peer pressure, and student achievement. Self-awareness and responses to aggression look different in kindergarten and second grade than they do in third and fourth (Weyns et al., 2017). Relational aggression develops more in third and fourth grade; according to Weyns et al. (2017), younger children respond to adult reprimands as an impetus to find more appropriate ways of handling aggression. During middle childhood, reprimands increase relational aggression and children respond better to teacher praise (Weyns et al., 2017). A 5-year veteran of a primary classroom stated "life also becomes more complex when children grow to have a greater sense of unfairness, politics, stereotypes, etc." (Weyns et al., 2017, p.23). As children get older, the need for SEL only increases.

Researchers began exploring social-emotional differences and challenges that could hinder children from developing socially, and others researched potential responses to those challenges. LaBelle (2019) investigated the influence of SEL on children's future life. According to the findings, students who do not receive adequate SEL guidance displayed withdrawal behaviors, had strained social relationships with their peers, and were aggressive when provoked by external stressors. Similarly, Wills et al. (2018) explored the link between coping strategies and social-emotional functioning in middle childhood and reported that students who received SEL in early stages of development were resilient and could cope with negative stressors in the environment less aggressively compared to those who were not introduced to SEL in their early years of development.

Weyns et al. (2017) also conducted a qualitative study to explore the views of 10 early year practitioners in relation to supporting children who have challenges with social-emotional development. The findings indicated symptoms of social-emotional difficulties resulting from social life, friends, and family. Nickerson et al. (2019) established that providing emotional support and guidance on how to avoid external stressors in the environment through SEL skills was important in reducing social-emotional problems with children. To address social-emotional development challenges, LaBelle (2019) explored different strategies, including the use of an elementary music class in which social-emotional skills develop in children who attend these classes. However, solutions do not only appear in the arts.

Researchers have found a significant relationship between social-emotional comprehension and focus in school. For instance, Platas (2017) investigated the relationship between social-emotional skills and students' comprehension in class and found that students who had been introduced to SEL had high self-awareness, social skills, self-management, and improved academic outcomes. Similarly, after exploring the relationship between SEL skills and academic performance, Nakajima et al. (2020) found a positive a relationship between social-emotional comprehension and focus in school, especially in reading and mathematics. In a similar study, Wolf and McCoy (2019) investigated the influence of social-emotional skills in school on student performance and found a strong correlation between socially skilled behaviors and reading and mathematics.

Similar results to those of Wolf and McCoy (2019) were reported by Wenz-Gross et al. (2018) who noted that Skill in social behaviors is taught through core problem-solving skills – problem identification, setting goals, generating appropriate responses, and evaluating outcomes - at some institutions. Additionally, Wenz-Gross et al. (2018), highlighted, based on study results,

that isolating the effect SEL has on improving the student-teacher relationship. Wong et al. (2019) also emphasized that as teachers engage students in structured classroom activities, they encourage students to ask for help. In turn, the support leads to increasing student interest and classroom engagement. Promoting teacher led SEL programs is important because, according to Wong et al. (2019), classroom management techniques come more naturally to teachers who take the time to develop these interpersonal skills with their children.

Similar to this study, Aydin et al. (2016) studied an SEL curriculum that was enforced to prevent students' problematic behaviors in a public-school context. With 55 % of students on free and reduced lunch, the 20 schools studied committed 75 % of their interested fourth and fifth-grade teachers to the process. Out of these fourth and fifth graders, 20% of the highest need students were able to regulate their emotions, appraise social problems appropriately, and use rational problem-solving skills to address them (2016, p.85). In all the schools studied, social-emotional learning programs were used to reduce at-risk behaviors and some impacted academic achievement more than others (2016, p.85). This study is building upon research already done while focusing solely on upper elementary students and their teachers' perception of the social-emotional curriculum administrators hope will curb those students' misbehaviors (2016, p.86).

Third- and Fourth- Grade Behaviors

Burchinal et al. (2020) provided evidence showing that Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) helps student to increase their abilities to assert oneself, take responsibility, and display self-control. Consequently, between third grade and fifth grade, there was a decrease in those abilities. This was similarly reported in the Eunice Kennedy Shriver's National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 2020) study which showed a shift in at-risk behavior trajectory at and after third grade. The study noted that behavior intervention appeared to have

diminished results after third grade (NICHD, 2020). More specifically, the study results showed that children who were on the higher-aggressive trajectory (e.g., disruptive at lunch, disruptive in class, off-task, required harsher punishment, or experienced parent-child conflict) are less socially skilled than those children on lower-aggressive trajectories (NICHD, 2020). However, children hold the power within them to self-transform if certain skills are developed.

For instance, Omasta et al. (2020) found that children in learning environments can adjust themselves social–emotionally based on their social interactions with others or as dictated by their immediate environments through executive functioning. In turn, Omasta et al. (2020) underscored that executive functions and cognitive controls enable students to evaluate situations, balance priorities, and flexibly adapt behaviors when confronted with novel problems and solutions. Fitzgerald (2020) also explored examined social behaviors in fifth grade students in reference to their SEL skills. Fitzgerald (2020) found that students without SEL skills in elementary levels struggled most with prosocial behaviors, status, as well as adapting to popularity and preference.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), much like the project's site school, young Black students in elementary and secondary schools outnumber Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native by triple the suspensions and over 400 more suspensions than their White counterparts. The New York State Education Department (2017) reported that boys and girls in New York's public schools make up much of the suspensions in this country, ranking seventh in the nation. Current literature suggests that in early adolescence, children's lives are accompanied daily with intense, negative emotions and a decrease in perceived support from parents (Burchinal et al., 2020; Fitzgerald, 2020; Omasta et al., 2020). Additionally, emotional stability seems to be low in this age group, as well as an increased reward

dependence and intense hormonal influence. According to Omasta et al. (2020), between ages eight and ten, there is an increasing number of contexts for which one is expected to develop skills, which have certain social-emotional interventions. However, Gregory and Fergus (2017) believed that social-emotional learning alone would not eliminate behaviors in some contexts. They write about SEL not addressing root causes and major contributing factors to the actual behaviors, including race and gender-based inequity (p. 1). In their Cleveland research, the components of my study are also evident: pre-kindergarten to fifth-grade population, teachers trained in an SEL curriculum, social skills intertwined into a minimum of 20 to 30 minutes per lesson, and teachers continually coached on SEL reinforcements throughout the day (p. 4).

While their data showed a reduction in the need for exclusionary discipline, they suggest that the reduction cannot be traced to solely social-emotional contributors (Esen-Aygun & Sahin-Taskin, 2017). Gregory and Fergus (2017) consider that social-emotional learning could be a smoke screen that takes all the credit for making substantial changes to school culture and student behavior. Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin (2017) noted the SEL skills could all be a temporary fix that falls short of addressing the other persistent inequities in our schools that spark said behaviors from the beginning. It is because of contrasting studies like this that further research on social-emotional learning intertwined with the educational curriculum that meets the behavioral needs of third and fourth graders in an urban setting is significant.

SEL Research

Miller et al. (2017) examined a population of fifth graders in fourteen classrooms with social interventions that were only geared toward building relationships among peers and found the SEL interventions improve student behavior and their academic outcomes. Bozgün and Akın-Kösterelioğlu (2020) applied a different intervention, goal setting, and found that it impacted

school adjustment within the elementary academy. While helpful, both studies only encompassed one form of social-emotional intervention. In addition to these interventions, Singh (2020) used a fourth-grade population of students and teachers to collect data on the use of an SEL program on internalizing or externalizing problems. Researchers Bozgün and Akın-Kösterelioğlu (2020 found that students in the intervention groups showed significant gains in self-management, aggressiveness, and social issues than those in the control group. However, deliberate sampling was done and may have led to inconsistencies in the data, especially when it comes to the impact of SEL on the population of girls.

In connection with the urban school setting, Graves et al. (2016) spoke of social-emotional inclusion as having affected students' ability to regulate their behavior. However, their study (Graves et al., 2016) did not reveal the impact on students' empathy, feeling of responsibility, or externalizing behaviors. The study finding indicated the SEL program being studied addressed isolated actions but not necessarily the transferrable skills leading to more permanent functioning (Graves et al., 2016). Increasing studies have been performed that speak to the positive impact of social-emotional learning on academic achievement and school behaviors (Kopelman-Rubin et al., 2021) However, the current study focuses on the effect of a social-emotional program on school behaviors explicitly found among third and fourth graders, as perceived by the teacher.

Most educators can agree that social-emotional learning has some benefit (Fitzgerald, 2020; Kopelman-Rubin et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2020; Singh, 2020). However, as with many educational concepts, many cannot agree with which SEL program is most beneficial. For some contexts, SEL programs would provide helpful tools for learning (Fitzgerald, 2020). Others view it as a channel for promoting resilience post-trauma and other stresses (Wong, et al., 2019). Some

want SEL programs for character-building or neurocognitive skills (Miller et al., 2020). The multi-faceted world of social-emotional learning is relevant to student development; yet, Jones and Kahn (2017) encouraged schools to find a program that meets the need of their population.

Second Step Program

Second Step is a program designed by the Committee for Children to help pre-kindergarten children through eighth grade to understand and manage their emotions, control their reactions, and be more cognizant of another's feelings (Jones et al., 2017). The program uses games, songs, and stories to help develop problem-solving and decision-making skills. Pre-kindergarten through eighth grade have separate lessons for each day, along with a five to ten-minute follow-through activity. Second Step lessons are differentiated by grade level. CASEL (2020) described the elementary kit as geared toward third through fifth graders which also provides a scripted curriculum of between 22 and 25 weekly lessons. Teachers can use 20 to 45 minutes on the script and approximately five to ten-minutes on subsequent activities which are executed over a week's time. Each of those 22 to 25 main lessons includes an introduction to the featured concepts, a Brain Builder for cognitive regulation, a story or video discussion, an opportunity for students to practice new skills, and a summary of the lesson concepts. Before strengthening emotional and interpersonal skills in fifth grade, first through third grade emphasize cognitive regulation (Miller et al., 2017). As supported by Kopelman-Rubin et al. (2021), interpersonal skills are built through prosocial behavior (42% of the time), conflict resolution (38% of the time), and understanding social cues (20% of the time).

CASEL (2020) published the comprehensive Safe and Sound guide that reviews 80 national sequenced programs for general education classrooms. Among those groups reviewed, CASEL (2020) identifies 22 'Select SEL programs' that are particularly effective and

comprehensive in their SEL coverage and their documented behavioral impacts. Soundness of their CASEL (2020) SEL instructional practices is determined by strong self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. In this guide, Second Step was proven strong in every area except social awareness, which was identified as 'promising.' Its documented behavioral impact areas were violence prevention and other social behaviors.

Whereas other SEL programs (e.g., Caring School Community Child Development Project, Conflict Resolution Curriculum, High/Scope Educational Approach, I Can Problem Solve (ICPS), Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Open Circle Curriculum, Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), Responsive Classroom, Skills, Opportunities, and Recognition (SOAR) and Tribes TLC) were deemed strongly sound CASEL (2020). In a similar report, Jones et al. (2017) looked exclusively at 25 leading SEL programs. Among those was Second Step. Fourteen years after the CASEL (2020) initial review, and Second Step is still valued for its high foci on conflict resolution and cognitive regulation, particularly attention control. Its wider variety of instructional methods use songs, kinesthetics, games, writing, and video.

Other SEL Programs

Jones et al. (2017) examined how the theories of change behind ten other widely used school-based SEL interventions align with the way those interventions measure outcomes. These interventions have undergone randomized controlled trials that were published in peer-reviewed journals between 2004 and 2015 (Kopelman-Rubin et al., 2020). Aside from Second Step, Jones et al. (2019) reviewed the following programs: Fast Track PATHS, PATHS, Positive Action, Responsive Classroom, RULER, 4Rs, MindUP, Making Choices, Good Behavior Game, and

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The setting, program targets, program components, and outcomes were all key determinants of the strength of the program's reliability and value. Triassi (2018) emphasized the regulation of thought and action in MindUP; while RULER highlights emotional literacy and emotional intelligence. Still, others choose to emphasize adult practices and strategies through the environment like PBIS and Responsive Classroom.

Like the need of the urban school in my study, Making Choices and 4Rs wants to focus on social problem solving and conflict resolution. Novelli et al. (2019) reported that 4Rs focuses on changing underlying social-cognitive processes, such as aggressive interpersonal negotiation strategies to reduce children's aggression and violence. According to Novelli et al. (2019), 4Rs targets and measures both the underlying causes and the desired behavioral change. Likewise, 4Rs also reinforces the link between the brain and behavior, instead of focusing solely on changing the behaviors themselves (Novelli et al., 2019). Novelli et al. (2019) stated that Making Choices significantly reduced aggressive behavior, with stronger effects for racial and ethnic minority children, which directly matches the population of children served at school.

A program currently being implemented and evaluated in a small-scale randomized trial across pre-kindergarten through third grade, as well as in a new charter school in New York City comparable to that of the urban school of my project is SECURe (Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Understanding and Regulation; Bailey et al., 2012). Teachers and other staff support students to use SECURe routines throughout the school day. Reminders and tips about routine use are posted throughout the school, like 'Stop and Stay Cool,' use the 'Decision Tree' as guides to make smarter choices. In the Jones et al. (2017) study, teachers also prefer the set of short, easy-to-play games built onto traditional games like Simon Says and Red Light, Green Light by

making explicit connections to memory and impulse control skills. They can be conveniently used during class transitions or other times to help students get focused.

Case for SEL Professional Development

While more than 25 high-quality SEL programs have been recently analyzed, they have varied greatly in their content focus, instructional methods, as well as additional features and supports beyond core lessons (Jones et al., 2017). Jones et al. (2019) noted that the most fundamental part of SEL programs is in the execution, as implementation is most positively associated with better student outcomes. Moreover, disorganized approaches to social-emotional learning have shown negative effects on not only student engagement but staff morale as well (Kopelman-Rubin et al., 2021). Some programs, akin to Second Step, provide their own professional development via online training. Trainings are often one hour long and should be completed before the start of the program. A supplementary Principal Toolkit, provided by Second Step, also includes all-staff orientations, staff meeting activities, and handouts highlight key SEL concepts. More popular SEL programs also provide a series of district-wide or nationwide training.

Broadly speaking, teachers, school staff, and other adults who work with children typically receive little training on how to promote SEL skills, deal with peer conflict, or address other SEL-related issues at the school site (Bozgün & Akın-Kösterelioğlu, 2020). Beyond basic behavior management strategies, little attention is paid to social-emotional matters at the pre-service level (Jones et al., 2019). There are often even fewer in-service supports available via coaching and mentoring. Also, research shows that an adult's SEL skills play an important role in their ability to model those skills, develop positive relationships with students, and foster positive

classroom environments conducive to learning. For SEL to be effective, Baker (2018) stated that adults need support from both pre-service and in-service training.

SEL Learning Standards

High-quality professional development is usually provided for state learning standards that are taken most seriously. These standards then become the plan or blueprint for instruction, shaping and influencing what happens in the classroom, and tend to be connected mostly to assessment. With that understanding, Fitzgerald's (2020) findings supported the need to create high-quality preschool through high school educational standards for social and emotional learning (SEL) across the United States. Education experts believe that there should be alignment with early childhood education standards from K–12th grade so that teacher and student development is consistently supported year over year (Yang et al., 2020). Learning standards are statements about what students should know and be capable of throughout their educational matriculation. Some states have a head start at standards that include social-emotional learning.

SEL State Standards on Character and Social Development

Illinois SEL Standards were released by the Illinois State Board of Education in 2004 (LaBelle, 2019). The 2013 version of those standards included preschool standards fully aligned to the K–12 SEL standards and focused on problem solving from 3 years old (Nickerson et al., 2019). The Pennsylvania Student Interpersonal Skills Standards were approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and designed to promote the development of skills needed to effectively navigate local and global world challenges (Pharis et al., 2019). The standards are organized into four developmental periods (grades PreK– K, 1–5, 6–8, and 9–12). In addition to Pennsylvania, Pharis et al. (2019) identified Kansas, Vermont, Maine, and Missouri as also having SEL standards. Kansas standards are organized into themes - character development

(decision making and problem-solving), personal development (self-awareness and self-management), and social development (interpersonal skills).

Vermont's Vital Results standards focus on communication, reasoning, personal development, and responsibility. Maine's Guiding Principles focus on communication and problem-solving skills, while Missouri's Show-Me Standards emphasize gathering and analyzing information, effective communication, problem-solving, and responsible decision making. Except for Pennsylvania, the states mentioned above use developmental resources grouped in a way that separates upper elementary from lower elementary. The state of New York, most closely associated with the current study, has not adopted learning standards statements for SEL; however, the New York State Department of Education (2014) provides many helpful resources and strategies for supporting social and emotional development through a supportive environment. If teachers' professional development is based on SEL learning standards, as Ross and Tolan (2018) stated, then learning institutions need to effectively execute SEL curricula, having standards explicitly named in state documents is imperative.

Implications

The current study encountered teachers whose perceptions of student behaviors are positive, due to the SEL program they have applied. It is anticipated that they will recognize active student engagement, peer relationships, and consistent use of transferable social skills. Learning and using these skills likely would have considerably decreased the suspension rate and egregious classroom behaviors. Based on findings from my study, I focused on creating a professional development training for teachers that teaches teachers how to incorporate the Second Step program in a way that meets the requirements of the school and its policies, as well as improve SEL implementation in the classroom. Furthermore, this study may be used as a

model of school culture consulting services that I provide across the country to enhance the national conversation regarding SEL learning standards.

Summary

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) research speaks to the importance of children experiencing, expressing, and managing their emotions by the time they reach third grade (LaBelle, 2019). The current study utilized a public charter school that implemented the proposed SEL program. Through this study, the teachers engaged in the interview protocol, submitted documents, and submitted photographs to report the increase or reduction of student misbehaviors that often led to send-outs or push-ins. The study examined the perception of teachers (as they related to the SEL approach used. Results helped to create the basis of social activism and community development for other urban schools that struggle to bridle similar behaviors.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

Studying the teacher perceptions of the SEL program as they relate to third- and fourth-grade students in an urban charter school required both interviews and direct observation. The quantitative method focuses mostly on numerical data and analysis, whereas the qualitative approach is used to seek understanding of people's experiences, the world around them, and what meaning they attribute to those experiences through rich, thick descriptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The qualitative method was appropriate for the current study. The study's purpose warranted a bounded exploratory case study.

Qualitative Design and Approach

There were other qualitative approaches that could have been used to answer the research questions (e.g., ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, or case study); however, these did not fit the scope of the research questions. Ethnography would have required an exploration of children or urban students as a culture, which it was not the purpose of the study. Additionally, phenomenology focuses on the way people experience their world. In the current study, experiences would have been the way teachers perceive students' behavior, and the phenomenon would have been SEL. Phenomenology was rejected because it would have required a more in-depth analysis of the phenomenon with less regard to the teacher perceptions of student behaviors while in the program. Grounded theory and case studies involve the search for meaning and understanding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Charmaz (2006), grounded theory is used to develop a theory based on a phenomenon. A case study is a detailed description and analysis of a bounded system—one setting and one particular event (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In the current study, the public charter school classroom was the setting. The social-emotional program was the

event. I used a case study design to provide a detailed description of the teacher perceptions of the social-emotional strategies applied, and the case was bounded by the third and fourth grades.

Participants

At the urban school of my study, the lottery determines enrollment. According to Great Schools (2019), the student population is 79% free and reduced lunch, 15% of the population is students with disabilities, and student ethnicity consists of 85% Black, 13% Hispanic, and 1% White. This study was approved by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (# 04-24-19-0486344). Furthermore, permission was requested from the school principal to conduct research at the study site. A private email was sent with the title of the study, obligations of teachers as the participants, and obligations of the school. Using this letter of invitation and informed consent form, I requested a week's turnaround for an efficient start. All individuals who were invited did participate. To gain access to participants, I requested permission from the school principal to conduct research at the study site. A private email was sent with the title of the study, obligations of teachers as participants, and obligations of the school. For this study, the purposive sample consisted of 10 teachers (five third-grade and five fourth-grade classroom teachers) to reach data saturation, ensuring no new data were captured (see Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) suggested that 10–12 participants are sufficient to reach data saturation. The sample within the elementary population was third- and fourth-grade teachers who had worked at the school site for exactly 3 years. This ensured participants consisted of teachers who had been employed at the study site before and after the SEL curriculum implementation.

To develop a productive researcher–participant relationship, I conducted preliminary meetings with participants in advance of interview day. In these meetings, I asked participants to share more about their role, what brought them to their current role, and something fun they were

planning. The aim was to establish rapport with each participant to gain their trust. Participants were assured of their confidentiality and privacy.

Data Collection

Interviews, document review, and photographs were used to collect data from third- and fourth-grade teachers. Data collection began with photographs, or what Spaulding et al. (2013) called "useful window[s]" into the experiences of students, events, and the assigned educational setting. Second Step curriculum implementation consisted of classroom spaces, signage in hallways and classrooms, and completed student activities. The photographs captured these details and served as an alternative data set to measure execution of the program and progress of the outcomes (see Appendix C). Pictures displayed chart movement and how students interacted with the wheel. Furthermore, the placement of key Second Step components in each classroom indicated the strategies preferred by teachers in the institution. These photographs were collected on the same day but before the interviews.

I used a semistructured interview protocol based on the conceptual framework and related literature. As the primary data collected from teachers, the interviews were a vital part of the study that helped me gain more in-depth and widespread information for the study (see Yin, 2012). The purpose of interviewing is to explore the experiences of others and what they think about those experiences (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Each semi structured interview occurred during the participants' scheduled planning hours. The interviews lasted approximately 30–45 minutes in a private, secure room within the school facility (see Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and reviewed for integrity in reporting. Participants who were unable to interview at their scheduled times were provided an alternate time within a 1-week period. All interviewees were assigned an alphanumerical code (G3-A1 = Grade 3, Class A

Teacher 1; G3-A2 = Grade 3, Class A Teacher 2) for storage and easy retrieval of responses that were stored in individual folders in a locked file in my home office.

When teachers arrived for their interviews, they submitted a week's lesson plan that displayed the uses of the Second Step curriculum. A document review and photograph tool was created (see Appendix C) and completed after all data were collected and stored on a password-protected computer in my home. A reflective journal was used to keep track of emerging understandings.

Instruments

Questions were used for third- and fourth-grade teachers that allowed for detailed teacher responses from various backgrounds and grades, and that were aligned to the conceptual framework and research questions (see Appendix B). The replies enabled me to determine the benefits and concerns of the implemented program from the teachers' perspectives. Although document reviews can be used as the only data to support a study (Sargeant, 2012), I included additional data to measure the application of the Second Step curriculum. In this study, lesson plans, newsletters, and SEL-specific emails were examined to determine the extent of implementation. Newsletters and school-wide emails also provided weekly data that supported the school's use of the program.

Researcher's Role

I have worked with developing children for 19 years. Eight of those years involved teaching kindergarten through sixth grade in private, magnet, public, and charter schools. At the time of the study, I was a school administrator who coached deans, other school leaders, and teachers at another school in a different region. Some of the teachers within the sample were colleagues; however, I had not had a working relationship with them since they initiated the

social-emotional programming. I assumed these teachers would be open to assisting with this study because of our close working relationships. I was careful to use the audio recordings, transcriptions, and document reviews to summarize my findings, rather than using anecdotal data and a biased perspective of what I had seen in prior years. My experience enabled me to understand the setting in which this study was conducted and the circumstances for which SEL may or may not be beneficial.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis with open and axial coding strategies for the interviews and descriptive statistics for frequency of themes in documents. Thematic analysis was appropriate for exploratory case studies and was my method for categorizing trends because it is a method for detecting, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found across all 3 data sets (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). Photographs were collected before the interviews to reference them, if necessary, for any additional questions. Upon arriving for the interview, teachers were asked to bring any documents that demonstrated how Second Step was integrated into their teaching each day so I could review and analyze the documents after the interview. Data were analyzed once all data sets were collected.

Interview Data Analysis

Semi structured interviews occurred as planned. Open-ended questions (see Appendix B) and responses were audio recorded for frequent listening. All but one interview lasted 30 minutes and occurred outside of instructional time during teachers' planning period. One interview lasted 45 minutes so the teacher could provide more clarity regarding a scope and sequence document she brought in addition to her other documents. All interviews were done within the same day to avoid bias or interference with results by teachers discussing my question sequence with others.

The first step in my data analysis process was to read through the transcribed interview responses to familiarize myself with the data. I reread the transcripts while annotating for points that resonated most with me in conjunction with the framework constructs and research questions. Following the second read, I commenced open coding. Open coding is the process of annotating and noting the highlights of the teacher responses received (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Transcripts were manually coded. In open coding, reports were searched for repeated words and phrases, then grouped into categories (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) in a Microsoft Word table. Category labels were determined after sorting through all of the interview responses and other collected data.

Document Review and Observation Data

The qualitative document data were analyzed using thematic analysis and a document review protocol. Braun and Clark (2006) defined thematic analysis as a method used in qualitative research to identify, analyze, and report patterns in data. Furthermore, thematic analysis is simple to use, can be used with any theory, and allows for rich, detailed, and complex description of data. Thematic analysis using open and axial coding was used to analyze teacher lesson plans, scopes and sequences, and interview data. In this analysis, I used open and axial coding strategies to explore how the categories from coded data related to each other. I analyzed all documents after the interviews were conducted. Upon arriving for the interview, teachers brought lesson plans, newsletters, SEL-specific emails, and scopes and sequences to indicate how they used Second Step throughout their day. I listed the strategies agreed upon by the study site and identified those strategies that were used in the lesson plans (yes/no). Observation data (photographs) were captured by me prior to the interviews as evidence to substantiate the strategies identified in the interviews. Photographs were reported in narrative form and provided a

valuable source of data (see Creswell, 2013). Creswell's (2013) six steps of data analysis were used for this study: (a) become familiar with the data, (b) organize the data, (c) code the data, (d) establish themes, (e) report the findings, and (f) use validation procedures to ensure the findings are accurate.

Step 1: Becoming Familiar With the Data

The first step in data analysis is to become familiar with the data and to make sure that the data are in a form that can be easily analyzed (Lodico et al., 2010). Qualitative researchers immerse themselves in the data to conduct a preliminary exploratory analysis to gain an overview of the data collected and to see if there are sufficient data (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative researchers may engage in multiple readings to develop a sense of the overall flow and structure of the data (Lodico et al., 2010). I read the documents to become familiar with the data. I also wrote notes in the margins about key concepts, phrases, and ideas that relate to collective inquiry and collaboration.

Step 2: Organizing the Data

Researchers must decide on a way to organize large amounts of data (Lodico et al., 2010). I organized the data by participant groups: current third-grade teachers, current fourth-grade teachers, and those who taught third or fourth graders before and after the implementation of Second Step. A Microsoft Word table was used to organize interview notes. This table assisted me in determining patterns and relationships among categories at the axial coding stage.

Step 3: Coding the Data

Coding is an inductive process that involves identifying segments of data that describe the phenomenon and labeling those parts with categories (Lodico et al., 2010). Coding is a

process that involves examining data, reducing data to manageable chunks, and identifying connections for analysis. Lodico et al. (2010) described the coding sequence as (a) selecting document data or interview data to review, (b) reviewing the data to think about ideas or issues that seem important, (c) highlighting the part of the data that relates to research questions and creating a code word or phrase, (d) continuing to create codes, and (e) making a list of the codes. First, I selected the interview notes to examine. Second, I reexamined the data to think about ideas that related to collaboration and collective inquiry. Third, I manually coded the team meeting notes in two stages. In Stage 1, I read the documents to identify keywords and develop codes. This resulted in many codes that were reduced in the second stage of coding. For Stage 2, I used open and axial coding. In open coding, events, actions, and interactions are compared for similarities and differences and searched for repetition of words and phrases (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During the second level of coding, I examined for repetition and similarity of concepts. Then, following open coding, axial coding involved generating categories and investigating possible connections found in the documents. The codes were compared, refined, and merged to form meaningful categories and to reduce the number of codes. I examined the categories for patterns to generate themes that addressed the research questions. I also examined the codes and extracted text segments that related to collaboration and collective inquiry.

Step 4: Themes

Themes are the deeper analysis that combines the codes in a way that allows the researchers to organize ideas to explain what they have learned from the study (Lodico et al., 2010). Themes emerged from the axial coded data based on patterns and relationships among the codes. The theme is a description of ideas, patterns, and assumptions based on the data (Lodico et al., 2010). Themes within the current study provided …

Step 5: Reporting Findings

Qualitative researchers write a report that includes the researcher's interpretation of what the data mean, and that information is reported in a nonquantitative, narrative manner (Lodico et al., 2010). I created a table to represent the themes that emerged from the data. I organized the report by theme and addressed the research questions. I used direct quotes from interviews and documents as evidence to support the findings. I summarized the results using a narrative approach.

Step 6: Validation of Findings

Triangulation was used to validate the findings. Validation of the findings will be explained in detail under Evidence of Quality.

Evidence of Quality

The triangulation of interview questions and responses, as well as the photos of Second Step curriculum and protocols, improve credibility and trustworthiness of data, analysis, and interpretation. With the third converging line of the document review, the results should all point toward comparable interpretations of the data; therefore, strengthening the results (Yin, 2012). The findings will also offer a deeper understanding of whether or not the SEL program assists in circumventing negative displays of social-emotional misbehaviors among urban students. Review of transcripts were done as the second strategy of evidence of quality with rich, thick description (Branch, 2018). This process validates that there is sufficient evidence from all sources to substantiate the themes that have emerged.

Discrepant or Nonconforming Cases

If there are any outliers in the data, called discrepant cases, they are reported in the findings. When conflicting points of view surface, qualitative researchers must reexamine other data sources to see if the differences can be resolved (Lodico et al., 2010). I examined the data for contradictions that did not support collective inquiry and collaboration. There were no contradictions identified, so no further analysis was required.

Data Analysis Results

Data analysis is the method of formulating the evidence needed to answer research questions (Saldana, 2008). After collecting and organizing all interview recordings, photographs, and artifacts, I read through all transcribed responses, followed by a rereading of the same. Upon the second read, I annotated points of resonance as they related to my research questions. I then disassembled the data by open coding each data source. According to Saldana (2008), a code is a word or phrase used in a qualitative study that represents a conclusive, prominent, and reminiscent piece of data. Each code was highlighted by color and documents in a separate document as I sorted through each and made representation determinations. I utilized the codes to identify themes or patterns in the data that I would not otherwise have noticed. The document review and observation data via photographs were categorized in a yes/no chart to show presence of these items for each interviewee.

The process of categorizing various units of data explains incidences and identifies the data with broad designations and is called open coding (Lodico et al., 2010). Finally, I wrote up my findings, where clear relationships were made within the findings between codes for teachers who worked with third and fourth graders in earlier grades and those who worked with third and fourth graders pre-SEL implementation. I tabled these findings before moving from level one of

coding to level two, revealing several recurring ideas in the categories including proposed strengths and weaknesses in programming and perceived shifts in student behaviors.

Identifying patterns and themes is one of the most important tasks in qualitative research (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Once a coding system had been created, I started to arrange information into color-coded categories. I reassembled the data by identifying patterns and themes. Ryan and Bernard (2003) stated that a theme is an essential idea we are trying to depict. While disassembling data, some thought was given to how data enlightened initial study questions, and this process gave way to the more comprehensive insights of data (Yin, 2011). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) theorized that while data collection and analysis are recursive and active, data analysis intensifies as data collection continues and concludes. I identified or connected reoccurring patterns with the research questions as I established an understanding of how the data related to my study (Yin, 2011). Likewise, I identified patterns and updated level one or two coding to themes that surfaced. By upgrading data coding levels, themes emerged to substantiate the research questions. Creswell (2013) raised that the final piece of the data analysis process is interpreting findings as they relate to the research questions or hypothesis. My data analysis results concluded with my general reflections on the process and overall findings.

Findings

In this section, I discussed the patterns and themes that surfaced from my data collection. Several patterns emerged as I read the interview transcripts, which led to themes that answered the study's research questions. Only participants' initials were used in order to securely extract their actual thoughts and experiences.

Two research questions were derived from this study in hopes to support the urban charter school to evaluate the increase in inappropriate behaviors at the third and fourth grade

level, often requiring removal of the students from the school or classroom. These two research questions were the following:

RQ1: What are the third and fourth grade teachers' perceptions of Second Step benefits on student behaviors in an urban charter school environment?

RQ2: What socioemotional practices are used to address the behavior needs of the third and fourth grade students?

The interview questions (Appendix B), document review and photograph tool (Appendix C) were formulated for the purpose of capturing responses to these research questions and the study's overall problem. Two themes were identified that addressed the first qualitative research question regarding the perceived benefits of Second Step, including: (Theme 1) students feel their voice is valued when teachers are empowered to validate their emotions, and (Theme 2) conflict resolution is improved. The 3 themes identified to address the second research question regarding socioemotional practices used to address behavior needs included: (Theme 3) teacher mediation of problem-solving is used, (Theme 4) the problem-solving wheel is used, and (Theme 5) scenario practice is used. The two research questions and the five themes identified during data analysis to address them are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Themes Identified to Address Research Questions

Research question	Theme identified to address research question
RQ1. What are the third and fourth grade teachers' perceptions of Second Step benefits on student behaviors in an urban charter school environment?	Theme 1: Students feel their voice is valued when teachers are empowered to validate their emotions. Theme 2: Conflict resolution is improved.
RQ2. What socioemotional practices are used to address the behavior needs of the third and fourth grade students?	Theme 3: Teacher mediation of problem-solving is used. Theme 4: The problem-solving wheel is used. Theme 5: Scenario practice is used.

Discussion of Results

This discussion of the results is organized by research question to demonstrate the alignment of the emergent themes with the study objectives. Under the sub-heading for each research question, the findings are organized under the themes used to address the research question. Direct quotations from the interview data are provided as evidence for all findings. In the attributions for the quotations, the participants are designated using alphanumeric codes (P1, P2, etc.) as pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality of their identities. Findings related to the photograph and document submission supported findings from the interview analysis as well.

Research Question 1

RQ1 was: What are the third and fourth grade teachers' perceptions of Second Step benefits on student behaviors in an urban charter school environment? Two of the themes identified during thematic analysis of the interview data were used to address this question. The following subsections are discussions of those data co.

Theme 1: Students Feel Their Voice Is Valued When Teachers Are Empowered to Validate Their Emotions

Three out of ten participants contributed interview data that supported this theme. In describing the Second Step practices that enabled teachers to validate students' emotions, P6 stated, "Every day, they [students] get to talk about how it's going." P6 added that listening to and validating students' feelings was a purposeful activity in Second Step, stating, "There are people there for them [students, for] being heard, advocacy." P1 spoke of the focus on hearing and validating students' feelings in terms of forming emotional connections with students, describing this as a positive aspect and a benefit of Second Step: "Aspects of it [Second Step] that I like – more opportunities for authentic connections." P6 corroborated P1's response regarding opportunities for forming validating, emotional connections with students, calling them, "Micro-moments." P2 said of the benefit of teachers' being empowered to form emotional connections with students based on empathy and authentic connection, "Second step validates their [students'] feelings . . . 3rd and 4th grade feel more validated: [their] opinion matters and needs to heard." P1 and P2 also delivered lesson plan documents that identified Morning Meetings within the first hour of each day. Both teachers share these lesson documents with each other and execute the same plans that include a minilesson, developmentally appropriate scenarios, and practice. These opportunities for practice using the provided scenarios gave students voice and experience with situations before they actually occurred, improving their chances of being able to resolve issues in the moment. These 3 aforementioned participants reported that a benefit of Second Step was that students felt emotionally validated and that the reason for this benefit was that teachers were empowered to form authentic connections with students based on listening and empathy.

The data associated with Theme 1 confirmed that Second Step was consistent with Bandura's (1977) SEL to the extent that the conceptual framework emphasizes the importance of teachers' modeling of the positive social-emotional skill of empathy. Teachers are the ones who lead the charge in aligning emotion and cognition in the classroom to make them mutually reinforcing, so teacher modeling of positive socioemotional practices is essential (Nickerson et al., 2019; Wentzel & Ramani, 2016). In fact, if educators are not effective practitioners of positive socioemotional skills such as empathy, the fidelity of a program such as Second Step that utilizes SEL is likely to be low (Schonert-Reichi, 2017). Furthermore, students in the Grade 3 to Grade 4 range respond more positively to validation and praise than to reprimands (Weyns et al., 2017). Thus, the Second Step benefit of validating student emotions is consistent with findings related to SEL theory indicating that teacher empathy for and validation of students is an effective means of modeling positive socioemotional skills, guiding student behavior, and aligning emotion and effective cognition.

Theme 2: Conflict Resolution Is Improved

Five out of ten participants indicated in their interview responses that a benefit of Second Step was improved conflict resolution. P1 stated that students "Struggle [with conflict resolution] when frustrated," but that using Second Step, "They understand the need for empathy and compassion," which assisted with conflict resolution. P2 stated that Second Step improved conflict resolution because, "There is a lot more talk about how your actions affect the team. Listen to what they're [other students are] saying." P3 stated that conflicts could arise between students when they were, "Angry [because they] got an incorrect answer or when someone skips them in line," but that Second Step enhanced students' ability to, "Help them solve their own problems, speak up for themselves, advocate for themselves."

Thus, participants spoke of two distinct ways in which Second Step enhanced conflict resolution, with P1 and P2 referring to the encouragement of student empathy for others with whom they might be frustrated or angry, and with P3 referring to an enhancement of students' ability to help others empathize with them through effective self-advocacy. P5 agreed with P1 and P2, citing the benefit of Second Step in enabling students to build socioemotional safeguards against conflict through, "Forming teams (building empathy) and perceptions based on the excitement of someone being called on." P7 stated that Second Step helped students build socioemotional safeguards against conflict by enhancing their ability to, "Care about their peers." In fact, P6 and P7 both highlighted aspects of their lesson plan documents that made room for students to talk to classmates with whom they did not typically converse. Photographs show steps that students took to engage in those conversations. P7 stated that "unexpected friendships formed from those interactions." P7 also indicated that the potential for increased social engagement incentivized participation in Second Step for students: "If they think it's going to help them make friends, they do it."

Data associated with Theme 2 confirmed the importance of programs such as Second Step that utilize SEL for conflict resolution for students in Grades 3 and 4. The development of relational aggression that can lead to conflict accelerates in third and fourth grade (Weyns et al., 2017). Students at this age also become more aware of factors such as unfairness, politics, stereotypes, and other factors that can trigger peer resentment and conflict (Weyns et al., 2017). While younger children respond to adult reprimand as an impetus to handle aggressive impulses more appropriately, during middle childhood, adult reprimand is more likely to increase relational aggression, so other means of conflict resolution based on SEL are needed (Weyns et al., 2017). The finding that a benefit of Second Step was more effective conflict resolution confirmed previous literature identifying conflict resolution as a strength of Second Step (Jones et al., 2017).

Research Question 2

RQ2 was: What socioemotional practices are used to address the behavior needs of the third and fourth grade students? Three of the themes identified during thematic analysis of the interview data were used to address this question. The following subsections are discussions of those themes.

Theme 3: Teacher Mediation of Problem-Solving Is Used

Four out of ten participants indicated that a socioemotional practice used to address the behavior needs of third and fourth grade students was teacher mediation of problem-solving. P5 described an instance of teacher mediation of problem-solving in stating, "The teacher had to mediate the restorative conversations. Saw [that student's] eyebrows were together, frustrated. Afterwards, student was able to have a better understanding." P6 stated that problem-solving was, "Mostly teacher-mediated" using the practice addressed under Theme 4, the problem-solving wheel. P3 stated that the mediating teacher's role in problem-solving was to remind the student to be, "Respectful and mindful of others' feelings." P1 stated that in the mediator role, teachers used, "Language, how we communicate with each other," to find, "Moments to build peer relationship, find ways to build connection."

The finding that teacher-mediated problem-solving was a socioemotional practice used in Second Step was consistent with literature describing this practice as effective. The emotional climate of the classroom is largely determined by teachers, who influence can positively students through leadership, friendliness, understanding, responsibility, and encouragement (Harvey et al., 2016). Implementing SEL in the classroom is dependent on teacher leadership, modeling, and mediation (Wentzel & Ramani, 2016). By mediating specifically in problem-solving, teachers can help students to understand and manage their emotions, control their reactions, and be more

cognizant of one another's feelings (Jones et al., 2017). Teacher mediation of problem-solving in Second Step is effective in contributing to the benefits of conflict resolution and violence prevention, two identified strengths of Second Step (Jones et al., 2017).

Theme 4: The Problem-Solving Wheel Is Used

All ten participants described the problem-solving wheel as a socioemotional strategy used to address the behavior needs of their students in Second Step. Photographs I captured and the interview with P2 described the intended application of the problem-solving wheel as the final step in a four-stage process of teacher-mediated problem-solving, which consisted of, "Name it [the problem]. Talk it out. Positive self-talk. Make a plan to make it better (problem solving wheel)." Notably, however, participants described the use of the problem-solving wheel as an ineffective practice. P8 provided a representative response in stating, "Students go to the [problem-solving] wheel to play, but no application to strategy." P4 said that students were engaged with a problem as opposed to playing with the problem-solving wheel, the practice was, "Not effective or productive in the moment [and] problems persist."

Participants discussed their perceptions of why the problem-solving wheel was effective as a diversion when students were not stressed but ineffective as a socioemotional practice for teacher mediation of conflicts and other problems. P8 stated that students who needed problem-solving mediation were, "Already too upset before [coming to] you [the teacher]" to use the wheel. Other participants agreed with P8's assessment. P2 said of the problem-solving wheel, "When it's time to use it, that's when it's hardest," and P3 said that students who were upset had difficulty selecting appropriately from options for responding to conflicts such as, "I am telling my teacher," versus, "I am just going to retaliate." P1 agreed with P8's assessment that students

were often too upset to benefit from the problem-solving wheel when they approached the teacher, attributing student distress to, “Recess, situations escalate, especially with boys.”

No studies were found in the previous literature to indicate why the problem-solving wheel might be an ineffective practice. Literature indicating that relational aggression increases at third- to fourth-grade age may be relevant (Weyns et al., 2017) because it may suggest that effective practices for solving problems among younger children may cease to be effective when developmental factors cause the intensity and frequency of conflict to escalate. Depending on how the problem-solving wheel is introduced and utilized by teachers, literature describing adult reprimand as tending to increase rather than mitigate relational aggression among third- and fourth-grade students (Weyns et al., 2017) may also be relevant, if students for any reason perceive the application of the problem-solving wheel as a reprimand or an invalidation of their feelings. Findings indicating that students are more inclined to play with the problem-solving wheel than to apply it during problem-solving may suggest that students perceive the tool as a diversion and therefore as a sign of the dismissal or trivialization of their feelings when they are under stress.

Theme 5: Scenario Practice Is Used

Three out of ten participants reported that scenario practice was used as a socioemotional practice to meet the behavior needs of their students. P10 stated that scenario practice involved, “Showing them [students] examples of situations.” P9 stated that scenario practice involved, “Scenarios [problems] from real video clip. How could they [students] have fixed the life situation?” However, all 3 participants who contributed data to this theme described scenario practice as ineffective. P9 described this practice as a, “Failure” because it utilized “Not realistic problems,” and because, “Examples need to align with their [students’] age.” P7 agreed that the

scenario practice was not age-aligned, stating, “A lot of the games for 3rd grade are childish, feels outdated, not accessible, not engaging.”

As with Theme 4, no literature was found addressing whether or why scenario practice in Second Step is ineffective. Again, however, literature indicating that students’ relational aggression and conflict-resolution needs change in the third- to fourth-grade age range, becoming more urgent and more responsive to positive reinforcement (Weyns et al., 2017), may be relevant. If teachers who contributed data to Theme 5 were accurate in reporting that the scenarios did not seem age-appropriate, and instead appeared to be aligned with the needs of younger children, then findings from Weyns et al. (2017) indicating changes in children’s conflict-resolution needs at the age of these participants’ students may provide insight into why scenarios more relevant to younger children might be ineffective.

Recommendations

After probing the participants’ thoughts and experiences using the study’s data collection tools, I noted patterns such all ten teachers felt that Second Step helped but was insufficient, Almost half of the group mentioned frustration, and the majority believe the issues that exist are with the school systems surrounding Second Step and not necessarily Second Step itself. Four recommendations are provided in this section to address perceived areas for improvement in Second Step.

Recommendation 1

The first recommendation is that teachers be provided with ongoing coaching, not just activities, so they can balance content time while rightfully addressing the emotional concerns of students when they need it most. Although several social emotional activities have been identified and used in-part, a significant gap exists between effective practices and teacher training

(Freeman et al., 2014). Boyd et al. (2011) stated that administrative support should reduce the difficulty of a teacher's job by aiding in the improvement of their ability. Although helpful, most participants shared their daily schedule indicating that Second Step activities can become a distractor from students' learning. P8 and P10 complained during their interview. They agreed that improving their practice as educators was a result of strong coaching. In lieu of submitting lesson plans, P10 brought a social-emotional calendar based on the Second Step curriculum to ensure implementation of all the components. P10 hoped that calendar or something similar could "double as a professional development calendar as well", for the purpose of SEL coaching of teachers. By not having the SEL program coached the same way the instruction is coached, the social emotional work of the day is not assuredly at its best. The participants did not provide any examples of what they did to improve their own practice except for timing students' time at the problem - solving wheel.

Teacher coaching currently consists of a real-time approach and a more formal one-on-one conversational approach. To address teachers' management skill, coaches and deans utilize the Doug Lemov (2014) approach. This includes observations during class and coaching occurring in the moment – partnering with teachers to correct students, repositioning a teacher to see the good in the classroom, using nonverbal cues to communicate need for an agreed upon management strategy and to celebrate uptake of feedback.

Recommendation 2

The second recommendation is that teachers be given more time to connect the Second Step activities to their work each day; thereby, more seamlessly weaving SEL into the day. The schedule for third and fourth graders at this institution consists of four departmentalized classes (e.g., math, science/social studies, English language arts, and writing). Each block is 90 minutes

long. Additionally, students engage in a specials class (e.g., Art, Music, or Physical Education), lunch, and recess. Time is built in for transitions, breakfast, and dismissal. Advisory classroom schedules are posted in every room. Schedules are typically to the minute :01 or :13, verifying that the day is planned to the minute. The tightness of this schedule connects to their value of 'every minute counts'. However, the tight schedule contributes to the feeling teachers have that adding this new social-emotional component and using it to fidelity can be challenging given the current schedule and competing priorities. All but two participants named time as an inadequacy to purposefully engage in Second Step. The remaining two admitted that time was not the biggest factor for them because they did not want scholars caught up in Second Step activities away from the group during learning anyway.

Personal communication with interviewees followed. In my interview with LFW, she stated that [Second Step] feels like it doesn't align. It's like we're saying to scholars, 'Advocate for yourself, except for this time, this time, and that time'." As if in the same interview, P8 noted "Everything we do is to the minute. Everything has a time stamp. We just need more time." Another participant, P10, attempted to improve the current programming to allow more time for Second Step by creating a scope and sequence that could tie more seamlessly into the units students were being taught in lessons. However, regarding time, she surfaced the stark difference even between full-day and half-day schedule on Fridays. On Friday's schedule, Second Step is allotted only 15 minutes. At its foundation, the classroom schedule should at least accommodate the baseline expectation of the program as prescribed.

Recommendation 3

The third recommendation is that teachers align on what data they will collect to determine if what appears to be less behavior concerns since SEL implementation is indeed true.

Participants who work with the same students in both third and fourth grade, or pre- and post-Second Step, agreed that there have been fewer behavior concerns over the last two years, since the start of social-emotional programming. In both interview transcripts and photographs, there was evidence of use having a connection to scholars' individual behaviors. Yet, no participants could submit any other data. expressed,

> It would be great if there were data connected to the schoolwide scholar surveys. I would want to see and understand their takeaways from the program and how they think Second Step has helped them. I also think we are missing a big opportunity to gather data from our Special Education scholars. We also need to be looking quantitatively at suspension data in conjunction with Second Step and any other supplemental materials we might use.

Recommendation 4

The fourth recommendation is that teachers be given training on how to utilize the activities of Second Step to build self-sufficiency. Participants stressed the gap between Second Step activities and students' ability to initiate certain problem-solving strategies independently. During interview, P10 shared an example of how playful banter and sports can escalate, especially among the boys. He named that they "struggle with relationships." P10 suggested that, unless specifically told to go to the problem-solving wheel, students will not take action on their own. So, that particular Second Step activity is still viewed as a distraction or crutch rather than a tool for teaching mediation. More than half of the participants directly mentioned wanting training on how to better fit Second Step into their day, see how others are using it in their classrooms, and coaching around a targeted sequence of lessons that can build students' toolkits faster.

Thurlings and den Brok (2017) found that after a professional development workshop, proactive and preventative strategies truncated scholar behaviors and socially induced problems in the classroom. Flynn et al. (2016) discussed a study in which eleven teachers met 3 days a week to read about classroom management scenarios, watched exemplars of how strategies were used, and worked together to discuss the approaches. Using a professional development model with a toolbox of six content areas and behaviors, teachers came together to learn how to role model scenarios, build relationships, intervene, respond, and facilitate reparations (Flynn et al., 2016). As an outcome of the results, teachers focused on strategies for addressing crises and resolving conflicts after disruptive behaviors have occurred in the classroom.

Section 3: The Project

This qualitative study addressed teachers' perceptions of social-emotional curriculum benefits in third and fourth grade. Findings revealed the need for training on how to utilize the activities of Second Step in a way that builds independence with daily efficiency. Section 3 outlines a project based on professional development. I present a description of the project's goals, rationale, implementation plan, latent barriers, resources, and alternative supports that may help teachers to better function within their role and school structure while applying Second Step. A second review of literature serves as a continuation of my study's findings and its various elements. In addition, I include formative assessments, summative assessments, and an evaluation plan to examine the project's goals and reflect on the social implications of the project. Lastly, I examine the evaluation of the project to contemplate the project's successes, potential progresses, and transformations. I created PowerPoint presentations for each day, combining collaborative activities, practice clinics with Second Step resources and timers for pacing, and media clips to keep teacher participation high. Each PowerPoint presentation included handouts of the presentation for the teachers to follow along and take notes.

Rationale

This study was triggered by several incidents of extreme disrespect and physical altercations by children at the study site school, especially children in third and fourth grade. The conceptual framework that guided this study was Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. According to Bandura, human beings learn by observing others' behaviors and the attitudes, reactions, and outcomes of those actions. Bandura argued that children can learn when given techniques that teach them regulatory functions.

This study guided me toward a professional development approach because teachers indicated that they need coaching, not merely activities, so they can balance content time while addressing the emotional concerns of students when needed most. Teachers also identified their need for training on how to utilize the Second Step activities to build self-sufficiency. Therefore, I determined that a professional development series was the most appropriate project because it would be an effective way to deliver information and shape the expertise of a larger group. Professional development projects that are articulate, relevant, dynamic, and collaborative can provide added expertise and proficiencies for proven practices (Wood et al., 2016).

I chose to create a professional development project to provide teachers with the means to become better prepared to implement the principles of Second Step within the time constraints and policies of the study site school. School leaders share in the responsibility to provide students with the best learning environment to grow academically, socially, and emotionally, which means leaders also must provide their teachers with adequate training (Abodeeb-Gentile et al., 2016). School leaders and education policymakers concur that professional development can increase teachers' skills and be a vehicle to move from research to practice (Abodeeb-Gentile et al., 2016). I set out to produce a high-quality professional development project based on my findings and what the research stated. Bayar (2014) made the following suggestion:

> Any effective professional development activity should consist of the following components: 1) a match to existing teacher needs, 2) a match to existing school needs, 3) teacher involvement in the design/planning of professional development activities, 4) active participation opportunities, 5) long-term engagement, and 6) high-quality instructors. (pp. 324–325)

Quality professional development could enhance the chances of getting a quality social-emotional experience in the classroom, and that experience could lead to students feeling more emotionally and academically safe in the classroom, thereby allowing them to take academic risks and increase their knowledge resulting in improved student achievement.

I crafted a professional development project to match the patterns, themes, and findings. As a result of an analysis of answers to interview questions, online journal responses, and school district documents, I created a 3-day professional development session that would be ongoing throughout the school year and would supply content knowledge, facilitate discussions with other teachers, utilize collaborative activities, and incorporate relevant classroom scenarios. I also included activities in which teachers would have to collaborate and create more relevant scenarios based on experiences they have had with students in their class, including discussing the best approach to address social-emotional issues that may arise. My findings were the blueprint for the focus of this professional development project.

Throughout the one-on-one interviews, participants referenced their perspective of what types of professional development or training they felt was effective. From those responses, I designed different collaborative activities that I placed strategically throughout presentations to break up the monotony, to keep the teachers engaged, and to provide them with relevant activities that made use of their combined experiences. After identifying the objectives and revealing the data collected from my study during the first day's session, I created a group activity that allowed teachers to see the resources they would focus on from Second Step, explore their use through media, and consider their benefit. Before closing on the first day, teachers would have a say regarding the tool used to collect data on their lesson execution and the effectiveness of Second Step resource implementation in third and fourth grade. The principal would share the modified

schedule and allow time for practice of the prescribed Second Step lessons, and school leaders would draft options of each collection tool. The principal would be responsible for approving the final version. On the second day of sessions, teachers would watch video of proper implementation, name the elements of each resource, create scenarios based on previous experiences, and use the scenarios to practice effective execution. Day 3's sessions would begin with a reflection of teachers' application of the Second Step program and continue with a focus on establishing independence and self-sufficiency through teacher modeling, nonverbal interactions, and emotionally supportive discourse.

The collaborative activities were devised to capture what the participants of my study stated would make for an effective professional development opportunity and what would be relevant to their professional lives. The practice within the sessions would reinforce the learning and serve as quality check for school leaders. The final element of my professional development involves discussion and reflection. In my data analysis, several participants mentioned how they had discussed strategies with other teachers as a method of learning how to make Second Step work within the time allotted in the day. This goal was framed within the context of ensuring shifts in student behavior. For this reason, I wanted to incorporate discussion and reflection into my professional development project. Each session has its own level of reflection because reflecting on teaching practice is an important part of professional development, leading to alternative solutions, different directions, and changes to transform the environment for increased learning (Saric & Steh, 2017). As a researcher, I took into consideration everything that I discovered through my literature review and my study's findings to create my professional development project. Like all professional development projects, there will room to expand and adapt the project, but I created a foundation from which to grow.

Review of Literature

A review of literature corresponded with teacher responses and a document review related to effective classroom management preparedness. Using initial searches for teacher training, coaching in public schools, and SEL in third and fourth grade, I conducted a scholarly search of the literature using the Google Scholar platform, the Walden University library, and physical journals. Search terms included *teacher training*, *developmental appropriateness*, *coaching leaders*, *coaching students*, and *SEL*. The literature review supported my findings and surfaced the following key concepts:

- teacher professional development,
- teacher coaching,
- SEL in upper elementary school,
- cultural competency of elementary school social-emotional learning programs, and
- training teachers to facilitate SEL programming.

This scholarly research helped enhance and enrich my study's contribution to the field of education.

Teacher Professional Development

Teachers are required to engage in professional development opportunities throughout their careers. Research demonstrated that if consideration is given to a number of factors, teachers can benefit from continuing education presented in a variety of formats (Lofthouse, 2019; Renbarger & Davis, 2019). Professional development can encompass individualized, school-wide, or conference-style study, and can include formal and informal learning opportunities.

Research has been conducted to determine the specific benefits of teacher professional development as well as factors that influence outcomes. In a study of 323 teachers, Pharis et al. (2019) found that teachers who engaged in professional development regarding specific teaching practices regularly incorporated new practices into their work. Fischer et al. (2018) also established that teachers respond positively to professional development that is tailored to the specific needs of the school and that offers teachers some autonomy in choosing areas of development in which to participate. Philipsen et al. (2019) demonstrated that developing professional development opportunities that are tailored to the needs and specific professional goals of the teachers participating could improve the efficacy of professional development programs. The delivery system of professional development can also impact how teachers benefit from the program (Blewitt et al., 2021). In a study of teacher-led professional development, Fischer et al. found highly positive teacher perception of utilizing teachers as facilitators.

Although it is important to continually gain classroom skills, teachers must also integrate state and national educational policy changes into their practice. As such, it is important that professional development programs integrate policy changes into their content and delivery (Lofthouse, 2019). Renbarger and Davis (2019) studied teacher experiences during a period of educational reform and highlighted the importance of professional development in supporting teachers to best serve students. Furthermore, Pharis et al. (2019) assessed multiple aspects of teacher professional development and determined that teachers pursue opportunities that allow them to better understand specific educational standards. As policy, standards, and best practices continue to change, it is crucial that teachers continue to engage in professional development opportunities that provide valuable information.

Teacher Coaching

Teacher coaching is an additional tool that can increase teacher effectiveness and satisfaction. Coaching provides a teacher-specific experience that allows teachers to build skills based on their unique strengths and barriers to competency. Researchers have shown that teachers benefit from the individualized and collaborative nature of coaching (Piper et al., 2018). Teacher coaching has the potential to impact classroom practice and teacher career satisfaction. Thurlings and den Brok (2017) demonstrated that teacher coaching had a positive impact on elementary school teachers' skills as well as the academic achievement of their students. Teachers who were tasked with implementing a SEL curriculum reported more positive perceptions of curriculum implementation and less perceived burnout when they felt supported by measures such as teacher coaching (Lofthouse, 2019).

In a study of a peer teacher coaching program, Richards et al. (2019) showed that teachers benefited from exposure to teaching perspectives other than their own because they could gain core skills from their coaches or mentors. Renbarger and Davis (2019) demonstrated that classroom-level teacher professional development had positive impacts on not only a variety of teaching skills but also on professional satisfaction. Elementary school teachers who received coaching showed significant benefit in terms of improving classroom management as compared with teachers who did not receive individualized feedback (Fabiano et al., 2018). Richards et al. (2019) established the importance of effective teacher coaches as a means for delivering the latest research and best practices. Elementary teachers in particular have been shown to perceive the greatest benefit from coaching as compared to their peers in secondary school settings (Renbarger & Davis, 2019).

Social Emotional Learning in Upper Elementary School

SEL, or curriculum focused on students' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, engages students in developing valuable social and emotional skills that allow them to have more positive relationships, grow to be responsible citizens, and behave in an ethical manner (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017). SEL programs are becoming more prevalent in public and private elementary school settings, and the empirical evidence for the efficacy of social-emotional learning programs is growing (Martinez, 2016). Bozgün and Akın-Kösterelioğlu (2020) found that a year-long SEL program delivered to fourth-grade students facilitated gains in student- and teacher-reported perceptions of the students' social and emotional competencies. In a study of school-age students, Burchinal et al. (2020) established that students who participated in a consistent SEL program showed improvement in social-emotional knowledge, demonstration of social-emotional skills, and perceived social functioning as compared to students who did not participate in the social-emotional learning program.

In addition to increasing important social and emotional competencies, SEL programs can impact academic achievement (Wenz-Gross et al., 2018). Ashdown and Bernard (2012) demonstrated a positive relationship between the implementation of an SEL program and improved reading achievement and classroom behavior. Dacey et al. (2018) investigated the impact of an SEL program integrated with language arts curriculum in elementary school and found that the program reinforced language arts competencies and increased knowledge of social and emotional skills. Burchinal et al. (2020) also highlighted the importance of prevention programs, such as social-emotional learning, in improving school-wide academic achievement, and recommended increased collaboration between educators and researchers.

Cultural Competency of Elementary School Social-Emotional Learning Programs

Although educators have raised concerns about the ability of SEL programs to be effective across diverse populations (Hoffman, 2017), research indicated that SEL programs are appropriate for use with a variety of populations in terms of race, socioeconomic status, gender, and behavior. Smith et al. (2016) demonstrated that consistent implementation of a SEL curriculum can have positive effects on the behavior of upper elementary students exhibiting behavior problems. In an investigation of an elementary school SEL curriculum implemented in schools that primarily serve African American students, Barnes (2019) found that participation in the program allowed students to build interpersonal skills, develop self-esteem, and improve academic performance. Studying a 2-year SEL program targeting fourth-grade students in an urban school setting, McCallops et al. (2019) determined that students benefited in regard to social and emotional skills as well as academic achievement as compared to students who did not participate in the program. In a synthesis of empirical evidence from multiple studies of SEL programs, Donahue-Keegan et al. (2019) found that SEL programs have benefit for students of diverse racial, ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Training Teachers to Facilitate Social-Emotional Learning Programming

In addition to the increasing demand for teachers to prepare students for standardized testing, mandatory incorporation of SEL has the potential to be stressful for teachers, despite potential benefits (Blewitt et al., 2021). Therefore, it is important for teachers to be prepared to implement social-emotional education (Nickerson et al., 2019). Adequate training opportunities can improve teacher's self-efficacy to teach students. In a study of 139 elementary school teachers, Conners-Burrow et al. (2017) found that teachers were satisfied with and perceived benefit from training that specifically focused on delivering SEL curriculum and supporting

student social emotional development. A 2017 study conducted by Conners-Burrow et al. (2017) demonstrated that teacher perceptions of social emotional learning skills impacted the student teacher relationship; thereby, suggesting that they play an important role in shaping student socioemotional skills.

Teachers may benefit from professional development opportunities focused explicitly on social emotional learning. For instance, Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin (2017) discovered that despite the country wide implementation of a SEL program in schools, teachers lacked awareness of SEL programs and resources. Additionally, teachers can benefit from social-emotional focused professional development in terms of classroom engagement, teacher burnout, and interactions with students (Singh, 2020).

Project Description

My project was a 3-day professional development that explained the purpose of the study, criteria for data collection, major outcomes, and addressed the needs of the school site. Schools needed to have offered professional development opportunities and created professional communities to enrich the quality of the teaching profession and increase the number of teachers who stay in the teaching profession (Lavine, 2016; LaBelle, 2019). The professional development offered a school-wide opportunity for teachers to improve their ability to execute Second Step while effectively building student independence and addressing undesirable classroom behaviors. A few key resources and supports were needed to implement this professional development opportunity. Before beginning the professional development, I met with the school's leaders to share my study's findings and professional development plan.

After discussing and getting approval to offer this professional development opportunity, I emailed a formal invitation to participate in a 3-day professional development opportunity. Once

the school had accepted the invitation to participate, I emailed the administrative team and academic coaches to review the professional development timeline, agenda, and specific needs. The school leader and coaches communicated with the teachers about the two-day professional development workshop dates prior to students arriving to school. The third professional development day will occur in October, after the first online journal was due. The 3–day professional development took place in the cafeteria because it served multiple purposes and was equipped with laptop connections, projector, screen, and sound, as specified by the school. The school further provided chart paper, sticky notes, markers, name tags, copies of the agenda and PowerPoint handouts, and their typical breakfast or refreshment options for summer workshops.

Potential Barriers

The first potential barrier for my project relates to lack of interest or support from the school leader. School leaders may have felt that this professional development was not a priority compared to other professional development designed for the upcoming year. They could also have felt that teachers may have misrepresented the need for this professional development. I was prepared to convince the leaders by reminding them that one of the last feedback from the survey teachers took was the need for professional development. Then, I went over my research findings to demonstrate to them what teachers in the school stated about their use of Second Step and the need for additional professional development and training. I also emphasized the compact nature of my project and the benefits of the collaboration their teachers experienced.

Finally, I pointed out the multiple benefits for their school's culture, as a trademark of effective schools incorporates well-managed classrooms that foster academic, social, and behavior success for students (Wills et al., 2018). I also highlighted the ongoing collaboration and further optional training elements of my project, so teachers could see one of the major

differences in my project and others. Removing barriers and being able to have the principal and coaches on board were important to my project because they encouraged all teachers to attend a professional development. By having the teachers' stamp of approval on my project, they had a vested interest and buy-in even before implementing the project.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The table below outlines the proposed timeline for the implementation of the professional development opportunity (Table 2). The principal, coaches, and I collaborated on the professional development plan. The planning of the professional development occurred during the spring in preparation of the upcoming school year.

Roles and Responsibilities

Several people had key roles or responsibilities in the implementation of this professional development opportunity. My roles and responsibilities included organization, communication, and facilitation. The school leaders' roles and responsibilities were to gather data throughout, practice their execution of the Second Step protocols, and support the teachers as they learn new strategies. Leaders were instrumental in identifying and expressing what the school's expectations were in terms of how students were expected to incorporate the Second Step activities and protocols. The administration also had the responsibility of supporting their teachers as they acquired new strategies, implemented classroom management plans, and monitored teacher participation in the professional development. Academic coaches played an important role in presenting key sections of each professional development session. In addition, they had the responsibility of gathering, organizing, and presenting data for the professional development. I made sure that all materials were produced and resources that were needed were at everyone's

disposal. My role as a communicator was to identify the goals and expectations of the professional development.

Table 2

Proposed Timeline

Date	Task	Person	Deliverable
April	Meet with principals	Principal and Researcher	PowerPoint
May–June	Create participant emails, gather and organize responses, and select participants	Researcher	Email
July	Conduct PD sessions 1 & 2	Researcher and participants	PowerPoint and scenarios
August–September	Online journal check-in	Participants	Google doc
November–December	Online journal check-in and reflect	Participants	Google doc

Additionally, an agenda to guide each session was created and disseminated to all stakeholders – teachers and leaders - who needed to know their role or responsibility., and everyone knew where and when to report to each location. Finally, as a facilitator, I created and helped present each presentation and activity. Each presentation and activity was designed to ensure teachers had time to practice, reflect on how they executed programming in the time allotted, while also building the independence that teachers reported as lacking.

Project Evaluation

Formative Evaluation

Collecting data for the purpose of enhancing learning is the reason one uses formative assessments (Dixson & Worrell, 2016). Finding out what a person knows before and after a learning opportunity is valuable information to give feedback and guide the learning process (Dolin et al., 2018). For the current study, these formative assessments will appear in handout form and serve the purpose of assessing prior knowledge, measured understanding, provided feedback, and collected information about the effectiveness of the professional development and what changes might be needed.

An on-going evaluation of how professional development is progressing and what its participants are learning was an important part of the professional development. Teachers will be asked to take a ticket at the door with questions prior to starting a session to gauge what they already know or remember from the day before, identifying what they learned after each session. Online journal questions will be sent to each teacher during the months between the first two professional development sessions and the last session to provide each teacher with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and Second Step integration. Formative assessments will be utilized as a way to provide multiple forms of feedback to teachers and students to help adjust instruction and maximize instruction (Dolin et al., 2018).

Summative Evaluation

Summative assessment is another key component when measuring effectiveness and skill and helps to determine how much is learned or retained after a planned unit (Bhat & Bhat, 2019). In the current study, the measurement of how much or what teachers received from a professional development opportunity will be vital to determining the success or impact of the professional

development. For this reason, a summative assessment will be utilized at the conclusion of this professional development. To that end, the following questions will be placed on a handout and distributed as the assessment:

1. Did this professional development have an impact on your ability to integrate Second Step more effectively? Why or why not?
2. What data points motivated you most to improve your practice?
3. Did your knowledge of the expectations for how time can and should be used enhance your understanding of Second Step integration? How?
4. What changes to your Second Step approach did you make as a result of this professional development opportunity?
5. Where did this professional development fall short in better preparing you to do so?
6. Which session, presentation, discussion, or strategy had an impact on your practice?
7. Did this professional development cause you to reflect on any of your other teaching practices, specifically with third and fourth graders?

Unlike formative assessments, summative assessments are cumulative in nature and help evaluate how much learning occurred (Bhat & Bhat, 2019; Dixson & Worrell, 2016). The summative assessment for this professional development opportunity was designed to assess the goals of the professional development, the teachers' acquisition of knowledge, and the impact of the newly acquired knowledge on classroom management practices. The summative assessment will also help make determinations about future professional developments including how they were delivered or what content was provided. The format of the summative assessment will

provide a confidential chance for teachers to reflect, not only on the professional development, but also on any additional needs as it pertains to classroom management skills.

Overall Evaluation Goals

Formative and summative assessments play an essential role in all learning. According to Bhat and Bhat (2019) and Dixson and Worrell (2016), formative assessments should be used initially and throughout a learning opportunity, while summative assessments should be used at the conclusion of a learning occasion. The goals of this professional development were addressed by the formative and summative assessments used throughout this professional development. I used formative assessment questions to stimulate discussions, guide presentations, and check understanding before and after each session of the professional development (Bhat & Bhat, 2019). These assessments were used to evaluate the teachers' understanding throughout each section. I used the summative assessment to decide what the teachers have learned, what parts of the professional development were effective, and what future adjustments needed to be made. This assessment was given at the conclusion of the second day and a full professional development evaluation at the end of the professional development series. Using both types of assessments improved the overall evaluation of goals in a professional development opportunity.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

In Section 4, I discussed the strengths and limitations of the study and whether the goals of the study were met. I included self-reflection of what I learned from performing this study as well as introspection as a researcher, scholar-practitioner, and project developer. Finally, I considered how this study may influence social change and possible areas for future research. This qualitative study addressed how SEL mitigates the misbehaviors frequently identified in an urban school, as perceived by the teachers, so that similar methods could be used across comparable student populations elsewhere. Lastly, I synthesized the key points of the study and share my conclusions.

Project Strengths

The professional development project had several strengths. First, it addressed teachers' need for coaching, not merely activities, so they could balance content time while addressing students' emotional concerns when they need it most. Additionally, the project provided training on how to utilize the Second Step activities to build self-sufficiency, as desired by interviewees.

Another strength of this project was to provide participants with the skills and data they needed to better evaluate their SEL needs and successes. Interviews with teachers, as well as review of documents that showed their current use of the Second Step program, confirmed their desire for the program to work. The professional development for those working with third and fourth graders would help teach educators the best approach for implementation based on research. During the training, participants would be provided with recommendations and tools to improve their use of Second Step to enhance the experience of third- and fourth-grade students.

Project Limitations

The first limitation to this professional development project was that it did not address the independence-building component until the third session, months into the school year. Additionally, no final institutional decisions were made regarding the data points for an internal evaluation of the Second Step program. Another natural limitation of this project was using only one school. Although there was a sufficient number of participants, urban charter schools in other states may function differently, and may be beneficial to evaluate them with similar approaches to ensure the results are generalizable. I used a qualitative method to study teachers' perceptions of Second Step on third and fourth graders, including document review, photograph review, and interviews. Quantitative studies could include statistical analyses to determine whether the program made a significant difference.

Recommendations for Limitations and Alternative Approaches

Several scheduling challenges and sustainability concerns limited this professional development project. Though current research supported the need for and importance of SEL professional development training for teachers (Fischer et al., 2018; Lofthouse, 2019; Pharis et al., 2019, Philipsen et al., 2019; Renbarger & Davis, 2019), the drastic changes and evolution of technology are likely to influence the rate of modification that future SEL professional training would require to continue being relevant and effective. Alternative approaches, including monthly optional faculty webinars, could focus on topics and areas related to SEL. Through webinars, monthly training programs could allow teachers to gain valuable skills to influence their learners' socioemotional skills in the classroom.

In addition, monthly training programs could offer an opportunity for teachers to identify behavior issues among children that require attention in the early stages. Future SEL practices for

teachers need continuous adjustment to ensure that the SEL practices are integrated into the curriculum and instructional strategies through technology. Future SEL professional development training needs to be assessed and updated to keep up with the complexities of deviant behaviors among students.

Scholarship, Project Development, Leadership and Change

Throughout my EdD journey, I cultivated specific scholarly skills. I learned that scholars employ the fundamentals of critical reading, drawing conclusions, and synthesizing literature, but in a more advanced way. I learned the skills required to identify, define, and articulate a problem; locate and utilize relevant resources; broaden my base knowledge through literature; and cite the works of others. Scholars must be able to see inconsistencies and approach problems systematically. Researchers search for articles and gather information about a topic until saturation. I learned how to collect data, extract their main points, analyze the accompanying data, make connections, and draw conclusions using higher level thinking skills. Also, I realized true reflection requires scholars to engage in the frequent and constant cycle of understanding what happened and problem-solving to improve next time. I gained a better grasp of academic writing as a practitioner by improving writing mechanics and attention to detail. In scholarly writing, the specificity of word choice and the use of clear and precise language to support the work are important. Scholarly writing also requires thorough citations of the sources used to support assertions. Scholarly writing requires researchers to determine which information is most relevant to the purpose, and to incorporate evidence and avoid bias.

Project Development

This project began as a way to address teachers' concerns based on their overwhelming perceptions that, although Second Step has had its benefits, it has not been used efficiently within

the parameters of time provided by the school, has promoted little to no independence, and has required more formal teacher training. This study forced me to reflect on the lasting outcomes of the professional development project because I have only 3 days to correct the inadequacies of Second Step implementation. I thought about what information to include and the best way to deliver that information. I now realize that designing effective professional development involves much more, and I have changed the approach I used before designing this professional development project. With my new knowledge of creating professional develop opportunities, I gathered as much information as I could so that I would know how to proceed.

I was able to tailor a professional development project to meet the needs of the individuals who would make up my audience. The participants did not want a one-and-done professional development, so I created a 3-day professional development series to make the professional development project more appealing. The findings showed that participants needed more information about classroom management strategies and expectations, so I created informative presentations to deliver information about proactive classroom management strategies, classroom management expectations, and organizational classroom management. The findings showed that participants wanted opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers, so I incorporated collaborative activities that encouraged the participants to work together on different tasks. Before my study, the professional development opportunities I created were more focused on what I wanted or what I thought the participants needed. Now that I know that I should consider background information and participants' needs, I will be more efficient when designing professional development opportunities.

Leadership and Change

As I have pursued my doctorate, my understanding of Second Step and other social-emotional programming has developed. Throughout this process, I have learned that time, training, and authentic execution are the key to a strong social-emotional program among upper elementary grades, regardless of the strict guidelines of high-performing public charter schools. As a leader, I am helping teammates share, learn, and practice strategies that will improve student learning because they will remain in the classroom, not in a reset space. I have changed this aspect during my professional development events to include practice and best practice collaboration in ways that I have not typically done. Additionally, I have learned that a successful leader ensures that the team is focused on continually improving their practice and implementation of systems that will further strengthen the experience of third and fourth graders.

Analysis of Self as Scholar and Practitioner

When I began my doctoral journey, I had not done this level of research. I was inundated with finding journals that were relevant to my topic and within the current time period expected. At one point, I questioned whether I possessed the writing skills necessary to produce scholarly writing at this level. This process, and those connected to my process, gave me the confidence to use advanced vocabulary in my writing, analyze multiple sources of data, and make the necessary connections. Throughout this journey, I have grown from being an educator to a becoming a practitioner. I have begun sessions involving social-emotional programs as an effective change agent regarding upper elementary student behaviors and experience. I learned the importance of using scholarly inquiry to make changes to my practice. Through this process, my writing, research, and professional reading have improved. I continue to check for peer-reviewed journals and articles centered around improving teaching practices to improve student achievement,

especially those connected to SEL in upper elementary grades. Overall, this study has forced me to persist, persevere, and be patient. I have always been an educator, problem-solver, and lifelong learner. These words describe the characteristics of a scholar as well, and I will continue to find problems and platforms that promote social change.

Potential Impact on Social Change

Teacher practices are used to increase student achievement, both academic achievement and growth of character. Teachers require and deserve active professional development and training to improve the social-emotional skills of students. Positive social change can occur if all upper elementary teachers, third and fourth grade specifically, consistently collaborate, share best practice, and implement recommendations through progress. Participants in my study indicated that practice would allow them to include Second Step and alternate social-emotional programming into their day. Participants also suggested that the sharing of best practices would encourage different approaches to building student independence within the SEL program. Student learning increases when teacher preparedness is strong (Barnes, 2019). Students remain in the classroom because they trust that their teacher will allow them to check-in emotionally, thereby countering the need to act out (Blewitt et al., 2021). The work teachers do on building student independence will impact students for life (Barnes, 2019). As students matriculate through elementary, middle, and high school, they take with them the transferrable practices and methods useful to navigating difficult times and complicated interactions.

Administrators, deans, and coaches also improve their instructional practices for teachers by learning new professional development techniques and practice methods that will engage teachers in different ways. Schools that have chosen to adopt Second Step and similar social-emotional programs may also benefit from understanding how collaboration on topics of pacing,

inclusion, and execution of their SEL curriculum through professional development can improve their student behavior data (send-outs, suspensions, etc.). The potential effect on social change is even more significant if schools take advantage of the recommendations around building student independence and ownership of the social-emotional practices taught and developed in the curriculum. As participants indicated in the current study, students can begin pulling from their toolbox again and again as needed. Those students interact with others, who interact with others, until practices are trending, shared, and lived beyond the walls of the school, where they are most beneficial.

Beyond the local level, the project's findings could also help administrators transform (a) the way they view SEL programming, (b) the academic schedules to make sufficient time for use, and (c) school-wide avenues to celebrate effective program use in student and teacher communities. The desired outcome of Second Step is to promote successful, sustainable, and transferrable social-emotional practices that impact class-wide and school-wide change. In the current study, this change addressed the behaviors and stamina within upper elementary cohorts.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Implications for future research include a comprehensive look at where state learning standards require social-emotional programming. I found that many school districts' learning standards do not include SEL. By making research-based SEL programs a requirement, the districts can impact student outcomes more broadly. A similar qualitative study using observations and interviews could be conducted to explore Second Step at the middle and high school levels. Second Step prides itself in covering kindergarten to 12th grade. However, my research showed that third- and fourth-grade teachers were displeased with Second Step's influence relative to the times and the disjointedness of the scenarios to the urban community.

Given the situation with third and fourth graders, research should be done to determine the efficacy of Second Step at the higher levels. Lastly, based on my experience in this study, there is a need for training to improve professional development techniques. Professional learning communities require refreshed engagement methods, practice protocols, and systems that lead to higher productivity in the classroom to enhance the whole child.

Conclusion

The fundamental problem at the study site urban public charter school was an increase in inappropriate behaviors that led to increasing send-outs and suspension numbers. To counteract that, the school implemented the Second Step program with the goal of improving SEL. Based on the local school data, third and fourth graders were the most susceptible to lower academic outcomes because they did not have or were not using the tools needed to navigate complex social-emotional interactions. My response was to conduct a study to answer two research questions: What are third- and fourth-grade teachers' perceptions of Second Step's benefits on student behaviors in an urban charter school environment? What socioemotional practices are used to address behavior needs of the third- and fourth-grade students? In conjunction with the analysis of teacher-provided documents, photos, and interview data, I created a 3-day professional development series to address the needs of teachers regarding how to utilize the activities of Second Step to promote student independence and fit within the tight pacing of the day. The benefits of the professional development outcomes may extend beyond the host school to the local and state levels of public education with required SEL standards.

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Appendix A: The Project

Goals: Over a 3-day period, this professional development will provide an opportunity for teachers to gain knowledge and engage in activities that will improve their ability to effectively execute Second Step in their classrooms. Using informative presentations and collaborative activities, the professional development facilitator will help improve school data by teaching participants how to use additional resources, gain a better understanding of the school's non-negotiables on time, content blocks, and how to make them work within the confines of said non-negotiables. The first two days of the professional development will ground teachers in the data leading to this study, the rationale, practice, and the implications of doing it well on students' social-emotional welfare. The third day will be dedicated to building self-sufficiency with the Second Step program and creating more relatable scenarios based on scholar experiences thus far. Teachers reflect on the successes and failures of their early program use and adjust based on this new practice. Further reflection will occur via an online check-in platform using GoogleDocs two months before the third professional development session two months after.

Learning Outcomes: By the completion of teachers' first day, they will be able to name the project goals; rationale for the chosen social emotional program; social implications of the project; and what Second Step resources connect most to the teacher-identified concerns. By the second day's end, participating teachers will understand the school's policy regarding content time and how to rightfully address the social emotional concerns of students within the time allotted. School leaders will determine the quantitative data that will be collected to determine if SEL implementation is meeting the needs of students; thereby, improving suspension and referral rates. After each day of sessions, they reflect on their learnings in summative assessments.

Target audience: The target audience for this professional development would be third and fourth grade teachers of the participating school. Optionally, second and fifth graders may also attend. In addition, instructional coaches and all school leaders will be asked to join in, shed light on the school's expectations, provide feedback on Second Step implementation through practice, facilitating collaborative groups, and following up with teachers as they implement their classroom management plans.

Components: The study's four findings dictated the various components of the professional development each day. The professional development was spread across 3 days, which each day focusing on different aspects of those four findings. The following outlines the theme or core mission:

1. First Day: Study data review, Second Step resources, and impending SEL data collection

2. Second Day: School-day non-negotiables and practice utilizing the Second Step programming

3. Third day: Building Self-Sufficiency

This study produced four findings that determined the essential components of this professional development. The findings showed that teachers needed coaching on how to balance content time while rightfully addressing the emotional concerns of students when they need it most and ways to weave Second Step activities into the work. Furthermore, teachers desired clearer measures as evidence of growth and success. Finally, because teachers indicated that they needed training on how to build independence, they have to be taught how to do that for students through ongoing

teacher collaboration via online journal, real world scenarios in the third session, reflections, and discussion multiple activities were included throughout the 3-day professional development. In addition, the third day was planned for later in the semester to provide time to implement new plans, learn the students, and use the knowledge of them to create and practice independence-building strategies.

To properly execute the professional development, resources were included for the facilitator and each participant. Each presentation will be broadcast via power point and document camera including all activities, assessments and activities relating to the presentation. Each collaborative activity will be displayed using a PowerPoint presentation including directions and an explanation of the sessions to make it easy for each participant to view as the work in their group. Facilitators will have access to all notes, and both electronic and hard copies of all presentations, activities, and required materials. Teachers will receive handouts of all activities to utilize in their groups, copies of power point note taking slides, and GoogleDoc links. Detailed below is the hour-by-hour agenda for each day of the professional development:

Day 1

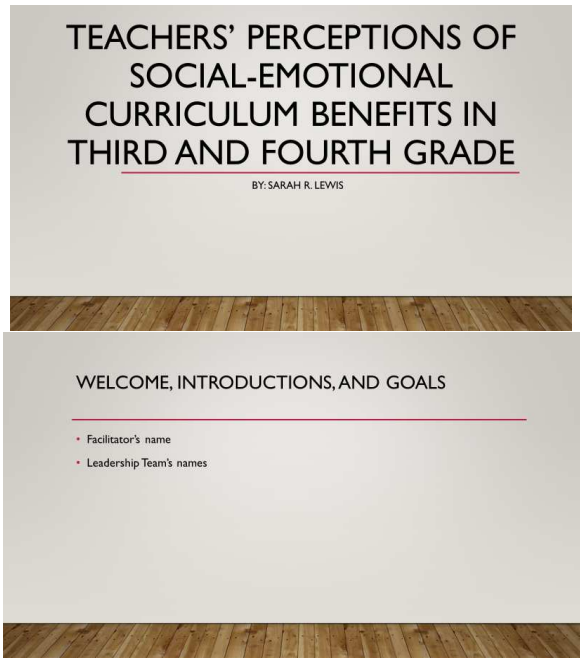
Study data review, Second Step resources, and impending SEL data collection

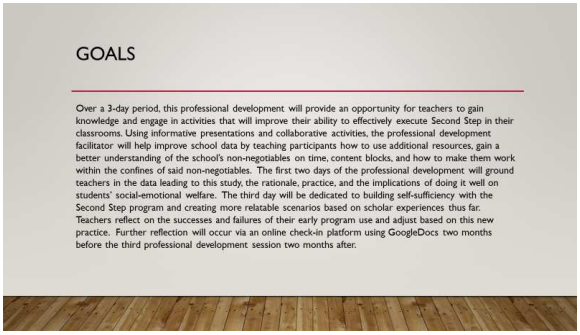
---

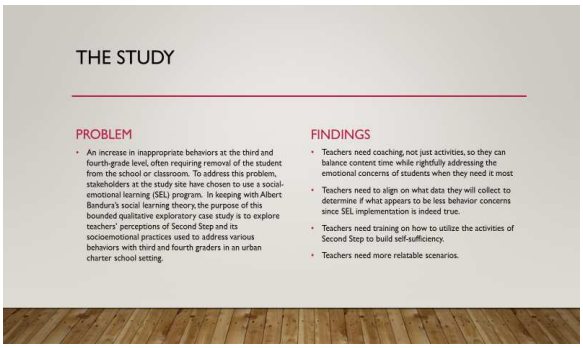
Time	Topic	Method

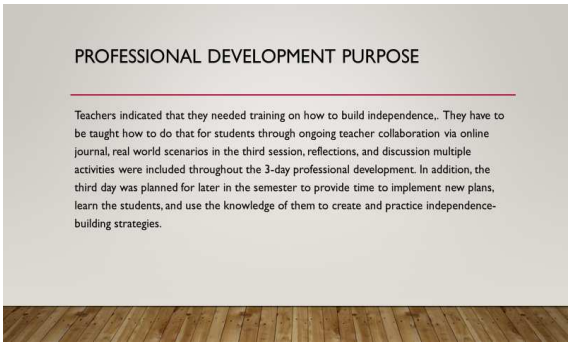
8:00 – 8:30	Breakfast &Sign-in	Breakfast & Sign table
8:30 – 8:45	Welcome, Introductions, Goals	Presenter (PPT)
8:45 – 9:00	Formative assessment	Ticket at the Door
9:00 - 10:00	Study Data Review	Presenter and Group Activity (PPT)
10:00 – 10:15	Break	
10:15 – 11:15	Intro and sampling of Second Step Resources for 20-21 school year	Presenter (PPT)
11:15-11:30	Break	
11:30 - 12:15	Resource #1	Power Point Presentation
12:15 – 12:45	Lunch	On your own
12:50 – 1:35	Resource #2	Power Point Presentation
1:40 – 2:25	Resource #3	Power Point Presentation
2:25 – 2:30	Formative Assessment	Ticket at the Door
2:30 – 3:30	SEL data collection	Team/grade collaboration

Day 1, Presentation 1

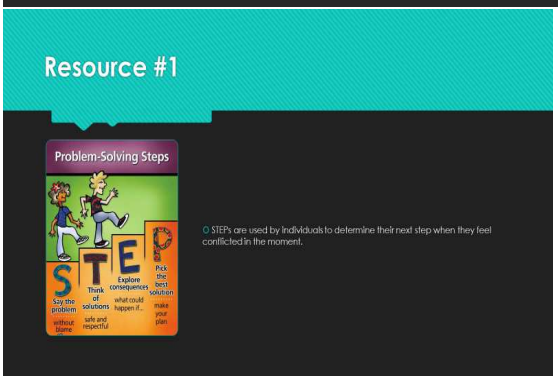


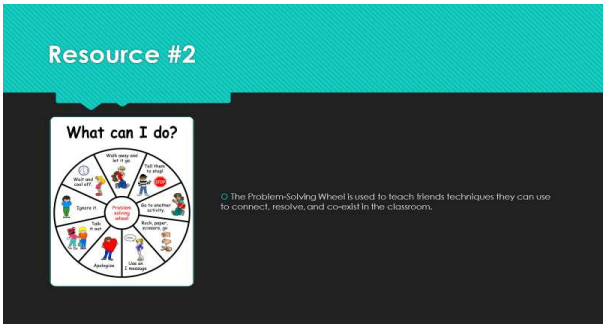






Day 1, Presentation 2





Day 1, Presentation 3

SEL DATA COLLECTION

How can we tell it's all working?

TARGET SKILL	RESOURCE	RELATED DATA	POSSIBLE FINDINGS
Attention Control – 40% of Second Step activities build cognitive regulation. 48% of those activities focus on attention control.	Problem-Solving STEPs	**Number of Referrals**: Greater time-on-task in class; more push-ins; no referrals	Fewer referrals from upper school classrooms because of the frequent STEPs students are taking to consider ways they can solve their problems in their head and heart first. Push-ins would only be needed to support a student as they take said STEPs on their own.
Prosocial behavior – 48% of Second Step activities build interpersonal skills. 42% of that time focuses on prosocial behavior.	Problem-Solving Wheel	**Number of Suspensions** - Fewer to no suspensions	Fewer to no suspensions will result because students will be taught to talk through more of their issues, instead of egregiously retaliating.
Empathy/ Perspective-taking – 52% of Second Step activities build emotional processes. 33% of that time focuses on empathy and perspective-taking.	SEL lesson	**Lesson Observation Data** - Fidelity of lessons taught by third and fourth grade teachers	Strong lessons will lead to greater independence among students. This empathy will be the basis for the individual student's STEPs and their problem-solving abilities.

DATA FOR COLLECTION

Referrals

Suspensions

Lesson Observations

DATA COLLECTION TOOL CREATION – # OF REFERRALS

- Read the draft referral collection tool.
- Answer the following questions at your table –
  - What constitutes a referral?
  - How often will referral counts be taken?
  - Who is responsible for collecting this data?
  - At the end of each day, what is the ideal number of referrals (goal metric)?
  - How will collected data be shared – individually and collectively, and with students?

DATA COLLECTION TOOL CREATION – # OF SUSPENSIONS

- Read the draft suspension collection tool.
- Ask the following questions at your table –
  - What behaviors result in suspension
  - How often will suspension counts be taken – end of each day/week?
  - Who is responsible for collecting this data?
  - At the end of each day, what is the ideal number of suspensions per day/week (goal metric)?
  - How will collected data be shared – individually and collectively, and with students?

DATA COLLECTION TOOL CREATION – LESSON OBSERVATIONS

- Read the draft observation tool/ rubric.
- Ask the following questions at your table –
  - What components should be part of every lesson?
  - How often will morning lesson observations be done, considering the coaches' current observation schedule?
  - What scale will the tool use? How will instructional coaches norm on the tool?
  - How will collected data be shared – individually and collectively?

Day 2

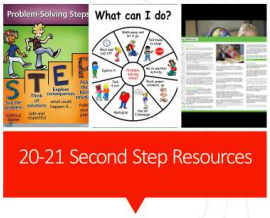
School-day non-negotiables and practice utilizing the Second Step programming

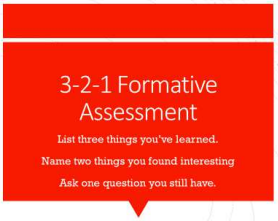
Time	Topic	Method
8:00 – 8:30	Breakfast & Sign-in	Breakfast/Sign-in table
8:30 – 8:40	Formative assessment	Ticket at the Door
8:40 – 9:10	School-day non-negotiables	PowerPoint Presentation (PPT)
9:10 – 9:20	Break	
9:20 – 10:50	Resource #1 Model/ Practice/ Feedback/ Q&A	Practice/ Teacher Collaboration (PPT)
10:50 – 11:00	Break	
11:00 – 12:30	Resource #2 Model/ Practice/ Feedback/ Q&A	Practice/ Teacher Collaboration (PPT)
12:30 – 1:00	Lunch	On your own
1:00 – 2:30	Resource #3 Model/ Practice/ Feedback/ Q&A	Practice/ Teacher Collaboration (PPT)
2:30 – 2:45	Summative assessment	Ticket at the Door

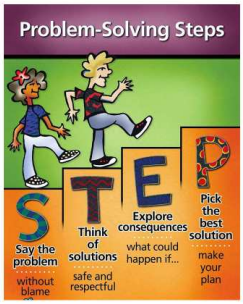
2:45 – 3:30 Reflection and Next Steps Handout

Online Activity and October

Day 2, Presentation







Monthly Online Journal Reflections, between Day 2 and Day 3

After the first two days of the professional development, the teachers will start their school year using their SEL program (Second Step) to fidelity, focusing on the three major resources – the lesson plans, STEPs to problem solving, and the problem-solving wheel. Between the second and third day of the professional development, teachers will use a GoogleDoc link I send to jot in an online journal each month. This will give them an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and practice of utilizing the three resources in his or her classroom. Listed below are the online questions, I will send each teacher using a Google form:

August Question: What is working for you versus what is not?

September Question: What is the most challenging thing you have dealt with so far and how did you handle it?

October Question: What situation would you like support dealing with at this moment?

November Question: What situation would you like support dealing with at this moment?

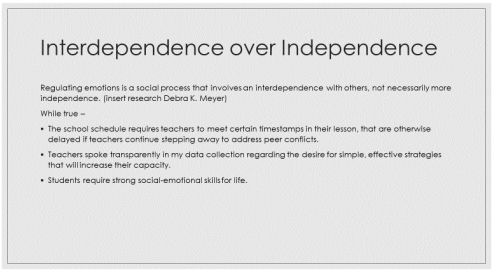
December Question: What, if any, new resource have you tried using in conjunction with Second Step? Why or why not?

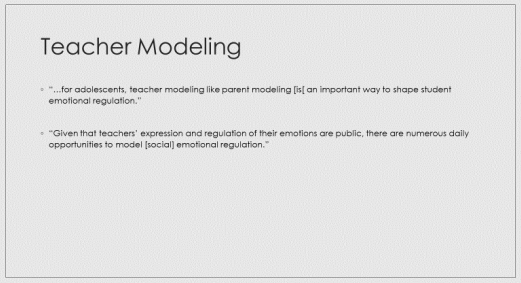
Day 3

Building Self-Sufficiency

Time	Topic	Method
8:00 – 8:30	Breakfast, Sign-in, and Video Reflections	Breakfast/Sign-in table
8:30 – 9:00	Share out and Online Journal data	Ticket at the Door
9:00 – 10:45	Independence Strategy #1 and Practice	Presenter (PPT); Teacher Collaboration
10:45 – 10:50	Break	
10:50 – 12:30	Independence Strategy #2 and Practice	Presenter (PPT); Teacher Collaboration
12:30 - 1:00	Lunch	Own your own

1:00 – 2:45	Independence Strategy #3 and Practice	Presenter (PPT); Teacher Collaboration
2:45 – 3:00	PD Evaluation	Handout
3:00	Closing	





Teacher Modeling

WE Do

- When teachers are celebrating individual or group of students
- When teachers are annoyed/ frustrated…
- When teachers are addressing students who get a question incorrect…

YOU Do

- Practice Protocol here
- Reflect

Non-verbal Interactions

- "Social roles and rules define expectations for emotions, such as how teachers should respond to frustration and excitement and how students should display and manage these same emotions. Social roles, rules, and emotions are communicated daily through nonverbal interactions."

Non-verbal Interactions

WE Do

- Create non-verbals you want students in your class to learn
  - Smile
  - Handshake
  - "Showing support"
- Create lesson that teaches these

YOU Do

- Practice Protocol here
  - Use scenarios that require use of non-verbals
  - Reflect

Emotionally-Supportive Discourse

- "Emotionally-supportive discourse explicitly communicates caring about students' learning and well-being."

Emotionally-Supportive Discourse

WE Do

- Teachers use their experience to name
- Create sentence-starters for emotional support

YOU Do

- Practice using this language in teacher-student scenarios
- Reflect

Professional Development Evaluation

* Required

1. The professional development goals were clearly stated. *

a. Strongly Disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

2. The professional development learning outcomes were relevant for my needs. *

a. Strongly Disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

3. The professional development format was beneficial for the intended learning. *

a. Strongly Disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

4. What was part of the professional development could be improved? *

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5. If you could redesign this professional development what would you exclude? *

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6. If you could redesign this professional development what would you add? *

Appendix B: Sample Questions from Semistructured Interview

Identifiers: • Male • Female • Other	**Grade Taught:** • 3rd grade • 4th grade
QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW	
Length: 30-45 minutes **Primary goals:** To capture teacher perceptions of Second Step benefits on student behaviors and socioemotional practices used to address behavior needs of third and fourth grade students.	**Verbal Consent:** **Would you like to participate in this interview?** • Verbal Consent was obtained from the study participant • Verbal Consent was NOT obtained from the study participant

1) How do you use the Second Step program to improve student behavior?
2) Describe an episode where the students applied the lesson you taught.
3) Describe an episode that was a challenge for the students to use the Second Step technique.
4) Have you observed students having a restorative conversation? What affect did it appear to have on both students?
5) How would you describe the student behaviors pre-SEL program and post-SEL program?
    - Have there been any changes in how students display understanding for other's problems and needs of other students?
    - Have there been any changes in how students follow school and classroom rules?
    - Have there been any changes in how students respond when corrected by teachers?
6) What challenges or benefits have you observed with the program and without it?

7) What other contributing factors do you believe aided the success or failure of the program? What recommendations do you have to improve the program?

8) How did you vary your technique for students with different behaviors and why?

9) How did you modify certain aspects of the curriculum?

10) Do you have a personal philosophy for education? If so, how do your philosophies influence your perception of the Second Step curricula?

11) How do your philosophies influence your perception of what third and fourth grade students need most both socially and emotionally?

12) Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Possible Probing Questions:

"It sounds like you are saying… Is that a fair summary?"

"What motivated this change?"

Appendix C: Document Review and Photograph Tool

Second Step - Recommended Techniques	**Present** *(Yes or No)*	**Comments** *How are they used? In what lesson content are they used, if applicable*	**Photograph Captured** *(Yes or No)*