

5-30-2024

## Implementation of Social-Emotional Programs Found in Urban Elementary Schools in a Mid-Atlantic State

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# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Stephanie Ann Gouskos

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

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2024

Abstract

Implementation of Social-Emotional Programs Found in Urban Elementary Schools in a

Mid-Atlantic State

by

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MA, Walden University, 2019

BS, Salisbury University, 2016

Project Study Submitted in Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2024

## Abstract

As the rise in need for social emotional learning (SEL) becomes apparent in schools, the lack consistent implementation in schools is apparent. Information has been collected stating how districts, schools, and teachers implement their own SEL lessons into the classroom to promote student well-being. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of administrators and teachers in urban elementary schools in a Maryland school district regarding possible barriers to consistent implementation of high-quality SEL. The theoretical framework for this study is based on CASEL's SEL framework. The research questions focus on the perception of implementation and barriers of SEL within schools. The study addressed what the perceptions of administrators and teachers are of the current implementation of SEL practices and of resources and/or training needed to improve SEL implementation. This qualitative study included interviewing, observing, and taking notes on a group of 10 administrators and teachers. The thematic analysis was provided through recorded interviews then analyzed through Saldaña's initial coding method. The results of this study can imply that the need of consistent implementation of SEL programs across elementary schools can lead better understanding of SEL and implementation in the classroom for teacher and administrators when explicit learning is provided help create a positive learning environment for students.

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## Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my parents, who raised me and provided me with all the opportunities possible. They instilled the love of learning and taught me the power of hard work and determination. I would be the student or educator today without them. This dedication is also to the rest of my family and friends who provided me with guidance, motivation, and emotional support throughout this process.

## Acknowledgments

My experience at Walden University I had the pleasure of working with knowledgeable and dedicated professors who provided support in helping me achieve my goals through this doctoral process. I would like to thank my committee chairs Dr. James Bailey and Dr. John Johnson for their collegial support.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **The Local Problem**

The problem that will be addressed through this study is that urban elementary schools in a Maryland school district lack consistent implementation of high-quality social emotional learning (SEL). SEL is an educational method in which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel, and show empathy for others, establish, and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2022). Sokal and Katz (2017) concluded that there is no fidelity in the implementation of SEL and that this cause concerns in current SEL programs for the lack of consistency. While the need to implement SEL increases across schools the lack of implementing consistency with these programs. Findings suggest that SEL implementation is delayed in schools due to climate, structure, and demands in urban schools; therefore, it is not a priority to implement SEL in schools (Humphries et al., 2018).

Many teachers have reported having a lack of strategies, and resources to support students' needs when trying to implement SEL in the classroom (Boylan et al., 2018). Overall, there is a pattern of inconsistency when implementing SEL in classrooms. Regarding the role of SEL in the local setting for this study, a program was created for implementation in improving SEL for the district. The goal of this created program was to ensure students have the necessary skills to become positive members of the community, manage their emotions, build academic and social resilience, identify and

access support, peacefully resolve conflict and make positive decisions, While the crafted program creates an overarching goal for the district, it was found that each school implements their own programs to align with the purpose of the created program from the district. The district for this project study lists each schools' differentiated programs, and many of the programs listed refer to after-school activities and not in-classroom implementation which is also required by the district. While each school implements different programs to promote SEL, there is no SEL curriculum that guides the staff and students. The problem indicates a gap in practice that exists across schools with fidelity application and implementation of SEL and what currently is being done.

### **Rationale**

Evidence indicates a lack of fidelity application and implementation of SEL across schools. For example, an elementary teacher in the district stated that more research into these practices is needed. Similarly, administrators need to voice what is lacking to implement programs in classrooms consistently across elementary schools. A local elementary assistant principal said the schools are not provided a guided curriculum or resources from the county which has led to inconsistent implementation. This local administrator does believe in having the ability to be flexible for students' needs, but there needs to be a foundation to support teachers to provide them with accurate resources that back up the idea of SEL. Several barriers undermine the efforts to bring SEL programming to scale. These barriers consist of implementation challenges, limited local buy-in, lack of financial and personnel resources, and poor integration into practice which could lead to an increase in bullying, low academic performance, and high dropout

rates (Bailey et al., 2019). The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perceptions of administrators and teachers in urban elementary regarding possible barriers to consistent implementation of high-quality SEL.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms are identified throughout this study:

*SEL (social emotional learning)*: SEL is the process for people to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel, and show empathy for others, establish, and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2023).

*SEL program*: This term refers to the SEL programs that are built upon a research based SEL curriculum that teaches individuals social and emotional skills that are necessary for life and academic success (Move This World, 2022).

*Implementation*: The study of methods to promote the adoption and integration of evidence-based practices, policies, research findings and evidence into policy and practices (Binagwaho et al., 2020).

*Competence*: The ability to integrate and apply contextually appropriate knowledge, skills, and psychosocial factors (e.g., beliefs, attitudes, values, and motivations) to consistently perform successfully within a specified domain (Vitello et al., 2021).

*CASEL Framework*: CASEL is the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning and helps make evidence-based social and emotional learning an

integral part of education from preschool through high school. The CASEL Framework fosters knowledge, skills, and attitudes across five areas of social and emotional competences: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making skills, relationship skills (CASEL, 2023).

*Self-awareness:* The ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts (CASEL, 2023).

*Self-management:* The ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations (CASEL, 2023).

*Social awareness:* The ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts (CASEL, 2023).

*Responsible decision-making skills:* The ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. (CASEL, 2023).

*Relationship skills:* The ability to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups (CASEL, 2023).

### **Significance of the Study**

Studying the problem of lack of fidelity application and implementation of SEL across schools in the district is useful because it provides insight into the need for SEL and what changes need to be made for better implementation. The problem addressed in this project study is that urban elementary schools in a Maryland school district lack

consistent implementation of high-quality SEL. This study is significant in that it leads to a better understanding of why the urban elementary schools in this study lack fidelity application and implementation of SEL across schools. The findings may create positive social change by providing teachers, counselors, and administrators with useful information regarding SEL. The long-term goals of SEL programs are to help establish students with successful emotional management tools that will help them navigate through everyday challenges. When provided with these specific skills, students are able to cope with life's challenges. SEL programs have been found to reduce risk factors, uncover innate resilience, promote natural well-being, and facilitate school success (Green et al., 2021). Studying the problem of lack of fidelity application and implementation of SEL provides insight into what next steps are needed to help improve SEL programming implantation for students.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions used to guide this study include the following:

- RQ1: What are administrator and teacher perceptions of the current implementation of SEL practices?
- RQ2: What are administrator and teacher perceptions about resources and/or training needed to improve SEL implementation?

### **Review of the Literature**

In this section, I will review the conceptual framework that helps frame this study along with a review of the broader problem of SEL and SEL implementation. Experience, variability, and sustainability were common themes found throughout the reviewed



research literature review that focused on SEL implementation, the CASEL implementation framework, stakeholder perceptions, and the impact of SEL programs. The overall research on the impact of SEL found similar concepts of competencies, practices, and achievement. To search the literature, I used the following search terms: *SEL and implementation in elementary schools*. I used the Walden Library databases and Google Scholar to collect resources.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Consistent implementation for fidelity of SEL in elementary schools means that program-based practices are being carried out by the school system to provide students with valuable tools necessary to be successful in everyday life. The CASEL framework grounded this study as it is a framework of foundation for communities to use evidence based SEL strategies in ways that are most meaningful to their local context (CASEL, 2023). The CASEL framework fosters knowledge, skills, and attitudes across five areas of social-emotional competence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills. The CASEL framework establishes equitable learning environments through these five areas that support student social, emotional, and academic growth.

The CASEL framework provides the structure and ability for schools, districts, states, and others to foster knowledge, and skills (CASEL, 2023) These social-emotional competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Based on this framework, schools, districts, states, and others are able to establish equitable learning environments and support students' social,

emotional, and academic development (CASEL, 2023). While SEL alone will not solve inequities in the education system, it can create the conditions needed for individuals and schools to examine and interrupt inequitable policies and practices, create more inclusive learning environments, and reveal and nurture the interests and assets of all individuals (CASEL, 2023)

The CASEL framework of systemic implementation in schools allows for SEL focused environment where students have opportunities to practice the skills that support their learning and development (CASEL,2023). The systemic implementation in schools is based on four main areas of activity. These areas include building foundational support and plans, strengthening adult SEL competencies and capacity, promoting SEL for students, and reflecting on data for continuous improvement. Throughout these areas of focus, there are many indicators that provide successful implementation. These indicators include explicit instruction, SEL integrated with academic instruction, family partnerships, focus on adult SEL, systems for continuous improvement, community partnerships and many more.

In a recent study, research emphasized the importance of how the CASEL framework should implement SEL as a schoolwide program (Jomaa et al., 2023). This aligns with the view that a consistent program should be implemented throughout schools for quality results. The research explains how training in the five CASEL competencies can improve knowledge and contribute to more effective implementation (Jomaa et al., 2023). Researchers found that through consistent implementation of SEL in the classroom, students were provided with a foundational level of support. When the

instructors understood the purpose of teaching SEL the implementation of a new curricula was successful. Understanding the CASEL framework provides the purpose for why SEL is important in the classroom and what is needed to be successful.

## **Review of the Broader Problem**

### ***Impact of Experience with SEL within Education***

In the United States, SEL has been integrated into schools within the last 20 to 30 years (CASEL, 2023). As years of development and research progressed, ways of integrating programs in schools have become more of a necessity, and establishing a new program takes time, effort, and consistency (CASEL, 2023). The implementation of SEL programs impacts the outcome success of the program, according to Dyson et al. (2021). The outcome of success means that how a teacher, administrator, or stakeholder buys into the programs and implements with fidelity can impact how effective the outcome of the program can be. Dyson et al. (2021) explained that avoiding slippage is essential in the implementation to sustain long-term positive change within school communities. Avoiding slippage means that school communities are consistently implementing and meeting the expectations of the SEL program to ensure that students are receiving full quality of the program. In a recent study, 14 educators were asked to reflect on their understanding and experiences of SEL based on continued PD and implementation (Dyson et al., 2021). The research suggested three themes when understanding what successful implementation of an SEL program meant. These themes were establishing the significance of SEL through continuing PD, putting SEL into practice, and the realities of establishing SEL. The first theme, continuing PD, allows for teachers/administrators to

have quality PD to continually learn and understand the program being implemented. The second theme gives the opportunity to put what has been taught into practice allows for teachers to grow and establish what areas they succeed in and what areas may need growth. This is established by monitoring student's behavioral and academic progress as well as monitoring teacher implementation. The third theme, the realities of establishing SEL, combines data and information that determines what is working and what is not when implementing an SEL program. Overall, a complete community buy-in would need to be involved for successful implementation as students, teachers, families, and community members would need to understand the purpose and outcomes of implementing a new program like this.

In a similar study, Dowling and Barry (2020) found that SEL programs were effective but the variability in implementation had a negative impact on programs lasting. Dowling and Barry examined how inconsistency in implementing a program called MindOut could affect the quality impact this program effects. When the variables of consistency change based on implementation, the outcome of the program has a higher possibility of changing. They found that when implemented differently at different schools, the effectiveness of the programs was not as successful as those with consistent implementation. Dowling and Barry found that these differences of implementation quality could be defined as school-readiness, management buy-in, training, ongoing support for delivery, etc. With the knowledge of what strategies helped successfully implement a quality SEL program, strategies can be developed to help promote quality implementation in the future.

A recent study by Thierry et al. (2022) revealed the process used to increase the school's ability for implementing and sustaining SEL programs. The results determined that implementation is based off improving the ability to support a new SEL program, create a positive climate, and align policies and standards. Supporting a new program is not easy this means new resources and funding in addition to stakeholders buying into a new program, creating a positive climate would be checking in with stakeholders (i.e., staff and students) to determine what is working and what needs improvement. Aligning policy and standards would mean connecting the other areas of one's school missions and goals to be supported by the new implementation of a new SEL program. By creating connections of SEL in each of these areas the strength in the implementation will grow and become consistent.

As Thierry et al. (2022) previously discussed, a school's ability to sustain implementation is based on openness to innovation, participatory decision-making process, collaboration among teachers and positive culture and climate. Humphries et al. (2018) discovered similar findings when researching the teachers' perceptions of SEL programs. Using a qualitative study to explore early childhood teachers' perceptions of SEL programs for children, the researchers found that responsibility, curricula/program design, contextual relevance, support, and barriers were all areas that needed support for successful implementation. Each of these areas were a step in the process in ensuring successful implementation. Responsibility was needed to ensure that everyone was trained and had the resources, curricula/ design needed to be determined and best selected for the benefit of the students. Contextual relevance aligns with curricula/ design as it is

to ensure that the selected group is targeted, and support and barriers were thought of prior to implementation to ensure of possible missteps. Like Thierry et al., these common themes of having consistency between programs and support are relevant to how successful SEL is implemented.

### ***Variability of SEL Between Students, Teacher, Programs, and Schools***

In addition to experience being a factor of SEL implementation, variability is also a factor into successful implementation of SEL within schools. Variability means lack of consistency of program elements, which relates to SEL because programs tend to be inconsistent between schools in addition to methods of implementation. Variation theory is relevant in this case because learners must change the way they see things which leads to a wider perspective by focusing on different aspects of SEL and gaining perspective and growth (Ling Lo, 2012). Fang et al. (2021) examined the relationship between the consistency of the application and program effects. From this study, it was found that high implementation and commitment to performance results in good quality execution, whereas a lack of high-quality implementation results in no change in program effects.

In another study, Goh and Connolly (2020) found similar results when implementing SEL programs with minimal variability. This means that the SEL program were implemented school-wide for all students with set guidelines for curricula and teacher implementation. When implementing a program, consistency is key to achieving success. As a result, the study showed that through SEL interventions, SEL skills, attitudes, and positive social behaviors increased, and students displayed fewer conduct problems and had lower levels of emotional distress (Goh & Connolly, 2020).

Research done by Hunter et al. (2022) coincides with previous studies but further determined that consistency is more than implementing a curriculum for instruction but how the curriculum is implemented. This study looked into how the training for implementation, or the lack of training can contribute to implementation of an SEL program in schools. Variability can occur when teachers and schools approach implementation differently even if the program is the same (Hunter et al., 2022). This takes variability a step further in suggesting that not only implementing a consistent program but how the program is implemented is important when ensuring maximum success.

### ***Sustainability of SEL***

Successful SEL implementation also aims for long-term sustainability. While implementing a new program, sustaining expectations and criteria is important for success. Since the change from in-person learning to virtual learning due to the pandemic, the adjustment has varied for students. Implementing SEL into daily education practices has helped students maintain and improve performance in school no matter the geographical location (Kamei & Harriott, 2020). In Kamei and Harriott's (2020) study, explicit SEL instruction and ongoing teaching practices are designed to promote SEL and sustain quality programs within schools. Effective support comes from an ongoing dialogue between all stakeholders to determine what is missing and how to provide it. This means that sustainability must be maintained through ongoing conversations between staff members and surrounding schools in order to determine what changes may need to be made to keep SEL of importance.

Similar to the previous study, Flanagan and Rodriguez (2021) studied the areas of strengths and weakness of school-wide structure to determine a positive implementation of a safe, supportive environment for all students. Their findings suggested that schools may benefit by examining their approach on SEL practices by implementing more consistency. The results of the study determined that many teachers felt uncomfortable implementing a program with lack of training and support for a successful sustainable program.

### ***Stakeholders Perception of SEL Achievement***

Collecting data and monitoring student achievement allows for stakeholders such as teachers, administrators, and parents to understand if what is being taught in the classroom is learned. Over the last 30 years, it has become known that a student's performance can be impacted based on their social and emotional needs, thus, the need for SEL to become a core element in education (CASEL, 2023). Bond (2020) described how SEL has positively impacted student achievement within a classroom. He described that when implemented students academically become more successful and attend class compared to students who do not. Bond (2020) stated that classrooms still lack the time for SEL focus that will help to promote student achievement. In many classrooms, teachers only touch the surface or implement a small amount of SEL on a weekly basis.

In another study, the perceptions of school leadership were gathered to investigate an effective teaching and learning culture in schools (Mohale et al., 2020). Mohale et al. (2020) collected data from four public high schools and determined that achievement is based on resources provided, curriculum implementation, and training. Social emotional



programs tend to lack support as there is little buy in from leadership when implementing a new program. When one of these areas is lacking in support then the overall achievement of implementing a program can be unsuccessful.

### ***Climate/Experience***

Climate plays a large role in stakeholder perception of SEL. Climate in schools is the perception of how students, teachers, and other stakeholders feel about school. SEL programs play a large role in changing school climate. Capp et al. (2021) found that school climate is increasingly intertwined with SEL and there is an increase in expectations to improve climate. Results from staff feedback have been collected from staff members to determine staff perceptions. By monitoring the climate, risk factors can be determined to help improve climate through personal SEL and implementation of SEL. By monitoring each subgroup's climate within the schools' different areas can improve overall stakeholder perception and wellbeing.

Including climate assessment when applying an SEL program can help with engaging students in the program by targeting the areas of concerns they mention. Yang et al. (2020), for example, discussed the benefit of school-wide SEL programs in addition to supporting students' needs depending on age and gender and providing additional support. Using the perception of students can determine how effective the SEL program being implemented is effective.

### ***Expectations***

Implementing any program requires a set of expectations. When implementing an SEL program into schools there are expectations from different stakeholders with

different needs. While SEL has become a new profound area in education some stakeholders still need convincing of the benefits (Jones & Carter, 2020). The perceptions of administration can determine how successful a program will be implemented, based on what priorities the administrator will have for their school such as the vision, expectations, and emphases (Jones & Carter, 2020). Principals set expectations for their staff as to what these goals and visions are for the school. Jones and Carter (2020) determined principals decide a perceived importance which refers to the level of importance integrating SEL into their school. Perceived importance means that if the principal has the belief and understanding of how effective an SEL program can be then the higher set of expectations for implementing versus those that prioritize it lower.

### ***SEL Program Competencies***

As social emotional programs have become more of a standard practice in classrooms, finding the right programs to ensure students' high competency levels is important for quality instruction. In a recent study, Ahmed and Abdullah (2020) examined the effect of the SEL approach on students and found that students who were exposed to SEL positively demonstrated significant social-emotional competence compared to students that were exposed to a traditional teaching style. Students became more self-sufficient in learning and their well-being with the tools that they were provided through their exposure of SEL in their everyday classroom setting.

Green et al. (2021) found that SEL programs have the ability to enhance social emotional competencies in children. These programs would grow different skills such as self- awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible

decision-making skills. The awareness of all these skills provides children with the opportunity to cope effectively. Green et al. determined it was important to compare students' understanding of underlying program principles by studying students who were intervenes with the SPARK Child Mentoring SEL program versus students that were not. The results indicated that positive effects determine positive outcomes for students who are associated with SEL programs.

Howard and Ferrari (2022) provided a similar perspective as they provide information on how SEL integrates with career development competencies. Being competent in a future career is one skill set that starts to develop within schools and learning social skills is another skill set developed within schools, by combining both you are targeting areas for students and teaching them specific coping mechanisms for real life situations. This provides the competency level for students to be able to manage one day on their own.

### ***SEL Program Practices***

SEL practices vary from teacher to teacher, from curriculum to curriculum. This can create inconsistencies and uneasiness in a learning environment. Best social emotional practices can provide a positive welcoming learning environment for students, but consistency is key. In a recent study. Bennouna et al. (2021) stated that providers need to adjust their practices to promote inclusion such as maintaining students' cultural heritage. This is in order to maintain respect through engagement. In addition, within this study, having a school-wide policy that creates a standard and expectation for all teachers, administrators, stakeholders, and staff can provide new students an opportunity

to feel welcome and transition easier into the classroom. Bennounna et al. found that schoolwide SEL efforts enhance culturally responsive behaviors amongst children and families.

Not only is the practice of SEL beneficial for students during the time being taught but Ferreira et al. (2021) states that beginning SEL practices at the preschool age is critical for long-term school and life success. In Ferreira et al., the researchers stated how even though much has been determined to lead to the importance of SEL and teachers play a huge part there is insufficient programming for teachers to provide to students. Many teachers provide their own research and experiences of what SEL should be in the classroom. After interviewing teachers, they concluded that their SEL beliefs did align with the CASEL model but that implementation or practices of SEL should be provided to teachers through a theoretical discourse of SEL such as a training and school-wide approach.

Supporting the idea of a school-wide approach Blewitt et al. (2020) discusses the idea and benefits of curriculum based SEL programs within school. This study determined that using a universal curriculum SEL based program strengthens teaching practice and behavior, provides positive teacher-child interactions and effective classroom management.

### ***SEL Program Achievement***

Many studies have indicated that student achievement is linked to the emotional well-being of a student's (Davies et al., 2021). In a study by Davies et al. (2021), the researchers not only studied the achievement in each student but the students as a

collective. For this to occur educators needed to implement this effectively by significantly improving students' social emotional skills, reducing problems in behaviors, improve academic achievement and outcome and better mental health among the community. Over the next several years the achievement in each of these areas can improve if the implementation of each area is consistent.

To determine the achievement of SEL, Soland et al. (2019) measured achievement through SEL constructs of growth mindset, self-efficacy, self-management, and social awareness. Growth mindset refers to the way the students view their intelligences on a continuum, self- efficacy is determined on how individuals judge their own ability to perform certain tasks or action successfully, self-management is referred to as the way a student's maintains control over his or her thought behavior or emotions and social awareness is defined as the ability to understand social norms (Soland et al., 2019). This study determined that SEL is a growing priority for educational stakeholders and that student's achievement can vary depending on time-specific situational and environmental factors. This is important to take into consideration as achievement can be linked to how a student is feeling at the time resulting in varied outcomes.

Fairless et al. (2021) study states that SEL positively impacts a student's achievement. It was determined that SEL and academic achievement are linked targeting specific skills at set age groups is set to be more malleable. This means that while SEL should be implemented throughout schools to help with achievement there should be goals and target for specific age groups for them to continue growing both personally and academically.

### **Implications**

Implications for possible project directions address the stress and burden that is put on teachers to not only teach students but ensure that student well-being is up to par without proper training. Providing insight as to the lack of consistent implementation, it would provide the district or school leaders with information on reasons why SEL programs are inconsistent across elementary schools within the same district. The current direction of the project will be a PD plan aimed at helping schools better implement SEL curricula.

The PD would provide staff with the tools that would help provide SEL with structured success. Finding a program that targets the areas of the common themes that were apparent through the interviews would be beneficial in ensuring consistent areas are being targeted throughout implementation when applying a new program in schools. With the results from the interviews the goal of the project study could be to provide multiple PD opportunities of understanding SEL and implementing SEL in elementary schools. This would provide the consistency needed for successful implementation.

### **Summary**

Throughout this section SEL has been discussed through implementation, stakeholder perception, and programming. Each of these areas were sectioned into subcategories that are commonly found in schools. SEL implementation was subcategorized into impact in education, variability between students, teachers, programs and schools, sustainability, and CASEL Framework. In this subcategory, information was gathered to determine that implementing an SEL program takes more than one aspect.

The next common thread through research was stakeholder perception. This category was subdivided into achievement, climate/ experience, and expectations. It was determined that to not only have a successful SEL program the perception of those working with and around the program bring a lot ensuring the success of the program. The last section of the SEL programs was subdivided into competencies, practices, and achievement. To determine quality implementation areas of practices and student achievement would need to be analyzed to determine the success of a program. Thus, these categories come together to bring the purpose of this study which is to understand the perceptions of administrators and teachers to determine why there is inconsistency in SEL programs in elementary schools. In Section 2, I present the Methodology that informs the reader of the research design and approach, participants, data collection, and analysis. In Section 3, I will present the Project that will provide the reader with an introduction, rationale, review of the literature, project description, project evaluation plan, and project implications. In Section 4, for the finally of the study reflections and conclusions will be provided through descriptions of project strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches, scholarship project development and leadership and development, reflection on the importance of the work, implications, applications, and directions for future research as well as the conclusion.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Research Design and Approach**

This study used a basic qualitative design. This approach was appropriate for this study as data were collected based on opinions, feelings, and experiences of current implementation and needs (see Clark & Vealé, 2018). The study design correlates with the approach as observations, interviews, and notes of specific individuals involved with participating in the study were collected and analyzed to determine common themes (see Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). The method aligns with the problem and purpose of this study as the perceptions of administrators and teachers may reveal why there is inconsistency with fidelity application and implementation of SEL across schools.

While there are many options for an effective qualitative study such as the use of surveys, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, and case studies the most beneficial methods are observations, interviews, and notes. This is because surveys, although efficient data collection tools, can lead to no given explanations and lead to more questions. Grounded theory research provides rich diverse data but is based on participants' experiences. While ethnographic research is another great method to collect data, it is not compatible with this research as it involves the researcher embedding themselves into the environment to record and observe what is seen. Case studies usually entail a deep dive into a single study which the elements of the case. The elements of using a case study does not meet the requirements of this current study due to the lack of participant engagement and feedback therefore the approach would not be effective. The research questions explored the experiences of the individuals within the same district. I



found commonalities between interviews and field notes to determine the reason for inconsistency between schools in the same district.

### **Participants**

Data resulted from interviews with primary school teachers and administrators. There were 10 participants from the same district with a range in educational experience and an interest in SEL. Participants' experience in the education field working with students ranged from 1 year to 40 years. Collecting interviews from individuals with a variety of educational experiences provided an insight as to why there is a lack of consistent implementation of high-quality SEL. The number of teachers, administrators, and counselors ranged based on availability at the time of interviews. Participants were contacted by email through the district wide email database. Qualified participants were then contacted to schedule a time for interviews.

### **Data Collection**

For my research design, I utilized semi structured interviews. Data collection began only after I obtained approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board to proceed (Approval No. 11-13-23-0747725). I interviewed 10 teachers and administrators within the same district at the elementary level. These interviews were individually planned with a curated list of questions and interview protocol that targeted the purpose of this study. The interview protocol was reviewed by experts outside the scope of the study to help determine the alignment to the chosen framework for the study. These 45- to-60-minute interviews were conducted through Zoom video call recordings as a data collection instrument including a note sheet for gathering notes during

interviews. The interview questions reflected the research questions. The research questions were established to target the views of strengthening adult SEL, promoting SEL for students, and continuously improving SEL (CASEL, 2023). Interviews were set up through a Zoom video call in order to be recorded with permission and replayed for feedback and data collection purposes. The data were collected through a transcript catalog going through multiple rounds of coding to determine categories which established a theme. Themes are what brings codes together in order to determine all the information that was gathered and processed. Throughout this process, my role as the researcher was to provide a safe space where the participants were able to share their experiences and views without involving my biased opinion as well as sharing minimal information about myself that could have changed the perspective of the participants. Participants were contacted through e-mail. Participants were selected based on meeting study criteria; those available to participate were interviewed. As a researcher, I currently am a teacher and have been for the past 7 years. I work in the same district as these participants, some being peers and/or leaders. Although I have worked with these few participants, our background in education has led us to have different experiences and therefore different viewpoints as to what may be necessary. As educators, it is important to listen and grow and continue to learn and hear from my peers and their viewpoints will allow for open conversation for change.

### **Data Analysis**

In this study, data were collected and analyzed through recorded interviews. I began analyzing the interview with Saldaña's initial coding, which breaks down

qualitative data into discrete parts and closely explains and compares them for similarities and differences (Saldaña, 2021). For this initial coding process, I began highlighting components of the interviews that were interesting and revealing what SEL was in the district or school they were mentioning. During my second cycle of coding, I used the concept coding process to analyze the data based on the chosen framework. Lack of consistent implementation of establishing basic learning environments and lack of systemic implementation in schools were the two framework ideas I targeted as I began sifting through the initial information I highlighted. This helped with bringing concepts together from multiple interviews to suggest a general concept or theme that will drive the development of the overall project. For example, when looking for lack of consistent implementation of establishing basic learning environments I found information that related the lack of the five CASEL competencies. When determining what related to the lack of systemic implementation, I found data that related to the lack of building foundation, lack of strengthening adult SEL competencies, capacity, lack of promoting SEL for students and minimal reflection for data for classroom improvement. Using these two cycles of analyzing data helped to determine why there is a lack of consistent implementation of high-quality SEL. As mentioned before, I used a transcript catalog to collect pieces of information from the recorded Zoom videos to find common codes to determine reasons that can lead to a possible conclusion.

While in the process of these cycles, I conferred with my committee members to monitor quality and ensure there was no bias from the conclusions collected from the interviews. This was done after each cycle to ensure that the conclusions being collected

were accurate to the voice of the participants. When necessary, any further clarification was referred directly back to the participants to ensure that their views were accurately portrayed. To increase the credibility and validity of the research, triangulation was used to determine the data collected providing a clear understanding of the data being portrayed.

### **Data Analysis Results**

Data analysis consisted of many steps using Saldaña's coding steps (2021). The first step in the data analysis process was to transcribe each interview. The Zoom platform provided transcriptions of the video-recorded interviews. The transcriptions were recorded into a Word document where each transcription was saved under the date of the interview and initials of the participant to protect their identity. Once the transcriptions were formatted in the Word document, I went back to each recorded interview to ensure that the words transcribed matched up with recorded video, fixing any areas that were omitted or added incorrectly. This also helped in regaining familiarity with the interviews for when I needed to begin coding. This process took about 2 to 3 days after each interview. After ensuring that the transcriptions were completed, I began the second step of the data analysis process.

During the interview process, each participant answered questions to share their views and experiences that surround SEL implementation in the school and district they work in. Table 1 provides background on the individuals who participated in the study, including the number of participants, the years of experience in education, and their current position. Table 2 indicates the two themes and the corresponding subthemes that

emerged throughout the interviews, based on both the CASEL framework and the CASEL framework of systemic implementation. Following both tables is a summary of the collected interview findings.

**Table 1**

*Participant Background*

Participants	Years of experience	Current position
Participant 1	14	5th grade teacher
Participant 2	26	Instructional specialist Department of Special Ed Services
Participant 3	14	3rd grade teacher
Participant 4	20	Academic intervention teacher
Participant 5	6	Head Start teacher
Participant 6	17	Elementary principal
Participant 7	13	Elementary assistant principal
Participant 8	18	English Language Development teacher
Participant 9	14	Elementary assistant principal
Participant 10	13	Elementary assistant principal

**Table 2***Themes From Frameworks*

Themes	Subcategories
Lack of consistent implementation of establishing basic learning environments	Minimal evidence of self-awareness Lack of self-management Inconsistent push for social awareness Lack of building relationship skills Lack of support for responsible decision-making skills
Lack of systemic implementation in schools	Lack of building foundational support and plans. Need for strengthening adult SEL competencies and capacity Inconsistent promotion of SEL for students Lack of reflecting on data for continuous improvement Need for time to implement

**Framework Theme 1: Lack of Consistent Implementation of Establishing Basic Learning Environments**

Participants' views of the implementation of SEL lack consistency. While the main focus of implementation of SEL is building self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making skills for students, the consistent implementation of these areas was not provided by the district but rather each individual participants determination to find solutions. Each category that builds the CASEL framework revealed the concept that there is a lack of inconsistent implementation in learning environments.

The first subcategory present throughout the interview process was the minimal evidence of self-awareness. Many of the participants interviewed mentioned receiving a

lack of training on SEL development and implementation. Therefore, the implementation of SEL in the classroom became based on the interpretations of teachers. Participant 8 mentioned how some teachers have incorporated SEL into their daily routine, whereas others have pushed it aside valuing the time to not fall behind. Another reason for lack of consistent implementation is due to a lack of resources available for teachers. Participant 5 mentioned how, “there were lessons provided for head start, but they are not developmentally appropriate and/or lack the relevant day to day interactions.” Many teachers are unaware of the CASEL framework and the meaning of SEL in order to implement direct instruction in specific areas. Participant 1 mentioned not having direct instruction around SEL skills. To provide understanding for self-awareness, their needs to be, “direct instruction followed with opportunities to practice and reinforce (Participant 4, 2024).” Participant 2 mentioned that

teaching [these] skills at a young age builds those neural pathways in our youngest learners when it’s easier to build, than waiting till they’re in fifth grade, middle, high school because now there are many calls of concerns around behaviors and responses.

Implementing the strategy of self-awareness later in life can be less effective as because, “then we’re trying to build neural pathways and brains that are already so far developed.” Teaching a new skill later in an adolescent can be harder than providing them with the tools to cope.

Some educators have addressed SEL in the classroom, but this is based on their own volition and research. Participant 4 mentioned that the reason for not implementing

is because of the lack of resources. Not having something specific to implement take time from instructional planning and with little knowledge on which direction to take they end up putting it aside. The teachers who have acquired their own knowledge on the benefits of SEL use resources such as YouTube or recommendations from other teachers.

Participant 12 mentioned how the message needs to come from administration. When the administration addressed this topic, they saw more teachers taking time to implement it because everyone was invested in how to implement and trying techniques.

While there was minimal evidence of self-awareness, there was also lack of evidence for self-management, another core concept that falls under the CASEL framework. Further evidence shows that there is a lack of consistent implementation for this competency also. Participant 2 mentioned getting inundated with calls of issues and problems. Participant 2 also mentioned that “these kids don’t have the skills to manage their distress when we could have taught it when their brains are more malleable at a younger age.” Providing students with the tools to self-manage would allow for less disruption in class. While some teachers or schools try to implement a focus on providing students with self-management another participant mentioned, “not having many resources from the district, they have pulled from resources from YouTube or other teacher recommendations.” This indicated that proper guidance and structure for students to follow is not provided. For example, this same participant mentioned taking part of the school-wide initiative for positive reinforcement called Peace Paws. While this initiative was implemented at their current school, they did not have a similar initiative at a previous elementary school within the same district. Participant 3 stated that,



the guidance counselor [at their previous school] provided a lot of different social groups, for kids that were going through different traumas, and then at the current school every morning they start off the morning announcements with a meditation or a calming strategy to get the kids focused for the day, which participant 3 had mentioned were great implementations of different SEL tools. This same participant went on to mention that they, “know [the counselor goes] over different strategies with the kids but as in teacher there being the first year there, I don’t.” This is because she does not, “know what any of these strategies are that they’re teaching kids.” Participant 8 mentioned how, “a true SEL system for elementary school, like teaching kids how to be humans.” For example, this participant explained that schools need resources to teach them how to be kind and how to solve problems. It has become more apparent that schools need to take time to explicitly teach these skills. These findings indicate that the self-management strategies from elementary school to elementary school within the district are different or missing.

The next areas in the CASEL framework that is prevalent to success of SEL implementation is for social awareness and the need for building relationship skills, yet evidence shows this was also inconsistently implemented. When asked about how schools promote social awareness a participant 4 mentioned that

at the school where I am now as part of the whole social emotional learning, we have children for their own problem solving and work out some conflicts, so every day after recess there are 5 to 10 minutes for peace talks.

They mentioned how when they got to this school, they, “had no idea what that was.” The simple implementation of practicing the idea of social awareness is again not implemented consistently throughout school to school in the same district. Schools are implementing what they think is best for students instead of providing a foundation of SEL and then building upon that. This provides the opportunity for establishing a basic SEL learning environment because students are learning self-awareness and building relationships with other students but is not provided in every school lacking the consistency across the district in all elementary schools. For example, when students leave or transfer to another school, they must relearn a new system of how these areas are implemented. Participant 7 mentioned that at their school, “the first month of the school year was focused establishing a time for relationship building.” In addition, it was stated that some teachers take this time for prioritizing intervention groups because there is no guidance or structure on what kind of activity to do during that time. So, while for some teachers, “it provides an opportunity to learn, make connections and get to know the class (Participant 4),” it is not consistent throughout the school or between elementary schools.

The final subcategory that would provide evidence for social-emotional competence is the idea of providing instruction that leads to responsible decision-making skills. Through the interviews conducted a lack of support for responsible decision-making skills was also revealed. A participant mentioned their way of proving that concept in their class was providing students with the opportunity to use fidgets, which are used to, “help you focus or to help you calm down. It’s not to sit there and avoid work or avoid an issue.” This idea was brought about because the district recommended the

idea of having a calming corner but did not mandate the idea or provide resources to encourage. This same participant mentioned that “where I am at my school out of my team of 5, there are 3 of us that implement this strategy.” Participant 8 mentioned how their school implemented the program *Leader in Me* and, “while it was great the program is not exactly what we need for like an elementary school SEL curriculum.” The structure of a curriculum was beneficial for the teachers, but this curriculum was missing the target of implementing the social-emotional competencies. While the concept of allowing students to make a responsible choice is provided in this classroom, it is not provided in all classrooms. The idea of teaching explicitly about what is responsible decision making is not there between school to school or even classroom to classroom.

### **Framework Theme 2: Lack of Systemic Implementation in Schools**

While the first theme focused on the lack of consistent implementation of equitable learning environments, the second theme focused on the lack of systemic implementations in schools meaning overall implementation varied from classroom to classroom and school to school. Each school had their own initiative and reasons for prioritizing subjects that either were or were not SEL related. To provide systemic implementation, four areas of activity needed to be targeted per the CASEL framework of systemic implementation (CASEL, 2023). These areas included building foundational support and plans, strengthening adult SEL competencies and capacity, promoting SEL for students, and reflecting on data for continuous improvement. Throughout the interview process it was found that each of these areas lacked or were inconsistent in their implementation.

Analyzing the data from each interview provided insight on the lack of opportunities to build foundational support with consistency. Participant 8 mentioned how other schools in the county that they worked in were not the same as their current school. Participant 4 mentioned teaching a program called Second Step at one school, but at another school there was no push for SEL, so they were told to do what they wanted. This is an indication that there is inconsistency of building foundational support and plans. Many of the participants interviewed mentioned receiving a lack of training on SEL development and implementation. Therefore, the implementation of SEL in the classroom became based on the interpretations of teachers. Participant 9 mentioned how some teachers have incorporated SEL into their daily routine while others have pushed it aside, valuing the time in order to not fall behind. Another reason for lack of consistent implementation is regards to lack of resources available for teachers. Participant 5 mentioned how, “there were lessons provided for head start, but they are not developmentally appropriate and/or lack the relevant day to day interactions,” whereas Participant 3 mentioned, “not having many resources from the district, they have pulled from resources from YouTube or other teacher recommendations.” For example, this same participant mentioned taking part in the school-wide initiative for positive reinforcement called peace paws. While this is implemented at the current school they work at, they did not have a similar initiative at a previous elementary school within the same district. Therefore, what is being implemented from school to school is inconsistent. This inconsistency reveals a lack of built foundational support and plans distributed to the schools. Another participant mentioned they, “weren’t sure there is the structure, the

follow-through and the oversight of consistent implementation of a structured program.” It was mentioned that each department seems to have some resources for instance, “the office of student support and well-being is doing one thing, the school counselors have something, the school social workers have things and special education has another so there are many different offices trying to do work.” While resources are seemingly available, because there are many departments implementing different initiatives, this participant mentioned, “it can be confusing because we are such a big system, when the offices are working in silos.”

The next subcategory of focus to implement a systemic form of SEL is strengthening adult SEL competencies. Throughout analyzing the interviews, it was apparent that there was a need to strengthen adult SEL. A participant interviewed stated that, “teachers don’t really have ownership around it, and they don’t really have the buy in capacity.” Teachers need to understand the need for SEL and be provided with the background that can help establish the buy in to implement it in the schools throughout elementary classrooms. Some schools are provided with a mindfulness coach in order to teach both teachers and students SEL techniques for better emotional management. The schools that do have access to a mindfulness coach, “don’t see the individual being utilized in that manner; they are utilized more for putting out fires and coverage, those kinds of need.” So, while having a resource that some other schools don’t have access to can be fundamental in building SEL for teachers, prioritizing the use of that resource in a proper manner was needed to strengthen adult SEL competencies. While some schools have access to an individual or resources, others do not. Participant 5 mentioned they,

“could still use more PD (professional development) and more resources because the world is changing, and things happen every day.” Providing enough information for better understanding and implementation can improve SEL competencies for adults. Strengthening adult SEL competencies is imperative for successful implementation of SEL.

While strengthening adult SEL is important, the promotion of SEL for students is also another factor from the CASEL framework of systemic implementation that also needs to be considered for implementation of SEL. Analyzing the responses of the participants indicated that there was inconsistent promotion of SEL for students. It was stated from a participant that, “in the county every school is very, very different, some schools place a heavy emphasis on it, and some don’t.” Promoting SEL seems to be based on the school preference and views of SEL: “Background knowledge and human experience that is guiding the success of SEL at [their] school.” Promotion of SEL seems to be based on the individuals that are together in a school rather than a district wide promotion using a program to implement consistency. Another teacher who is in an out of classroom rooms throughout the day mentioned not seeing or hearing SEL being promoted to students throughout the day or for even a block of time. The implementation and promotion are therefore not consistent enough to meet the standards of the CASEL framework of systemic implementation.

To ensure that systemic implementation of SEL is being met, there needs to be an opportunity for reflecting on various forms of data for continuous improvement. When interviewing participants on what data surrounds SEL, many participants answers were

ambiguous. As Participant 5 mentioned, “there’s really no sharing or even like anything research based.” Participant 5 proceeded to state that the “information provided to teachers is something quick that is hard to relate to or interpret for one’s classroom.” Participant 4 stated how, “maybe anecdotes from other teachers that say how successful [SEL] is, or how great this too is, or how to use it in a classroom would be helpful.” Providing teachers with data on what works and what does not help them reflect on their own teaching practices and ensure they are providing the most beneficial SEL instruction to all students. Participant 2 mentioned how there, “isn’t any fidelity to prove if it does or does not work.” Meaning it is hard to collect data when everyone is implementing something different and focusing on different areas. The need for consistent implementation can provide opportunities to reflect on data for continuous improvement.

In addition to these areas that provided insight on the lack of and the inconsistency of implementation, another common subcategory theme was the need for time and resources. Throughout the interviews many participants mentioned, “teachers are overworked, and they don’t have time.” Trying to implement SEL in a classroom where there is little guidance becomes a low priority because there are other tests and curriculum that are mandated. For example, participant 6 said that one day, “we had an assembly, and the assembly was directly at 9:30, so that cut into our community circle time.” Since other events or curriculum take precedence, SEL tends to be what is cut out during the day since there is no specific guidance on implementation. In addition to time there is also the lack of resources. Participant 1 mentioned how, “having access to people who do know what to say would be ideal.” Many situations come up and schools are not

sure how to handle it and/or navigate the situation in a classroom because of lack of training or resources provided for educators. Overall, this is another large factor as to why systemic implementation of the CASEL framework is not apparent throughout elementary schools.

In order to ensure that the accuracy of the data was depicted a series of steps were followed. These steps included an initial transcribing of the recorded interviews, followed by a second transcription to ensure all words were written accurately. Once the transcriptions were finalized, the first round of coding began. After the first initial round of coding, I passed my initial codes to my committee members. With initial feedback, I went back for a second round of coding noting common subcategories. Through triangulation, I was able to find repetitive data from the codes and connect them to the initial CASEL frameworks. In addition to coding and noting the participants answers, I used a reflexive journal to note my own biases as well. Throughout this process, I was able to determine the common themes found through participant interviews.

### **Conclusion**

This study was initiated by the lack of consistent implementation of high-quality SEL throughout urban elementary schools in a Maryland school district. To find further information about consistent SEL implementation I used semi structured interview questions located in Appendix B to gather more information.

I interviewed 10 individuals that consisted of both administrators and teachers who work in the elementary level of education within the same district. Through these interviews I found evidence that supported a lack of consistent implementation



throughout urban elementary schools. Section 2 provided the methodology consisting of the research design and approach, information on the participants, data collection and data analysis methods, data analysis results and overall conclusion. The CASEL frameworks were used to guide the overall analysis of the data collection on administrator and teacher perceptions of current implementation of SEL practices and the perceptions about resources needed to improve SEL implementation. Section 3 provides the project, including the rationale, review of the literature, project description, project evaluation plan, and project implications.

## Section 3: The Project

### **Introduction**

The themes that were apparent through the results of the study were a lack of consistent implementation of establishing equitable learning environments and the lack of systemic implementation in schools. Administrators and teachers indicated that the lack of consistent implementation was derived from lack of focus on building awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making skills. In addition to these areas, the lack of SEL also derived from the lack of systemic implementation. Therefore, the district needs a new approach in successfully implementing a consistent SEL program in all schools. In Section 3, project recommendations are suggested to the school district. This project entails targeted PD providing an understanding of SEL and the effects in the classroom. In addition to the PD, the project recommendation would also include guidance for implementing an SEL curriculum. In this section you will also find the rationale, review of the literature, project description, evaluation plan and implications.

### **Rationale**

The rationale behind this project is to help improve and build SEL for students. The lack of consistent implementation from school to school is what initiated this study. When analyzing the interview data, it was clear that there are multiple solutions to help resolve this problem. The participants interviewed indicated that they had a lack of PD and lack of resources to help promote SEL within schools/classrooms. When asked about having consistent resources, Participant 3 responded saying, “honestly, I don’t think so,

cause it's not like every school's getting like the same guidance." Participant 3 mentioned how it changed from school to school they worked in and that it was hard to keep up because of the lack of foundation. These educators would benefit from more PD surrounding SEL and a curriculum plan that could provide them with the guidance and resources needed to implement SEL within the classroom. My recommendation to the district would be to provide consistent PD to all staff and a curriculum that should be implemented in all elementary schools that target teaching SEL to all students. The project recommendation aligns with the data analysis finding established in Section 2.

### **Review of the Literature**

The interview findings I described in Section 2 revealed a need for PD and SEL curriculum for consistent implementations of SEL through all urban elementary schools within the same district. This literature review provides evidence for the recommendations made to the urban Maryland school district. To search the literature, I used the following search terms, *benefits and impact of PD* and *the benefits of implementing an SEL curricula*. I used the Walden Library databases and Google Scholar to collect resources. The following review of literature provides information on the impact of consistent PD and the benefits of implementing an SEL curriculum in schools.

#### **PD (Professional Development)**

PD can be defined as, "facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills and dispositions as well as the application of this knowledge in practice" (Zara-Nezhad et al., 2023). PDs are instilled to provide educators with an opportunity to continue their

education as changes in education are frequent and new techniques of learning can change from the time one graduates with their teaching degree. “PD in Education and its predecessors have provided the most comprehensive collection of academic writing on professional learning and development” (Jones & O’Brien, 2024). Applying PDs within districts has shown a positive impact in schools between educators and students (Cohen et al., 2023). These PDs consist of providing educators with more information in a specific content area or strategies to apply within the classroom. Since SEL has not been explicitly taught to all educators within the same district it is imperative to build a foundation that can help provide them with the knowledge and benefits of SEL. As stated, “the importance of training teachers in social emotional learning is high” (Doyle & Swisher, 2023). Using PD to provide information on SEL can provide, “concise concepts for increased understanding and awareness, thereby creatively prompting interest in pursuing formal training” (Doyle & Swisher, 2023).

Providing more information on SEL and the impacts it has within the classroom can help create a buy-in for educators to want to learn more of the positive impacts SEL has within schools. As Su and Wang (2022) mentioned, PD is, “an inevitable cycle and a crucial component of enhancing learning overall,” meaning that since PD is essential for teachers, it would be beneficial to provide PD that is effective. While PD is vital, it is important to find a PD implementation method that is effective in providing teachers with information that they can successfully implement in the classroom. Recently, it was found that effective PD included, “longer durations, expert involvement, and cooperation among teachers (Kalinowski et al., 2019),” in order to ensure success of having effective

PD. It is crucial when providing PD that it meets the criteria so ensure successful implementation in the classroom.

Implementation of SEL is, “often lacking in school systems (e.g., having a clear definition and vision of goals, dedicating time and staff to the work, and establishing effective channels of communication)” (Chu & DeArmond, 2021). By creating clear goals, expectations, and understanding as a district to then administer to schools, implementation can have a smoother transition and be applied with consistency to all students. The foundation of implementing a PD of SEL in schools can help create a positive change for both educators and students. This begins with “system and school leaders [playing] a key role in framing SEL as a whole-school effort” (Chu & DeArmond, 2021). Providing PD on SEL can begin the framing of setting up school with a strong foundation, which is one of the key concepts in CASEL’s framework of systemic implementation.

Throughout researching it was found that, “there is a need for teachers to be equipped with suitable support tools to ensure that classroom diversity translates into successful social inclusion and student learning” (Morgan et al., 2022). Providing teachers with PDs based on the understanding of SEL and then the implementation of SEL can help create successful social inclusion and student learning. “It is imperative for educators to understand components of SEL if they would like to begin the implementation process in their schools and classroom” (Todd et al., 2022). Providing teachers with, “a deep and broad knowledge of SEL now is a critical piece in preparing them for today’s schools and for equipping them to transform today’s schools” (Katz et

al., 2020). Creating a PD that has “been established to foster mindfulness leading to improved classroom environments for learning” (Akhavan et al., 2021). The benefits of PD surrounding SEL have seen an improvement in schools. By shifting the focus and creating consistent PDs based on teaching and improving SEL.

PD can be implemented in various ways, but it is important to create an effective system that has the most impactful outcome. According to Sancar, et al. (2021), “effective PD is attentive to assessment, research scale, duration, comprehensiveness, dissemination, context, support and control, and collaboration.” This means that PD should last more than a couple hours of training on a topic, but rather dive into all components of the topic and the implementation in the school setting. Kennedy (2016) found that the length of PD implemented has an effect in the change in classroom. Kennedy mentioned that “the PD itself also extended throughout an entire school year, so that even year-long measures of student learning were still coterminous with the PD itself.” During these PDs, the implementation process was also factored into the impact. It had appeared that while learning content for a period of time is important it is also important to factor in the impact of the PD being presented. Kennedy found that programs were effective when messages provided strategies and insights. Providing PD where teachers have an opportunity to engage, practice, and participate changes the outlook on the implementation.

PD should allow room for collaboration as well as the opportunity to implement. Recently it was found that, “PD has an impact on school improvement, especially if it is carried out from an intergenerational collaborative perspective, and the acquisition of

new skills (Salmeron Aroca et al., 2022).” Having the opportunity for teachers to learn and attain perspective from other peers, allows for teachers to be more open to acquiring and implementing something new. This idea links to CASEL’s recommended implementation plan. CASEL recommend a Research–practice partnership (RRP). This implementation means, “practitioners get the chance to collaborate and participate in research that has meaningful applications for their work, while researchers have access to a rich, “real-time” opportunity to test and assess (CASEL, 2023).” Teachers are given the opportunity to learn, organize, implement, and improve their classroom. The idea of RRP allows for continuous improvement of systemic implementation, ensuring that professional learning development of SEL is not limited to a day of learning but is a continuous learning opportunity that gives room for a hands-on practice approach.

PD is the opportunity for educators to learn and adapt new strategies into their field. As mentioned, effective PD is not just a few hours of learning but rather take time as well as the approach to delivering new information. While PD provides new information it was found that creating professional learning communities (PLC’s) would also enhance the learning obtained from PDs. Patfield et al. (2022) stated that classroom lesson observation, critical inquiry, and evidence-based feedback are also factors in creating and implementing a successful PD. This means that educators would have an opportunity to see what they have learned in practice and form ideas to implement within their own practice.

Overall, while it is important to always have PD available, ensuring that the PD is effective is critical when implementing a brand-new idea, method, or curriculum.

According to Darling-Hammond (2017), effective PD should include focused content, active learning, collaboration, models of effective practice, coaching and expert support, feedback, and reflection as well as sustained duration. These criteria lead to effective PD and provide educators with an overall understanding of the effects and intensity of new ideas, methods or curriculums have in their day-to-day practices. Finding SEL PD that incorporates these strategies is critical when adapting a new program into the district.

### **SEL Curriculum**

In addition to providing PDs to educate teachers and school staff about the SEL concepts, providing a curriculum is needed to help structure and consistently implement SEL throughout classrooms. Franklin (2022) mentioned that “the effects of implementing an SEL curriculum are seen not only that the individual level of student skill development, but also at the teacher, classroom, and school levels as relationships, expectations and communities are strengthened.” By providing a consistent SEL curriculum throughout all schools will strengthen the whole student and create better access for learning. To implement a successful SEL program it is important not to limit, “the programs to students and teachers, the program needs to actively involve multiple stakeholders in the process ... [of creating] sustainability of the systemic approach” (Aradhya & Parameswaran, 2023). By involving all stakeholders in building the foundation of implementing a curriculum, the district would be able to improve the lack of systemic implementation which was a theme found throughout the interviews.

To improve systemic implementation, SEL curriculums also provide data that is needed to understand how students are improving in their SEL skills. In a recent study,



“students filled out the social emotional skills score and the strengths and difficulties questionnaire before and after the intervention” (University of Washington et al., 2024). The results of this study indicated that compared to students who did not receive the intervention, students who received the implementation of the curriculum had significantly higher scores on self-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Shi & Cheung, 2024). The effect of implementing a curriculum targets the theme of establishing equitable learning environments. CASEL’s five areas of social emotional competence can be targeted for each student. Focusing on the CASEL wheel as a criterion for success, it would be imperative to investigate curriculums that target self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills and social awareness. Finding a curriculum that provides learning in these areas will provide students with a strong SEL foundation.

Implementing SEL as a curriculum allows for reflection and improvement. Ferreira et al. (2020) noted that “tying together teaching methods, SEL goals and formative assessments allows for the clarification of teaching strategies, leads to a better understanding of learning purposes and enables the appearance of evidence of learning.” Similar to most core curriculums an SEL curriculum provides the structure but also the availability to adapt and reflect to meet the needs of the students. In a recent study it was found that, “SEL programs that integrate social-emotional skills with academic skills better meet with its original purpose” (Kim et al., 2022). This same study also found that, “SEL programs are usually implemented not for selective interventions but for general education targeting all students in school settings.” When finding a program to fit the

district it is important to take into consideration of SEL can be immersed in all subjects and allow students for an opportunity to practice what they are learning. By having the criteria that ensure SEL programs integrate with academic content, it creates an environment that promotes social, emotional, and academic skills (National University, 2020). It is also important to consider that SEL is not an intervention but the same a learning a subject.

Another criterion to consider when looking for a curriculum is how other stakeholders can be involved in promoting the skills learned at school. It was found that in some SEL curriculums, “teachers will need to communicate with parents the learning goals of SEL, so that the skills can be reinforced at home when applicable (Kaspar, Massey, 2023).” Including families into the implementation can allow for better buy in as well as keep the consistency between home and school. To successfully implement an SEL curriculum takes time. By consistently providing PD and analyzing the results of the data collected from the curriculum would provide insight on the success of implementation and improve overall student learning and well-being.

### **Project Description**

With the aim of providing consistent implementation to elementary schools within the same district, it is imperative to provide recommendations to the district. These recommendations include providing consistent PD on SEL to all staff members. The benefits of an SEL curriculum are to provide consistent implementation in all elementary schools. The goal of this project is to provide insight and development of the benefits of SEL within classrooms.

At the start of implementing PD for staff and an SEL curriculum for all elementary schools, a leadership team for SEL would need to be determined. This team would need to consist of all stakeholders, as it has been determined that in order for SEL implementation to be effective in schools, everyone needs to be involved and understanding. The goal of this team would be to determine the criteria for providing successful PD and SEL curriculum. This team would also collect baseline data to determine what areas need to be targeted in this district in order to meet the needs of students and teachers. After this initial collection, the team would then build a list of criteria they would look for in PD implementation and an SEL curriculum that would meet the needs. Afterward, the SEL leadership team would come up with a timeline of how to implement SEL successfully and consistently throughout all elementary schools.

Once the PD process is determined and an SEL curriculum is chosen, based on the baseline data, an implementation plan would begin with targeting 68 out of 137 elementary schools. These initial schools would begin PD first in 2027, with the remaining 69 elementary schools following in 2028. In 2028, the first group who have already acquired a full year of SEL PD will then begin piloting the newly chosen SEL curriculum. These 68 schools will begin implementing the SEL curriculum with fidelity with the build PD knowledge gained from the previous year, the remaining 69 schools will follow after their PD year of completion. By the end of 2030, all elementary schools will have established SEL PD and SEL curriculum. The goal would be to monitor school progress on the effectiveness of the program and from there determine which areas need follow up. Providing this recommendation and discussing possible implementation can

lead to a positive increase in student well-being and engagement in classrooms as well as teacher engagement for implementation.

During this process, it is important to consider some barriers that may occur. This would include newly hired teachers who are starting in school who have already established PD and SEL curriculum. In order to determine that there is no gap in implementation, new teachers would engage in a beginning training during new educator orientation (NEO). This would allow for new educators to have an opportunity to initially learn about SEL and understand the standards of implementing SEL in the classroom. Since NEO is already established, this would be added to the agenda as part of the core learning for new educators. Adding resources in school, such as an SEL coach, is also a potential barrier as these require additional funding. Creating a team of already-established teachers within the schools who can provide support to all teachers in SEL may deter excessive spending. These leaders would be chosen as individuals who focus on the implementation of SEL and success in the classroom. This would allow educators with opportunities for leadership.

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

Evaluating the success of the project would take a series of data collection regarding the implementation of PD and the implementation of an SEL curriculum. This implementation would take multiple years. It would start with PD and building the knowledge of teachers in understanding the impacts of SEL, creating a buy-in for staff. Establishing the why is important for understanding success. To monitor the growth and understanding that staff would gain from this PD evaluations on understanding would be

gathered as well as feedback of successes and suggestions/improvements. These PD evaluations would be collected to reflect and reevaluate for the next session of PD. Evaluating how effective the PD is important as it guides direction for the next PD session and informs those providing the PD what still needs clarification. Thomas Gusky evaluates PD using through 5 critical levels: level 1 participants' reaction, level 2 participants' learning, level 3 organization support and change, level 4 participants' use of knowledge and skills and level 5 students learning outcomes. (Breslow & Bock, 2020). The following steps to evaluate the PD being implemented will determine how effective it will be implemented in the classroom.

Once a foundation of PD for understanding the why is built then PD can begin with implementing a curriculum. With a series of trainings on understanding how to implement the curriculum, a time would then be established to then implement the curriculum in all schools. With the extensive PD, the success of implementing an SEL curriculum is then set up for success. All elementary schools within the same district would implement the SEL curriculum with fidelity and gather data each month on the improvement of student's social emotional needs. At the end of the year the data will be monitored to see the month-to-month improvement. The acquirement of date would include student self- reflections, teacher self-reflections, parent teacher conferences and any measuring tool suggested from the curriculum that is chosen and implemented. This data would be collected at each school locally and then condensed into a quarterly report that is shared with all schools. This will provide schools with an opportunity to reflect and see where they need strengthening as well as communicate with other schools to see

what they are doing to be successful in areas they may not be successful in. Providing data allows for concerns to be determined and then addressed as the curriculum is being implemented. As the curriculum continues for a few more years, the year-to-year data can be monitored to see what improvements have been made since the implementation of the curriculum and what gaps may need to be addressed. After a three-to-four-year implementation plan, the district can reevaluate to determine if continuing the SEL implementation meets the needs of each elementary (CASEL,2023), way of monitoring student growth, but other ways would be to measure through student self- reflection journals/ surveys, behavior tracking, and role play scenarios. These data tracking methods would provide an insight as to what students are maintaining and what still needs to be focused on. In addition to measuring student growth, it is also imperative to measure the effectiveness of the PD implemented by using Guskey's five levels of PD evaluation to monitor the effectiveness of the PD. This means that there would need to be a survey or checklist that monitors, participants' reaction, participants' learning, organization support and change, participants' use of knowledge and skills and students learning outcomes (Breslow & Bock, 2020), to determine what areas of PD in SEL still need to be addressed.

### **Project Implications**

The goal of this project is to provide PD for staff surrounding SEL and to provide an SEL curriculum that meets the criteria of CASEL's framework for successful systemic implementation. The elementary schools within the district could benefit from this project as there is a need for social emotional development for all students. This project study

could improve the social change of elementary school students and staff by establishing equitable learning environments. These learning environments would be based on the idea of improving self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, building relationship skills and responsible decision-making skills. To create these equitable learning environments establishing systemic implementation by building foundation support and plans, strengthening adult SEL competencies and capacities, promotion of SEL for students, reflection on data for continuous improvement and creating time for implementation. The consistency of implementing PD and SEL curriculum can improve these areas that were evidently lacking throughout the collection of data.

Creating a common goal and setting expectations for all elementary schools can provide successful implementation for SEL. This project study could then lead to the consistent implementation of SEL in middle schools and high schools. It would be imperative to provide PD and find curriculums that meet the developmental needs of students. By beginning at the elementary level a foundation is created for better success as students continue to the next grade.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

In Section 4, the project's overall reflections and conclusions will be addressed. This section will highlight the project's strengths and limitations. It will also include recommendations for alternative approaches, scholarship, project development and evaluation, leadership, and change. The section will conclude with a reflection on the importance of the work, implications, applications, and direction for future research.

#### **Project Strengths**

The goal of this project study is to successfully implement SEL consistently in all elementary schools. The project aims to strengthen school employee's knowledge and background on the impact of SEL in the classroom. To provide effective information that will increase knowledge and background the studies recommendation of PD targets these areas. PDs are developed to help "gain new skills through continuing education and career training after entering the workforce (Parsons, 2022)." In addition, PD "can assist [one] in honing existing skills and in learning new ones (Parsons, 2022)." Providing staff with an understanding of SEL will allow for better implementation and solving the problem of having a lack of systemic implementation. The project also aims to apply a consistent curriculum to all schools, providing schools with the tools to successfully implement SEL as well as have the same resources from school to school. Providing the resources the schools need to implement SEL will allow the teachers to have time to effectively plan and ensure the maximum effect of implementing SEL. The application of a curriculum also ensures the opportunity to create a basic foundation for implementing



SEL. If the district decides to follow the project recommendation, it would improve the implementation of SEL in all elementary schools.

### **Project Limitations**

While this project has many strengths, there are also limitations. One limitation is a lack of guarantee that the district will accept the project recommendations suggested. Although there are clear benefits from applying his project, there are many other factors the board must consider regarding implementation. A reason the district would not prioritize the project recommendation is that other imperative data may take precedence in the need for improvement in schools versus the need for SEL. It would need to be considered how the implementation of consistent SEL might impact other areas of learning therefore providing a benefit for prioritizing the implementation of SEL. As a large district, it would be important to determine why SEL is needed versus another subject area. Another limitation of this project study would be finding the resources for PD as well as an SEL curriculum to implement. It would be imperative to have the selected PD coincide with the chosen curriculum intended to be implemented. This leads to the third project limitation, which involves funding. While there is a precedence in implementing SEL successfully in some schools in the district, it comes with a cost. This cost would include finding resources to implement for PD, the cost of hiring a company to help implement the program for PD as well all the funding of a new curriculum. The cost of implementing a curriculum is around \$50,000 per school and with there being roughly 137 elementary schools this cost would amount to roughly \$6,850,000 for the entire county. The district would have to note that this cost is annual and only targets

elementary schools. The last limitation of this project study is that it only targets the elementary level of SEL implementation. Future studies should examine the perceptions of middle and high school teachers and administrators on SEL implementation.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

To address some of these limitations, there are possible alternative approaches. First, it would be imperative to create a team consisting of all stakeholders to help find a suitable SEL PD and curriculum to implement. By involving all stakeholders, the district would be creating the buy-in and help to build the foundation on the importance and the impact of SEL in elementary schools. Once this committee becomes finalized, it would then be beneficial to target a few schools within the district to begin implementing this program. This would allow those schools to begin and determine what works and what does not before implementing it to all elementary schools. Since cost is a major factor in implementation, it would minimize the cost to only impact a few elementary schools at a time. Once the benefits are observed, funding can then expand to all elementary level and progress can be monitored before determining whether implementation should be considered for middle and high schools. Implementation in all schools could proceed slowly but consistently start with all elementary schools. While the project study is limited to elementary school, the opportunity to find the missing perspectives from middle and high school teachers can be approached to begin finding PD and SEL curriculum that appropriately meets the needs at those levels.

### **Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change**

The project began with the idea of finding where the gaps of implementation began with SEL. Through the collection of data from administrators and teachers within the same district, the project that needed to be implemented became more apparent. Throughout the interviews, it became clearer that an understanding of SEL and the impact it has in schools was needed. This led to the idea of wanting to provide the project of implementing PD for all staff members that defined these areas. This would result in a common understanding of SEL and the need for consistent implementation. In addition to the need for understanding, the interviews also revealed that resources needed to be available for all elementary school teachers. The project then evolved into adding a need for a consistent curriculum in all elementary schools. This would then provide teachers with the same resources as well as ensure consistency from school to school. Applying a curriculum would help with transitions from grade level to grade level as well as in special cases from school to school.

As a scholar, I realized that I needed to put aside my own ideas of what I thought SEL was and how it should be implemented in the classroom. Throughout this process, I was able to gain knowledge on SEL and what areas SEL impacts a school community. Throughout my research, I learned how to critically determine the impact of content on my own study. Researching provided me with the ability to identify problems and determine what solutions are available to those problems. I gained knowledge of the components that make up SEL and was able to conduct my research targeting specific

areas. I also learned how trying to resolve the problem also required research on how to successfully implement different methods for successful impact.

Throughout this process, my views on leadership and implementation changed. As an educator myself, I have observed that change is common in the classroom and sometimes must occur quickly. Leaders in the classroom make changes all the time. This process has taught me to take time to gather information and reflect on data. I also learned that creating new implementation takes time as building a foundation of knowledge and understanding the “why” creates better success for implementation. Overall, as a scholar and educator, I learned how to determine the importance of information, form judgement based on evidence, and see beyond the confinements of my own experiences.

### **Reflection on Importance of the Work**

As education continues to evolve and times change, it is important to continue reflecting on the effectiveness of what is happening in schools. Conducting this study provided information that the foundation of SEL needs to be built to create a successful implementation. Without understanding the meaning and the importance, the drive to implement a new program such as SEL becomes less of a priority. In addition to building knowledge, providing resources is a major factor in the success of implementation. With too many or too few resources, there is no consistency in the implementation and therefore the results will vary in terms of how much of an impact it is making in schools. Throughout this process, I learned that SEL is essential. The implementation of SEL in school provides a foundation for students, the ability to reflect on continuous

improvement, provide students with ability to build relationships, foster communication and establish a basic learning environment.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

The project study presented has the potential to impact positive social change within education for all stakeholders. Beginning a student's schooling with the implementation of SEL can set them up for success. Students will learn how to manage and cope as they go through each grade level. Teachers will also benefit from this implementation as they would be able to consistently implement a program and apply strategies to situations that students will understand. This will hopefully reduce the number of referrals sent to the office and/or disruptions that may occur in a classroom, allowing for more time for core curriculum. A recent study found that there were "encouraging [results] to school psychologists seeking to understand, prevent, and decrease the frequency of office discipline referrals and their negative consequences" (Finder, 2021). As a district, this will provide all elementary schools with the same resources that will help to fill any confusion on how to respond to situations. By applying a consistent SEL program to all elementary schools within the same district, parents and other community members can understand the common goals and purpose and keep the consistency outside of school. When everyone has a common understanding and goal, the consistency of the implementation will be stronger. This all leads back to CASEL's framework of systemic implementation. As a result, from implementation the targeted areas of this framework such as building foundational support and plans, strengthening adult SEL competencies and capacity, promotion of SEL for students, the ability to

reflect on data for continuous improvement would improve due to the implementation of SEL. This would also save schools time from having to search for resources when there is a system readily available for all staff members. Data collected from the implementation in elementary schools could then lead to future research. Middle schools and elementary schools within the same district could then be targeted. Beyond the district, a study could be implemented in comparing other districts on the impact of implementation. This initial study can provide an initial dive into the impacts and implementation of SEL. Ultimately this adds to CASEL's SEL framework that "establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation" (CASEL, 2023). With the push and promotion of SEL, there can be future research on how to specifically implement SEL and/or what the structure of school should look like with SEL as the official foundation.

### **Conclusion**

Section 4 provided a summary of the project study, starting with the project's strengths and limitations and ending with the overall conclusion. This section also included recommendations for alternative approaches and directions for future research. This section concludes with an overall summary from and final thoughts from the study that was implemented.

The project that was created was to find the perception of SEL implementation throughout elementary schools from both teachers and administrators. Themes were developed from participant responses. These themes helped target the areas needed to develop consistent implementation of SEL within elementary schools. This led to the

ideas that implementation of PD and a structured SEL curriculum would improve the overall implementation of SEL. These two areas of implementation were supported by the literature review found in Section 3. The goal in conducting this research and proposing a project to the district was to provide information on a local problem with possible solutions. Overall, this project is to improve SEL for all stakeholders within the same district.

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## Appendix A: The Project Recommendations

### **Timeline and Implementation**

**Target Audience:** Elementary Teachers, Elementary Administrators, Elementary Staff

#### **Yearly Timeline Overview**

The initial implementation of the SEL PD would begin during the summer. Elementary teachers from the first round of selected schools will sign up for the SEL PD. The three-day intensive training would consist of an introduction to SEL and the CASEL framework as well as the next steps and the future of SEL. These trainings would be offered all summer for teachers to choose three consecutive dates that would best fit each individual educator's summer schedule. After the initial three days of summer SEL PD, each school participating would participate in a monthly SEL PD of continuous learning. During this time, teachers would have the opportunity to reflect on their practices, engage in new learning, as well as discuss what learning still may be missing. During this initial year of SEL PD implementation, a group of selected stakeholders will gather to begin the process of finding an SEL curriculum that aligns with the CASEL framework, targeting the five competencies. The committee will meet monthly for 6 months and review data and input collected from schools implementing PD practices. This will provide the committee with information as to what curriculum best fits the elementary school in the district. By the spring of the year of PD implementation, a curriculum will be chosen, and information will be provided through the last few months of PD of the year. This will provide educators as to how to begin brainstorming implementation of the new curriculum at each school.

### **Three-Day SEL PD Overview**

The three-day SEL PD will consist of introducing SEL into district elementary schools. Day one would consist of an eight-hour training with breaks and lunch immersed in the schedule. The beginning of the day will begin with defining SEL and the importance of implementing SEL. This will provide a clear and concise picture of what SEL means and the impact it has on education. The day would then continue with a discussion around misconceptions regarding SEL. This then will lead to educators discussing how SEL is implemented at each elementary school and how that may be different after understanding the definition and importance of SEL. The continuation of the day will focus on adult SEL and the impacts it has on teaching. Educators will have an opportunity to learn techniques and strategies to promote their personal SEL as well as strategies with school members on how to continue the promotion of adult SEL in schools. At the end of the training on day one, educators will fill out a feedback survey providing instructors with information regarding insight on how educators feel from the first day of training and what they would like to see in further SEL training after this initial day. These feedback surveys will be administered after every session and will help provide what the PD during the year will address. Day two of training will consist of another eight hours of training with breaks and lunch planned out. During day two of training this would consist of introducing CASEL's framework of the five initial competencies of SEL that should be apparent in the classroom. The first part of the day will begin with introducing CASEL and its background. After this introduction, it will then dive into how implementing SEL is divided into five competency categories. The

first two competencies will be introduced before lunch while the last three will remain for the rest of the day.

Each competency will be defined, strategies on how to begin implementing in schools, classrooms, and communities will be provided, and the process of collecting data on how successful the implementation of the five competencies. Educators will then have an opportunity to collaborate and discuss what they have learned and possible next steps. After day two educators will receive another feedback survey where they can provide what they have learned as well as areas they feel they still need information on again providing a direction for what future PDs should address. Day three will begin with a summary of the two previous days. This will be another eight-hour day with breaks and lunch embedded into the schedule. The first half of the day will consist of educators having an opportunity to break into grade-level cohorts. These grade-level cohorts will then have an opportunity to brainstorm and discuss how they would implement the five competencies of CASEL's SEL framework in their schools. Educators will also have an opportunity to speak with instructors, ask questions, and reflect on the previous two days of PD. The second half of the day would consist of the introduction to the future of SEL in the district. Educators will be introduced to the concept of monthly PD that targets SEL and what they will look like. Educators will then be introduced to the concept of a curriculum being chosen in the spring of that upcoming school year. Since these educators are part of the stakeholder group, they will have an opportunity to sign up to be a part of the committee in choosing the SEL curriculum that will be implemented for all

elementary schools. As the day continues discussion around how to involve and engage the community in the new implementation of SEL.

Schools and grade levels will have an opportunity to begin discussing and planning implementation from what they learned through the SEL PD that has occurred over the past three days. At the end of day three, a feedback survey will be provided to educators so that implementation for the next steps to be guided.

1. The overall purpose of this training is to build knowledge and provide resources of SEL to teachers as the district becomes more SEL focused.
2. Goals & Learning Outcomes of 3 Day Training
  - a. The goal of the 3 Day training is to provide teachers with a clear definition of SEL. To provide an explicit understanding on the expectations to uphold and implement SEL in the classroom.
  - b. The learning outcomes:
    - i. Define SEL
    - ii. Make connections with SEL and the classroom.
    - iii. Build adult SEL.
    - iv. Introduce the CASEL Framework and the 5 competencies.
    - v. Define and provide examples and tools for each competency.
    - vi. Collaborate on the implementation of SEL.
3. Day 1
  - a. Introduction to SEL
  - b. Welcome: (8:30-8:40)

i. Ice Breaker (5 Minutes)

1. Three truths and a lie ice breaker where teachers have the opportunity to make connections with peers to feel comfortable to collaborate.

2. Trainers will provide paper, pencil, and instruction.

Educators will be asked to write down 3 truths and a lie on a piece of paper. Once everyone in the group that is established is finished, papers will be passed to the left. Educators in the group will put a check on which one they think is a lie.

Passing will continue until the original paper is received.

Results will be shared with the group: which was the most voted on and what the real answer is.

ii. Overview and expectations & trainer note.

1. The trainer will provide an overview of the learning outcomes for the day.

2. A time agenda will be provided to guide educators on the sessions for the day.

3. Included on the agenda are expectations of the setting to uphold in the PD in order to stay on target.

a. Expectations:

i. Confidentiality

ii. Open to information

- iii. Minimal sidebar conversation

- 1. Educators will have the opportunity to contribute to the expectations list.

- c. Defining SEL (8:40-9:15)

- i. Activator

- 1. Trainer will provide educators with time to break out into small groups to define SEL based on what they already know. Each group will come up with their own definition.
    - 2. After collaborating in small groups, educators will come together in a whole group to listen to other groups definitions. During this time each individual educator will have the opportunity to reflect on what they hear and determine if ideas were the same or different.

- ii. Providing a definition of SEL

- 1. A universal definition will be provided to all teachers.
      - a. SEL means: “Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and

maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2024).”

iii. Collaboration

1. Educators will then have an opportunity to get back into groups and discuss and compare their definition and their peer’s definition to the actual definition of SEL.
2. After all educators will come together and provide key points from their discussion.
3. It will be mentioned that the SEL definition provided will become the universal definition for the district.

d. Importance of SEL (9:15- 10:15)

- i. During this time the importance of SEL will be shared. These ideas include the following.
  1. When implemented SEL can create supportive relationships and opportunities to develop and practice social, emotional, and cognitive skills across many different contexts, academic learning accelerates (CASEL, 2023).
  2. SEL does not replace the need for mental health interventions for students who need it.
  3. SEL fosters preventive measures that can support against mental health risks (CASEL, 2023).



4. SEL can create caring relationships, safe and supportive environments, social and emotional skills (CASEL, 2023).
- e. Break (10:15- 10:30)
  - f. SEL Misconceptions (10:30- 11:15)
    - i. 5 examples of misconceptions will be stated. Additional facts will be provided about SEL. Morrin (2020) created a list of what common myths are and facts about SEL.
      1. Social-emotional learning only teaches kids about feelings.
        - a. Fact: Emotional intelligence (the ability to be smart about feelings) is only one of the many parts of SEL.
      2. Social-emotional skills aren't as important as "hard skills."
        - a. Fact: Social-emotional skills are often referred to as "soft skills," but they're just as important as "hard skills." Soft skills (sometimes called people skills) allow us to get along and work well with other people, communicate effectively, be empathetic, and solve problems. These skills can be difficult to measure, but they're essential.
      3. Kids learn social-emotional skills automatically.
        - a. Fact: People aren't born knowing how to manage emotions, get along with others, and solve problems. These skills are learned over time.

4. There's only one way to teach SEL.

- a. Fact: There's no *one* right way to teach SEL. Every child has different needs. Families have different backgrounds and cultures. Teachers, who work with a diverse group of students, can use what they know about their students to design SEL lessons in which *all* students can fully access and apply these skills.

5. SEL is only for kids with behavioral issues.

- a. Fact: SEL is for *all* kids — and adults, too. We all continue to develop these skills throughout our lives.

g. Current Implementation of SEL (11:15- 12:00)

- i. Educators will have an opportunity to break out into groups to discuss current implementation. Groups will question the following:

1. Is SEL implemented at your school or in your classroom?
  - a. If not do you think it should be? Why or why not?
2. How is SEL implemented at your school?
3. How do you implement SEL?
4. What do you or your school use to implement SEL?

h. Lunch (12:00-1:00)

i. Morning Recap (1:00-1:15)

- i. After lunch a review of what was discussed in the morning will be facilitated. The discussion will lead to defining SEL, addressing misconceptions and talking about the current implementation.
- j. Adult SEL (1:15-2:30)
  - i. Educators will learn the benefits and impact of adult SEL. They will be provided with the following information:
    - 1. Educators will learn that SEL benefits social and emotional competence can also improve teacher well-being.
    - 2. Educators with strong social and emotional competence report higher levels of job satisfaction and less burnout.
    - 3. Focusing on SEL can help educators build and maintain stronger relationships with students and manage classrooms.
    - 4. Teachers who teach SEL to students report feeling more effective at their jobs and lower levels of job-related anxiety.
  - ii. After educators will have an opportunity to reflect and compile a list of what is already being implemented and what is needed to implement adult SEL.
- k. Break (2:30-2:45)
- l. Debrief and Survey (2:45-3:30)
  - i. During this time educators will have an opportunity to discuss the learning of the day and ask any clarifying questions. At the end of the debrief educators will have time built in to complete a survey about the

training and provide any inquiries that were not addressed. These results will be compiled and summarized then sent to all schools for further analysis.

#### 4. Day 2

- a. Educators will be able to implement SEL through the use of 5 SEL competencies.
- b. CASEL (8:30- 9:45)
  - i. Founding Story of CASEL
    1. Video provided from CASEL website provides an introduction.
  - ii. What is the CASEL Framework?
    1. Schools, districts, states, and others can use CASEL's Framework to: Foster knowledge, skills, and attitudes across five areas of social and emotional competence; Establish equitable learning environments and coordinate practices across four key settings that support students' social, emotional, and academic development (CASEL, 2023).
    2. Introduction of the CASEL Wheel
      - a. A systemic approach ensures that SEL is woven into all students' educational experiences (CASEL, 2023).
      - b. An image of the CASEL wheel will be provided where an introduction to the CASEL 5 begins.

c. The CASEL 5 addresses five broad and interrelated areas of competence and highlights examples for each: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2023).

3. In the next few hours educators will be diving into each competency.

c. Competency 1: Self- awareness (9:45-10:30)

- i. A PBS video will be shown about the implementation of self-awareness in the classroom.
- ii. After the video self-awareness will be defined. Self-awareness: The ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. This includes capacities to recognize one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose (CASEL, 2023).
- iii. A list of how to foster self-awareness will be provided. The list includes:
  1. Integrating personal and social identities
  2. Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets
  3. Identifying one's emotions
  4. Demonstrating honesty and integrity
  5. Linking feelings, values, and thoughts

6. Examining prejudices and biases
  7. Experiencing self-efficacy
  8. Having a growth mindset
  9. Developing interests and a sense of purpose
- iv. A hub of resources will be provided to teachers to help with the implementation of self-awareness in the classroom. Teachers will be provided with access. The resources are linked to Harmony Academy and Zones of Regulation. During this time educators will have an opportunity to explore each resource and identify how the resources specifically relate to competency and self-awareness. Educators will have the opportunity to work in groups and begin discussing how they would implement these resources into the classroom.
- d. Break (10: 30-10:45)
- e. Competency 2: Self-Management (10:45-11:30)
- i. A PBS video will be shown about the implementation of self-management in the classroom.
  - ii. After the video self-management will be defined. Self-management: The ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation and agency to accomplish personal and collective goals (CASEL, 2023).

- iii. A list of how to foster self-management will be provided. The list includes:
  - 1. Managing one's emotions
  - 2. Identifying and using stress management strategies
  - 3. Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation
  - 4. Setting personal and collective goals
  - 5. Using planning and organizational skills
  - 6. Showing the courage to take initiative
  - 7. Demonstrating personal and collective agency
- iv. A hub of resources will be provided to teachers to help with the implementation of self-management in the classroom. Teachers will be provided with access. The resources are linked to Harmony Academy and Zones of Regulation. During this time educators will have an opportunity to explore each resource and identify how the resources specifically relate to competency and self-management. Educators will have the opportunity to work in groups and begin discussing how they would implement these resources into the classroom.
- f. Competency 3: Social Awareness (Part 1) (11:30-12:00)
- g. A PBS video will be shown about the implementation of social awareness in the classroom.
- h. After the video social awareness will be defined. Social awareness: The ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others,

including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports (CASEL, 2023).

- i. Lunch (12:00-1:00)
- j. Competency 3: Social Awareness (Part 2) (1:00-1:15)
  - i. The definition will be reviewed after lunch.
  - ii. A list of how to foster social awareness will be provided. The list includes:
    1. Taking others' perspectives
    2. Recognizing strengths in others
    3. Demonstrating empathy and compassion
    4. Showing concern for the feelings of others
    5. Understanding and expressing gratitude
    6. Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones
    7. Recognizing situational demands and opportunities
    8. Understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior
  - iii. A hub of resources will be provided to teachers to help with the implementation of social awareness in the classroom. Teachers will be provided with access. The resources are linked to Harmony Academy and Zones of Regulation. During this time educators will have an



opportunity to explore each resource and identify how the resources specifically relate to competency and social awareness. Educators will have the opportunity to work in groups and begin discussing how they would implement these resources into the classroom.

k. Competency 4: Relationship Skills (1:15-2:00)

- i. A PBS video will be shown about the implementation of relationship skills in the classroom.
- ii. After video relationship skills will be defined. Relationship skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups. This includes the capacities to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem solve and negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when needed (CASEL, 2023).
- iii. A list of how to foster relationship skills will be provided. The list includes:
  1. Communicating effectively
  2. Developing positive relationships
  3. Demonstrating cultural competency
  4. Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving
  5. Resolving conflicts constructively

6. Resisting negative social pressure
  7. Showing leadership in groups
  8. Seeking or offering support and help when needed
  9. Standing up for the rights of others
- iv. A hub of resources will be provided to teachers to help with the implementation of relationship skills in the classroom. Teachers will be provided with access. The resources are linked to Harmony Academy and Zones of Regulation. During this time educators will have an opportunity to explore each resource and identify how the resources specifically relate to competency and relationship skills. Educators will have the opportunity to work in groups and begin discussing how they would implement these resources into the classroom.
- l. Break (2:00-2:15)
- m. Competency 5: Responsible decision-making (2:15 -3:00)
- i. A PBS video will be shown about the implementation of responsible decision-making in the classroom.
  - ii. After responsible decision making will be defined. Responsible decision-making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of

various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being (CASEL, 2023).

iii. A list of how to foster responsible decision- making will be provided.

The list includes:

1. Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness
2. Learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts
3. Identifying solutions for personal and social problems
4. Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions
5. Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school
6. Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being
7. Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts

iv. A hub of resources will be provided to teachers to help with the implementation of responsible decision- making in the classroom. Teachers will be provided with access. The resources are linked to Harmony Academy and Zones of Regulation. During this time educators will have an opportunity to explore each resource and identify how the resources specifically relate to competency and

responsible decision-making. Educators will have the opportunity to work in groups and begin discussing how they would implement these resources into the classroom.

- n. Debrief and survey (2:45-3:30)
  - i. During this time educators will have an opportunity to discuss the learning of the day and ask any clarifying questions. At the end of the debrief educators will have time built in to complete a survey about the training and provide any inquiries that were not addressed. These results will be compiled with and summarized then sent to all schools for further analysis.

### 5. Day 3

- a. Educators will recap, reflect, and collaborate on the future of SEL within the district.
- b. Overview/Recap. (8:30-9:30)
  - i. The agenda and expectations for the day will be reviewed for the day. Followed by a discussion on what has been mentioned in the past two days of training.
  - ii. Recap
    - 1. A group discussion will summarize key points of the last two days. This will consist of going over the definition of SEL, the CASEL 5, and a check-in for understanding.

2. The trainer will facilitate the discussion and answer any clarifying questions.
- c. School collaboration (9:30-10:45)
    - i. Educators will have an opportunity to brainstorm as a school on how they would want to slowly implement SEL based on what they have learned the past two days. All educators and administrators will have a brainstorming session to create consistent reachable expectations that will be upheld by everyone. Schools will have the opportunity to share with each other to provide more ideas and schools will have an opportunity to reconvene and add additional ideas to their school plan.
    - ii. The goal of the school collaboration is to create systemic implementation in all elementary schools. All educators will use the CASEL guide to schoolwide implementation. Schools will need to target interactions and relationships between members of the school community, staff social, emotional, and cultural competence and how they model SEL Instructional practices and academic rigor, student voice and engagement, discipline policies and practices, family, and community partnerships (CASEL, 2023). They will begin outlining and determining expectations on implementing each of these areas for systemic implementation.
  - d. Break (10:45-11:00)
  - e. Grade level collaboration (11:00-12:00)

- i. During this time grade level specific educators will have an opportunity to break into groups and discuss grade level SEL targets for the year of implementation. Educators will have an opportunity to interact with other schools to collaborate and explore ideas. Specialists and administrators will also meet to determine their role of implementation and support.
- f. Lunch (12:00-1:00)
- g. Future of SEL in the district (1:00-2:30)
  - i. Monthly PD
    1. Administrators and staff development have been informed that monthly PD on SEL will continue. During the early stages of PD schoolwide norms, routines and procedures and physical spaces will be established as a school. With the use of CASELS guide to schoolwide SEL, educators will have an opportunity to collaborate and create the foundation for continuous learning and systemic implementation.
    2. As the PDs continue from month to month learning and collaborating will be essential to consistent implementation and strengthening the foundation of SEL implementation.
    3. The surveys that were completed over the past three days will be condensed to provide insight on the topics of future SEL PD. Surveys will be continued to be completed after each

monthly PD to help the continuation of guiding future PD.

These surveys will also target school needs as well as provide information on what is happening in other elementary schools.

4. Schools will have an opportunity to focus on the CASEL 5 as each school implements SEL into the everyday setting.
5. Educators will have an opportunity to ask questions and collaborate on ideas of implementation.

#### ii. SEL Curriculum

1. Presented during this time trainers will have an opportunity to present how the selection process for an SEL curriculum will be selected for elementary schools.
2. The trainers will state that there will be a committee consisting of all stakeholders. Trainers will have an opportunity to provide educators with a link that will lead to a sign up for participation.
3. They will then explain that this team would meet monthly to analyze data coming in from schools who have started to implement SEL after the following PD and continued PD. Through this, educators will create a criteria list for what the new curriculum should encompass. This would include ideas

such as incorporating the CASEL 5 and the need to have easily accessible resources for educators and schools.

4. Using the CASEL guide to schoolwide SEL, the committee will ensure that the program selected is based on evidence. Using the acronym SAFE from CASELS guide to implementation. SAFE stands for sequenced, active, focused, and explicit. Each can be defined as:
  - a. *SEQUENCED*: Connected and coordinated activities to foster skills development (CASEL,2023).
  - b. *ACTIVE*: Employing active forms of learning to help students master new skills and attitudes (CASEL,2023).
  - c. *FOCUSED*: Dedicated time and attention to developing personal and social skills (CASEL,2023).
  - d. *EXPLICIT*: Targeting specific social and emotional skills (CASEL,2023).
- h. Break (2:30-2:45)
- i. Debrief and Survey (2:45-3:30)
  - i. During this time educators will have an opportunity to discuss the learning of the day and ask any clarifying questions. At the end of the debrief educators will have time built in to complete a survey about the training and provide any inquiries that were not addressed. These



results will be compiled with and summarized then sent to all schools for further analysis.

6. 3 Day Training Presentation

**3 DAY SEL DISTRICT TRAINING**

By: Stephanie Gouskos

This slide features a light blue background with a white grid pattern and cloud borders at the top and bottom. It includes illustrations of a heart with a ribbon, two children's faces, and two colorful figures.

**3 DAY OVERVIEW**

At the end of this training educators will be able to:

- 1 DEFINE SEL**
- 2 UNDERSTAND CASEL 5**
- 3 FUTURE OF SEL IN THE DISTRICT**

This slide features a light blue background with a white grid pattern and cloud borders at the top and bottom. It includes an illustration of a framed photo of two children.

**PURPOSE / GOAL / OUTCOMES**

**Purpose:** The overall purpose of this training is to build knowledge and provide resources of SEL to teachers as the district becomes more SEL focused.

**Goal:** The goal of the 3 Day training is to provide teachers with a clear definition SEL. To provide an explicit understanding on the expectations to uphold and implement SEL in the classroom.

**Learning outcomes:**

- Define SEL
- Make connections with SEL and the classroom
- Build adult SEL
- Introduce the CASEL Framework and the 5 competencies
- Define and provide examples and tools for each competency
- Collaborate on the implementation of SEL.

This slide features a light blue background with a white grid pattern and cloud borders at the top and bottom. It includes illustrations of two children's faces and two colorful figures.

**DAY 1- AGENDA**

8:30-9:40	Welcome and Introduction to SEL
9:40-9:15	Defining SEL
9:15- 10:15	Importance of SEL
10:15-10:30	Break 1
10:30-11:15	SEL Misconceptions
11:15-12:30	Current Implementation of SEL
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-1:15	Morning Recap
1:15-2:30	Adult SEL
2:30-2:45	Break 2
2:45-3:30	Debrief and Survey

This slide features a light blue background with a white grid pattern and cloud borders at the top and bottom. It includes an illustration of a heart with a ribbon.

## WELCOME


1. Please sign in.
2. Find a seat.
3. Create your name tag.



## ICE BREAKER

### 3 Truths and a Lie

- Write down 3 truths and a lie on a piece of paper.
- Once your table group has finished pass your papers to the left.
- Put a check on which one you think is the lie
- Keep passing until you receive your paper again.
- Share results!
  - What was the answer most voted on?
  - What was the real answer?



## OVERVIEW/ EXPECTATIONS

### Review agenda

**3 Day Professional development expectations:**



- Confidentiality
- Open to information
- Minimal sidebar conversation




## ACTIVATOR

### What does social emotional learning (SEL) mean?

- In your table groups come up with a common definition for SEL.
- As you discuss think about:
  - What do you already know about SEL?
  - What does it look like in schools or what do you think it should look like?
  - What makes up SEL?
- Each group will share their definition SEL.


**DEFINITION**



**What does social emotional learning (SEL) mean?**

“Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2024).”

**COLLABORATION**



**In your groups:**

- Discuss and compare your definition to the provided definition.
  - What is the same?
  - What is different?
- Which group had the closest definition?

**IMPORTANCE OF SEL**



- When implemented SEL can create supportive relationships and opportunities to develop and practice social, emotional, and cognitive skills across many different contexts, academic learning accelerates.
- SEL does not replace the need for mental health interventions for students who need it
- SEL fosters preventive measures that can support against mental health risks.
- SEL can create caring relationships, safe and supportive environments, social and emotional skills

**BREAK 1**  
**(15 MINUTES)**




## SEL MISCONCEPTIONS

- #1: **Social-emotional learning only teaches kids about feelings.**
  - Fact: Emotional intelligence (the ability to be smart about feelings) is only one of the many parts of SEL.
- #2: **Social-emotional skills aren't as important as "hard skills."**
  - Fact: Social-emotional skills are often referred to as "soft skills," but they're just as important as "hard skills." Soft skills (sometimes called people skills) allow us to get along and work well with other people, communicate effectively, be empathetic, and solve problems. These skills can be difficult to measure, but they're essential.



## SEL MISCONCEPTIONS

- #3: **Kids learn social-emotional skills automatically.**
  - Fact: People aren't born knowing how to manage emotions, get along with others, and solve problems. These skills are learned over time.
- #4: **There's only one way to teach SEL.**
  - Fact: There's no *one* right way to teach SEL. Every child has different needs. Families have different backgrounds and cultures. Teachers, who work with a diverse group of students, can use what they know about their students to design SEL lessons in which *all* students can fully access and apply these skills.
- #5: **SEL is only for kids with behavioral issues.**
  - Fact: SEL is for *all* kids — and adults, too. We all continue to develop these skills throughout our lives.

## CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION OF SEL

### Discussion time!

In new groups discuss the following:

- Is SEL implemented at your school or in your classroom?
  - If not do you think it should be? Why or why not?
- How is SEL implemented at your school?
- How do you implement SEL?
- What do you or your school use to implement SEL?



**LUNCH**  
(1 HOUR)



## LET'S RECAP

What have we learned so far?

- SEL definition
- Misconceptions of SEL
- Current implementation of SEL in the district



## ADULT SEL



Did you know?

- SEL benefits adult
- Focusing on educator social and emotional competence can also improve teacher well-being.
- Educators with strong social and emotional competence report higher levels of job satisfaction and less burnout.
- Focusing on SEL can help educators build and maintain stronger relationships with students and manage classrooms
- Teachers who teach SEL to students report feeling more effective at their jobs and lower levels of job-related anxiety.

## ADULT SEL



- Is there current implementation of adult SEL?
  - If so what is being implemented?
  - If not, how can adult SEL be implemented?
- Let's brainstorm ways the district can help promote adult SEL?

**BREAK 2**  
**(15 MINUTES)**





A slide with a light blue grid background and white clouds at the top and bottom. The title "DAY 2- AGENDA" is in bold orange letters at the top. A table lists the schedule for the day.

Time	Activity
8:30-9:45	Introduction to CABEL
9:45-10:30	Competency 1: Self-awareness
10:30-10:45	Break 1
10:45-11:30	Competency 2: Self Management
11:30-12:00	Competency 3: Social Awareness (part 1)
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-1:15	Competency 3: Social Awareness (part 2)
1:15-2:00	Competency 4: Relationship Skills
2:00-2:15	Break 2
2:15-3:00	Competency 5: Responsible decision making
3:00-3:30	Debrief and Survey



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# BREAK 2

(15 MINUTES)





A slide with a light blue background and a white grid pattern. The title "DAY 2- AGENDA" is in bold orange text. Below the title is a table with two columns: time and activity.

Time	Activity
8:30-9:45	Introduction to CASEL
9:45-10:30	Competency 1: Self-awareness
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10:45-11:30	Competency 2: Self Management
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3:00-3:30	Debrief and Survey





## INTRODUCTION TO CASEL




CASL  
30  
YEARS

## WHAT IS THE CASEL FRAMEWORK?

Schools, districts, states, and others can use CASEL's Framework to: Foster knowledge, skills, and attitudes across five areas of social and emotional competence; Establish equitable learning environments and coordinate practices across four key settings that support students' social, emotional, and academic development (CASEL, 2023)

## WHAT IS THE CASEL FRAMEWORK?




connected engaged inspired

## CASEL WHEEL

CASEL's Framework can be used to:

- "Foster knowledge, skills, and attitudes across five areas of social and emotional competence;
- Establish equitable learning environments and coordinate practices across four key settings that support students' social, emotional, and academic development (CASEL, 2023)."





## COMPETENCY 1: SELF-AWARENESS

**Self-awareness: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. This includes capacities to recognize one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose (CASEL, 2023).**

## COMPETENCY 1: SELF-AWARENESS

**How to foster self-awareness:**

- Integrating personal and social identities
- Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets
- Identifying one's emotions
- Demonstrating honesty and integrity
- Linking feelings, values, and thoughts
- Examining prejudices and biases
- Experiencing self-efficacy
- Having a growth mindset
- Developing interests and a sense of purpose

**Resources for gradual implementation:**

- [Harmony Academy](#)
  - Sign up for a free account to explore resources
- [Zones of Regulation](#)



**COMPETENCY 2: SELF MANAGEMENT**

**Self-management:** The abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation and agency to accomplish personal and collective goals (CASEL, 2023).

**COMPETENCY 2: SELF MANAGEMENT**

**How to foster self-management:**


- Managing one's emotions
- Identifying and using stress management strategies
- Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation
- Setting personal and collective goals
- Using planning and organizational skills
- Showing the courage to take initiative
- Demonstrating personal and collective agency

**Resources for gradual implementation:**

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**COMPETENCY 3: SOCIAL AWARENESS**


(Part 1)



**COMPETENCY 3: SOCIAL AWARENESS**

(Part 1)

**Social awareness:** The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports (CASEL, 2023).




**LUNCH**  
**(1 HOUR)**



**COMPETENCY 3: SOCIAL AWARENESS**

(Part 2)

**Social awareness:** The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports (CASEL, 2023).



## COMPETENCY 3: SOCIAL AWARENESS

How to foster social awareness:

(Part 2)

- Taking others' perspectives
- Recognizing strengths in others
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- Understanding and expressing gratitude
- Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones
- Recognizing situational demands and opportunities
- Understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior

Resources for gradual implementation:

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- [Zones of Regulation](#)



## COMPETENCY 4: RELATIONSHIP SKILLS



## COMPETENCY 4: RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

**Relationship skills:** The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups. This includes the capacities to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem solve and negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when needed (CASEL, 2023).



## COMPETENCY 4: RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

How to foster relationship skills:

- Communicating effectively
- Developing positive relationships
- Demonstrating cultural competency
- Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving
- Resolving conflicts constructively
- Resisting negative social pressure
- Showing leadership in groups
- Seeking or offering support and help when needed
- Standing up for the rights of others

Resources for gradual implementation:


- [Harmony Academy](#)
  - Sign up for a free account to explore resources
- [Zones of Regulation](#)





**COMPETENCY 5: RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING**

Responsible decision-making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being (CASEL, 2023).




**COMPETENCY 5: RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING**

How to foster responsible decision making:

- Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness
- Learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts
- Identifying solutions for personal and social problems
- Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions
- Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school
- Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being
- Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts

Resources for gradual implementation:

- [Harmony Academy](#)
  - Sign up for a free account to explore resources
- [Zones of Regulation](#)

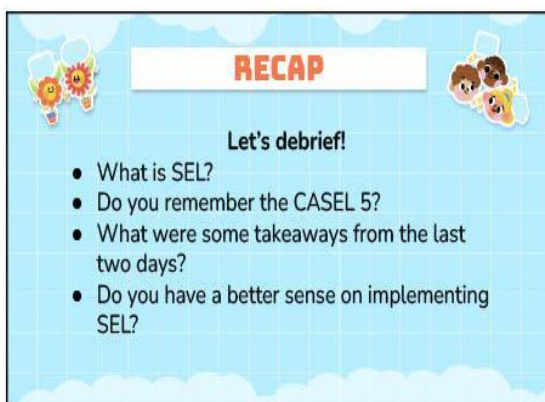




A slide with a light blue grid background and white clouds at the top and bottom. The title "DAY 3- AGENDA" is in a white box at the top. Below it is a table with a grid background. There is a small cartoon character in the bottom right corner.

Time	Activity
8:30-9:30	Overview/ Recap
9:30-10:45	School Collaboration
10:45-11:00	Break 1
11:00-12:00	Grade Level Collaboration
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:30	Future of OEL in the District
2:30-2:45	Break 2
2:45-3:30	Debrief and Survey

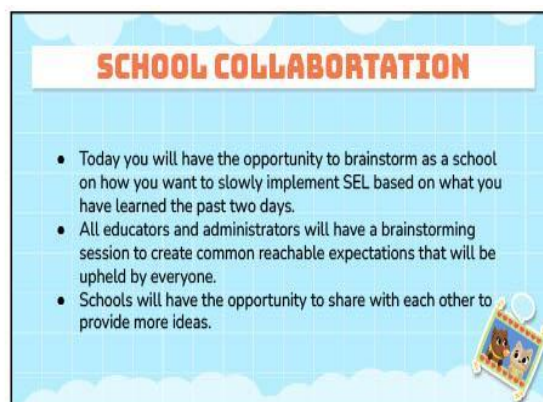




## RECAP

**Let's debrief!**

- What is SEL?
- Do you remember the CASEL 5?
- What were some takeaways from the last two days?
- Do you have a better sense on implementing SEL?



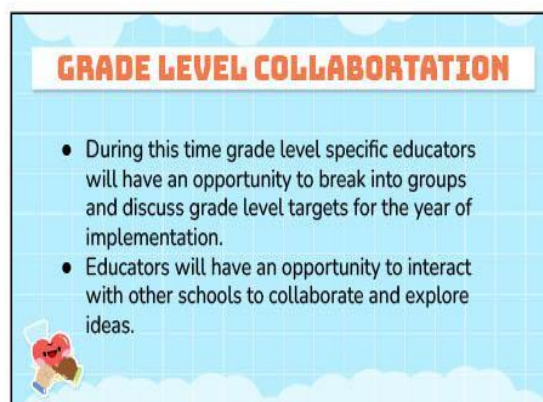
## SCHOOL COLLABORATION

- Today you will have the opportunity to brainstorm as a school on how you want to slowly implement SEL based on what you have learned the past two days.
- All educators and administrators will have a brainstorming session to create common reachable expectations that will be upheld by everyone.
- Schools will have the opportunity to share with each other to provide more ideas.



## BREAK 1

**(15 MINUTES)**



## GRADE LEVEL COLLABORATION

- During this time grade level specific educators will have an opportunity to break into groups and discuss grade level targets for the year of implementation.
- Educators will have an opportunity to interact with other schools to collaborate and explore ideas.






**LUNCH**  
**(1 HOUR)**

Decorative elements include two smiling sunflowers in the top left and three colorful, smiling characters (yellow, red, and green) in the bottom right.

**FUTURE SEL IN THE DISTRICT**

**What comes next?**

- Administrators and staff development have been informed that monthly professional development on SEL will continue.
  - The surveys you have been completing over the past 3 days will be condensed and shared with schools. These surveys will help drive future PD.
    - Surveys will be continued to be completed after each monthly PD to help guide future PD.
    - These will target school needs as well as provide information on what is happening in other elementary schools.
- Schools will have an opportunity to focus on The CASEL 5 as each school implements SEL into the everyday setting.
- Educators will have an opportunity to ask questions and collaborate on ideas of implementation.




**FUTURE SEL IN THE DISTRICT**

**Choosing an SEL curriculum!**

- Interest meetings for selecting a standard SEL curriculum that will be implemented in all elementary schools.
- Sign up if you are interested in participating in the selection.
- Curriculum search team will consist of all stakeholders.
- A criteria list will be created and agreed amongst the stakeholders.
- This curriculum criteria list will consist of ideas such as:
  - To incorporate The CASEL 5
  - Need to have easy accessible resources for educators and schools

**Additional criteria to be added.**




**BREAK 2**  
**(15 MINUTES)**

Decorative elements include two smiling sunflowers in the top left and three colorful, smiling characters (yellow, red, and green) in the bottom right.

**DEBRIEF/  
SURVEY**

**REFERENCES**


CASEL. (2023). *Advancing Social and emotional learning*. CASEL. <https://casel.org/>

Medin, A. (2020). *5 myths about social-emotional learning*. Understood. <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/5-myths-about-social-emotional-learning>

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PBS. (2020). *Teaching Resources for students and teachers*. PBS Learning Media. <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/>

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**Continuation of SEL throughout the year**

As the school year begins each school will determine how they would like to implement the five competencies and strategies they had learned over the summer SEL sessions. These five competencies and strategies that all elementary educators have learned will keep the consistency of implementing SEL. To monitor the success of implementing these new strategies monthly surveys will be provided to students to monitor their learning of the five competencies. At the end of each quarter, data will then be collected by a district survey from both teachers and students to provide insight into what is working and what still needs to be addressed. This information will be collected and provided to the SEL curriculum committee which the committee will then discuss and determine which curriculum would best fit the missing gaps as well as continue to promote the areas that have already been established. This will continue over the year through the spring and a decision will be made at the beginning of the fourth quarter marking period. Once the curriculum selection is made and schools have already implemented a year's worth of SEL through the knowledge of the ongoing PD that has been provided. The remaining months of SEL PD will be used as an introduction for educators to explore the new SEL curriculum that will be implemented the following year.

**Project Outcomes**

There are many goals of this project implementation. The first goal is to provide educators with SEL PD to build their knowledge. Another goal of this project is to create a common language and techniques across the district and community regarding SEL.

This will help to create consistency and build the foundation of SEL in the district.

Providing the elementary schools in the district with common goals and expectations will promote the implementation of SEL through all stakeholders. Once the foundation of SEL knowledge is implemented the implementation of an SEL curriculum would then be immersed into elementary educators. This will provide all elementary schools with consistent resources.

## Appendix B: Semi structured Interview Questions

- What is your perception of implementation of SEL in your school?
- How is SEL being implemented in your school/classroom right now? What do you think it should look like?
- Do you feel that your perception of SEL impacts the effort of implementation?
- Where is the current guidance of SEL implementation coming from?
- How do you feel the need for implementing SEL in the classroom? (Teacher)
  - How do you feel about the need to guide your teachers to promote SEL in the school? (Administrator)
- How was foundational support developed or how does it need to be developed and communicated?
- Compared to other schools within the same district do you feel that you have the same training and resources?
- What would you consider for successful SEL implementation that you are not provided now?
- Is SEL a structured curriculum-based program in your district?
  - Do you think it should be?
  - What do you think of implementing a consistent program of SEL across all schools?
- Has the district provided you with how SEL impacts your school?
  - What kind of planning has been involved?
  - Has there been a budget to set aside?
  - If so, what supports have been made to improve SEL implementation?
  - If not, what discussions surround implementation? Is this a school matter or a district?
- How is adult SEL being addressed or how does it need to be strengthened?
- How is SEL being used with students? Community? Parents?
- How is continuous improvement being used? How does it need to be improved?