

2016

Socioeconomic Status and Whole Student Positive Academic, Social, and Emotional Outcomes

Matthew David Dotson
Walden University

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Matthew Dotson

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Dr. Don Jones, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Karen Hunt, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2016

Abstract

Socioeconomic Status and Whole Student Positive Academic, Social, and Emotional

Outcomes

by

Matthew Dotson

MA, Salem International University, 2004

MA, West Virginia University, 2002

BS, Fairmont University, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2016

Abstract

The focus of this study was on identifying the challenges faced by teachers and school personnel at a middle school in educating the whole low socioeconomic status (SES) child academically, socially and emotionally to enhance positive educational outcomes. The unmet academic, social, and emotional needs of the low SES student in the middle school in this case study are having a negative impact on proficiency for these students on the state standardized assessments. Kolb's experiential learning theory and Rogers and Maslow's humanistic theory provided a psychological framework for the study. The qualitative case study included staff interviews and a review of documents. Purposeful sampling included 11 subjects; 6 teachers, 2 counselors, 2 administrators, and the nurse from 1 selected middle school, who had experiences working with low SES students in reading language arts classes in grades 6 through 8. Data from interviews and document review were coded and analyzed for common themes. Results included 4 major themes; student focused instruction, challenges for instructing low SES students, supports needed for effective instruction, and discipline challenges. Findings supported construction of a professional development program project for school personnel that incorporated these themes with emphasis on improving educational outcomes for low SES students by addressing individual social, emotional and academic needs. This study might contribute to positive social change by providing school personnel with the ability to identify and collaboratively address the individual needs of the whole low SES student to enhance their learning and contributions to society.

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Table of Contents

Section 1: Problem	1
Introduction	1
Definition of the Problem.....	3
Rationale	3
Definitions.....	5
Significance	5
Guiding/Research Questions	7
Review of Literature	8
Historical Review of Literature.....	12
Implications	16
Summary	18
Section 2: The Methodology.....	19
Research Design and Approach.....	19
Sampling Procedures and Methods	20
Data Collection Methods	23
Data Analysis Methods.....	27
Data Analysis Results	30
Findings.....	31
Theme 1: Student-Focused Instruction	32
Theme 2: Challenges in Instructing Low-SES Students.....	34
Theme 3: Supports Needed to Effectively Instruct Low-SES Students.....	35

Theme 4: Discipline Challenges for Low-SES Students	38
Public Document Review	39
Conclusion.....	42
Section 3: The Project.....	43
Introduction	43
Description and Goals.....	43
Review of the Literature	45
Rationale for the Project Genre	45
Rationale for Content of the Project	47
Theme 1: Student-Focused Instruction	49
Theme 2: Challenges in Instructing Low-SES Students.....	50
Theme 3: Supports Needed to Effectively Instruct Low-SES Students.....	51
Theme 4: Discipline Challenges for Low-SES Students	53
Implementation.....	54
Needed Resources, Existing Supports, and Potential Barriers	54
Timetable.....	55
Roles and Responsibilities.....	55
Project Evaluation Plan.....	56
Justification.....	57
Overall Goals	57
Key Stakeholders	58
Social Change Implications.....	58

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions	60
Introduction	60
Project Strengths.....	60
Project Limitations.....	62
Recommendations.....	63
Analysis of Scholarship	65
Analysis of Project Development and Evaluation.....	66
Analysis of Leadership and Change	68
Analysis of Self as a Scholar.....	68
Analysis of Self as Practitioner	69
Analysis of Self as a Project Developer.....	69
The Project’s Potential Impact on Social Change	70
Overall Reflections	71
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research	72
Conclusion.....	73
References.....	75
Appendix A: Project	90
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form.....	105
Appendix C: Invitation Letter	107
Appendix D: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Number.....	108

Section 1: Problem

Introduction

Students of low socioeconomic status (SES) have been and continue to be a concern in the field of education, particularly in light of the strong relationship between low SES and student academic, social, and emotional outcomes. According to Spencer and Schuele (2012), research has consistently found that children from low-SES families have smaller vocabularies than children from higher SES families. Bempechat, Jin, Neier, Gillis, and Holloway (2011) acknowledged that low-SES students are at greater risk of underachievement and school disengagement than their middle-class peers and are more likely to be held back, suspended, and placed in lower educational tracks or in special education. Children growing up in low-SES environments, according to Wright and Neuman (2013), are not obtaining the variety of language reinforcements they need to achieve in the Common Core Standards, in their homes or in school. Meins, Centifanti, Fernyhough, and Fishburn (2013) contended that family environment and children's behavioral issues in their home and school lives are related. Families that are economically poor show high levels of stress in adults and children compared to adults and children from high-SES groups, which Allington et al. (2010) documented in a longitudinal experimental study.

Most students experience some mental and physical health stress, but students from low-SES environments experience more stressors and higher degrees of stress, according to Karimshah, Wyder, Henman, Tay, and Capelin (2013). The West Virginia School Health Technical Wellness Center (2014) noted that only 22 of the 55 public

schools districts in West Virginia have comprehensive community-based mental health services available for students in their schools. According to Szabo (2013), West Virginia's inadequate mental health system is deteriorating for psychiatric hospitals, community-based mental health service, and school-based mental health service. West Virginia was one of only five states to receive an F grade on an A-F scale in providing access to mental health care, according to a 2009 report from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (as cited in Szabo, 2013). According to the West Virginia School Health Technical Wellness Center (2014), only 100 of the 820 public schools in West Virginia have mental health services through a community partnership with a community mental health agency. Schreier and Chen (2012) noted that children from low-SES environments have more childhood physical and mental health problems and are more likely to be socially isolated with increased stress levels compared to their more affluent classmates. According to Farmer (1984), educators should view the whole student; too often, educators maintain a narrow focus on the academic well-being of the student and neglect the social and emotional side.

Prince and Howard (2002) noted that even though the United States is the richest country in the world, it is still neglecting to educate and care for many of the nation's most vulnerable children, the poor. According to The Nation's Report Card (2014), West Virginia had no significant change in reading scores for the fourth and eighth grades on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for the 2013 test as compared to the 2011 test. West Virginia's fourth grade test scores for 2013 showed 27% proficiency compared to 34% proficiency nationally, and eighth grade test scores showed

25% proficiency compared to 34% national proficiency, according to The Nation's Report Card (2014). The high number of students living in poverty in West Virginia may be a contributing factor to the lack of significant change in NAEP reading scores for West Virginia's fourth and eighth grade students. Previous research has documented the negative impact of SES on the education of the whole student, and this continues to be a significant issue nationally and locally.

Definition of the Problem

When looking at the low-SES population in West Virginia in comparison to national data, it is not difficult to document the potential impact of the high number of low-SES students on student outcomes such as academic performance and social and emotional well-being . According to National Kids Count (2014), West Virginia ranked 39th out of 50 states for percentage of children living in poverty (22%, in comparison to a national average of 19%). National Kids Count (2014) data also revealed that West Virginia has 86% of families with children participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) relative to 72% nationally. The Kids Count numbers for West Virginia's children and families living in poverty have been discouraging as they compare to those of the other states. However, the high number of low-SES students in West Virginia may shed light on why test scores may be low in specific school districts and schools with extreme poverty.

Rationale

The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE, 2014) requested an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver from the U.S.

Department of Education in 2013 to launch a new student achievement and school accountability system. The main reason that the WVDE requested the ESEA Flexibility Waiver was to address the issue of many of West Virginia's schools inability to meet annual yearly progress standards for student proficiency under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), now known as the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The ESEA Accountability System's primary focus was improving academic achievement for struggling schools and all students, particularly in the subgroups of special education students and low-SES students (WVDE, 2014). The new ESEA Accountability System, according to the WVDE (2014), had five categories of designation: success, transition, focus, support, and priority.

The selected middle school for this qualitative research study was identified as a "focus school." The focus school had achievement gaps affecting large subgroups of special education and low-performing, low-SES students. The gaps were measured by examining the number of students who scored below state targets in reading/language arts (RLA) on the West Virginia Educational Standards Test (WESTEST) at the middle school, compared to the numbers for the state. The most recent state WESTEST RLA scores for the selected middle school's low-SES subgroups in Grades 6, 7, and 8 were at 43.33% proficiency compared to the state's proficiency percentage of 48%, according to the WVDE (2014). The percentage of low-SES students for the 2013-2014 school year for the selected middle school was 51% (WVDE, 2014). This study is important because the findings may help to raise test scores, increase learning, and eliminate the achievement gap for students from low-SES backgrounds. If no answers are found to

help these students, continued low academic performance, social struggles, and emotional instability may prevail.

Definitions

Socioeconomic status (SES) is frequently measured as a combination of an individual's or group's education, income, and occupation levels or standing, according to the American Psychological Association (2014). SES in public schools was determined by the number of students receiving free and reduced-price lunch.

Positive academic student outcomes were measured by examining test scores on the WVDE standardized WESTEST. For reading, a *positive academic outcome* is a positive difference in scale scores from one testing period to the next. For individual students or schools, the change needs to be greater than the average gain for the district and state by grade level and subgroup, according to the WVDE (2014).

Positive social student outcomes are defined as a student's ability to relate to adults and peers and to follow rules associated with interacting with peers, according to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2014).

Positive emotional student outcomes are defined as a student's capability to exhibit self-awareness and self-management skills, interpersonal skills, and positive life skills, according to CASEL (2014).

Significance

In looking at research on the impact of low SES on student educational outcomes, the negative impact on students is clear. In the local middle school that was studied, there are many poor students who are likely to be affected in ways similar to the research

findings. A better understanding of the problem could help to prevent some of the negative effects of low SES and provide additional information that may benefit the education of low-SES students. Educating the whole child, as defined by Slade and Griffith (2013), means focusing attention on the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of all students. At its core, this approach reflects a belief that the purpose of instruction is to cultivate future productive citizens. According to Hoff (2012), in many U.S. schools, low-SES students underperform compared to their middle- and upper-class counterparts. The data collected from this project study may benefit other schools and school districts with high numbers of low-SES students, a group that encompasses most of West Virginia's public schools. Finally, the findings could be shared with the WVDE to address a broader population of the state's students. West Virginia as a state showed the fifth lowest household state median income at \$41,821.00 and has traditionally finished in the top 10 for the highest unemployment rate in the country.

Children from lower SES homes frequently have lower levels of the sort of English language skills that school requires because lower SES parents tend to talk less to their children, tend to be more directive and less conversational in the functions of their speech, and they tend to use a more restricted vocabulary and range of grammatical structures. (Hoff, 2012, p. 10)

Prince and Howard (2002) found that many adults from low-SES backgrounds see education as having not been effective in their lives and, in return, regard classroom learning as being immaterial in the lives of their children. Could now be the time to find a

way or ways to disrupt these negative trends in West Virginia public school systems and build a state culture of greater expectations for positive academic, social, and emotional student outcomes?

Guiding/Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to identify the challenges and strategies a local middle school uses to educate the whole low-SES student academically, socially, and emotionally for positive outcomes. The middle school in question is situated in a rural town in south central West Virginia but is located in the most populated county in West Virginia. Pizzolato, Brown, and Kanny (2011) expressed that students of low SES achieve at much lower rates than their higher SES peers. Students living in low-SES neighborhoods are at a greater disadvantage for achieving academic success even with additional academic supports, according to Owens (2010). The literature and data reviewed previously in this study clearly show that educating low-SES students for positive educational outcomes is a growing problem in education in general and specifically at the selected middle school. The problem for the middle school's sixth, seventh, and eighth grade RLA teachers is to understand how to address the challenges of having high numbers of low-SES students in their classes and positively impact academic as well as social and emotional outcomes.

The following research questions limited the scope of the study to isolate and incorporate the central concept under investigation. For this qualitative case study, there were nine research questions that addressed the central phenomenon:

1. What strategies do RLA teachers use to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of their low-SES students?
2. Why and how do teachers perceive these strategies as being effective?
3. What challenges do RLA teachers face when attempting to teach low-SES students in a holistic fashion (i.e., academically, socially, and emotionally)?
4. Why do the RLA teachers perceive these challenges as barriers to teaching low-SES students?
5. What suggestions do the RLA teachers offer to address the challenges of meeting the needs of these students?
6. What additional supports do RLA teachers perceive that they need to meet successfully low-SES students' needs academically, socially, and emotionally?
7. How are the perceptions of the non-RLA staff similar to and different from the RLA teachers' perceptions as related to their strategies, challenges, and needed supports?
8. How do school personnel perceive that low-SES students are supported for optimal academic, social, and emotional success?
9. What differences are there for low-SES students compared to higher SES students with discipline referrals or infractions?

Review of Literature

“For centuries now, great philosophers and educators have proclaimed that the cure of societal ills and the future well-being of society could only be found in the proper

care and education of children” (Prince & Howard, 2002, p. 27). The main theoretical framework for this study was Kolb’s experiential learning theory. According to Kolb (1984), learners can increase their learning power by participating in a cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. Kolb and Kolb (2009) stated that one of the ultimate goals of experiential theory is for learners to manage their learning and take control of their learning process. Taking control of the learning process or having experiences to learn from is one of the major shortcomings for low-SES students. Dennick (2012) noted that the teacher should encourage students to reflect about how they learn and give students accountability or their learning. Spencer and Schuele (2012) noted that students from low-SES families have word-learning abilities equivalent to those of high-SES students but have far less exposure to rich linguistic development in their homes.

According to Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, and Barnett (2010), children from low-SES families have limited access to books in their homes, communities, and other life experiences.

Since the classroom is a perfect microcosm of society in which to give students the opportunity to prepare for their role as global citizens in this world, then experiential learning strategies such as service learning are likely instructional choices that can be used to address the 21st century learning goals and connect learning to real-life experiences. (Ponder, Veldt, & Lewis-Ferrell, 2011, p. 20).

According to Bergsteiner, Avery, and Neumann (2010), Kolb’s experiential learning theory suggests that learning is a cognitive process involving continuous acclimation to,

and engagement with, one's environment and that children create knowledge from experience rather than just from received instruction. To follow Kolb's teachings, teachers and instructional leaders must keep the experiential learning theory in mind when trying to provide meaningful and lasting instruction to low-SES students. Chan (2012) recognized that students participating in real-life activities are able to effectively transform the knowledge they learn from classroom instruction into their own sense of understanding. Kihm and Knapp (2015) stated that low-SES students who participate in experiential learning experiences relevant to classroom instruction understand and retain lessons at a higher rate. Low-SES students traditionally do not have access to the real-life learning opportunities that students of higher SES are able to experience in their lives. Kolb's experiential learning framework assisted in interpreting data from the project study by providing an understanding that all students come from different backgrounds and experiences. All children's experiences either help to support or hinder their current knowledge base and learning rate.

Low-SES students tend to select career paths that will allow them to maintain the same level of SES in which they were raised, thus indicating that social class is transmitted from generation to generation, as noted by Schmitt-Wilson (2013). Sohr-Preston et al. (2013) remarked that the effect of low SES on students exists throughout their lifetime, with individuals experiencing consequences before entering kindergarten and past the end of their formal education. The National Center for Higher Education Management System (NCHEMS, 2014) showed that 59.2% of West Virginia high school graduates attended college in 2010, compared to the U.S. average of 62.5%. According to

the NCHEMS (2014), the 6-year college graduation rate of West Virginia students was 43.8% in 2009, compared to a U.S. average of 55.5%. The statistics from the NCHEMS indicate that West Virginia students are entering college at a lower rate compared to the national average and are finishing college at a much lower percentage compared to the rest of the nation. Frempong, Ma, and Mensah (2012) noted that low-SES students are more susceptible to exclusion from postsecondary education than their higher SES peers because of deficiencies of financial resources and social capital.

The humanistic theory by Rogers and Maslow also played a part in the theoretical framework for this study. The humanistic framework assisted in interpreting data for the project study by applying the understanding that all aspects of the whole student must be addressed for optimal student growth and achievement. Forbes (2003) stated that Rogers's work with humanistic theory shows the value of emotional development, interpersonal skills, and goal-setting/goal-striving techniques for students. "Self-actualizing people have a wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder, and even ecstasy, however stale these experiences may have become to others" (Maslow, 1954, p. 214). According to Villares, Lemberger, Brigman, and Webb (2011), each student possesses the capability to achieve, and such promise is too often diminished by a multitude of circumstances, such as social occurrences, personal misuse of ability, and/or lack of support and guidance. Weinberg (2011) conceded that the most important thing for teachers and parents of young children is to instill self-actualization. The same will follow in society, because these children have loved and been loved.

The idea behind educating the whole student is fundamental in humanistic theory and pivotal for low-SES students to receive the educational, social, and emotional components of their education experience. “Education must not be understood in the sense of teaching, but of assisting the psychological development of the child” (Montessori, 1965, p. 28). According to Weinburg (2011) parents and teachers should realize the extreme importance of self-esteem, self-respect, and esteem from others. These are all attributes that students of low SES struggle to incorporate into their lives. “Self-actualization theory provides a means whereby each educator, regardless of that educator’s special professional duties, can view the whole person” (Farmer, 1984, p. 165). Maslow’s theory might be one of the best theories available to educators who desire to focus on educating the whole child, according to Farmer (1984).

Historical Review of Literature

Several research studies in the past have looked at the effects of low SES on student outcomes. However, there has been limited research focusing on the impact of low SES for educating the whole student for improved academic, social, and emotional outcomes. Historically, low-SES research studies have examined either achievement outcomes or social and emotional outcomes independently. In this section of the paper, I look at current peer-reviewed studies concentrating on the achievement of low-SES students.

The following research studies primarily discussed the achievement of low-SES students in reading and math. According to research conducted by Apel et al. (2013), kindergarten, first, and second grade students from low-SES homes are believed to be at

greater risk for literacy struggles than students from higher SES homes. Mothers of low-SES kindergarten students were discovered by Levin and Aram (2012) in their research study to initiate reading to their children less frequently than mothers of higher SES kindergarten students. A study performed by Block, Whiteley, Parris, Reed, and Cleveland (2009) that focused on successful instructional approaches revealed that allowing low-SES students to choose their independent reading selections increased the amount of time they spent reading and their reading comprehension. Comprehension in reading for low-SES students is greatly influenced by community culture and social experiences, as acknowledged in research done by Luke, Woods, and Dooley (2011). A study by McCallum et al. (2011) provided results showing that low-SES students' reading comprehension increased after having group discussions about material read by the entire group. Konstantopoulos and Chung (2011) found that low-SES elementary school students achieved substantially less than higher SES elementary students across all achievement scores, but particularly in reading.

The articles reviewed in this paragraph mainly address the difficulties that low-SES students have with mathematics. Kirkland, Manning, Osaki, and Hicks (2015) explained that low-SES students need social interaction with their peers to discuss math problems and to have enhanced learning opportunities. Kelly (2009) noted that low-SES students, and in particular, low-SES Black students, are likely to be enrolled in lower level mathematics classes than higher SES students by high school. Stull (2013) presented data from a study indicating that parents from low-SES households do not have high expectations for their children to obtain at least a bachelor's degree in college when

compared to parents from high-SES households. Low-SES students struggle with the use of technology when they start school, which may be related to lack of exposure to technology at home compared to high-SES students, as illustrated by Phillips and Loch (2011). Coe, Peterson, Blair, Schutten, and Peddie (2013) found in their quantitative study that fitness is positively related to academic achievement and that low-SES students live less fit lifestyles than their high-SES peers. Low-SES students have many challenges in improving their academic performance, as the studies previously discussed revealed.

Articles and studies from recent years have also addressed the social and emotional issues faced by students categorized as low SES. According to McDowell, Brown, Cullen, and Duyn (2013), the perception commonly held by higher SES persons that low-SES students are lazy and unmotivated is often internalized and believed by low-SES students about themselves. Results reported from a study on SES and adolescent mental disorders by McLaughlin, Costello, Leblanc, Sampson, and Kessler (2012) indicated that low-SES adolescents' mental health is influenced by their perceptions of where they fit in with their social status. Crosnoe (2009) noted that low-SES students do not benefit from attending higher SES schools as compared to lower SES schools.

Powell and Marshall (2011) found that low-SES students view forming trusting relationships with caring adults as the most important component of being successful during their participation in school. Haigen (2015) noted that although low-SES children were not able to overcome their challenging backgrounds by spending extra time studying, building healthy relationships with their peers and adults elevated their learning capacity. A study on effective school leadership conducted by Ramalho, Garza, and

Merchant (2010) uncovered that school administrators diligently worked to develop trust with low-SES parents and students through the creation of community schools to support the needs of both parents and students. Ming Ming and Chow (2015) noted that low-SES children's academic resources at home and their parents' academic ability greatly impacted their own educational success. These studies have shown collectively that low-SES students are conflicted and influenced by their sense of belonging and of being capable of achieving above their perceived status level and abilities.

Family and parents play an important part in how low-SES students are affected socially and emotionally, as the following studies reviewed indicate. Wildenger and McIntyre (2011) found that low-SES families are less involved in their children's education due to having less time and fewer resources to devote to them. Low-SES children's physical fitness is affected by having inadequate health education within the household, poor food choices in the home, and limited or no exercise facilities in their community, according to Bohr, Brown, Laurson, Smith, and Bass (2013). Robinson-O'Brien, Burgess-Champoux, Haines, Hannan, and Neumark-Sztainer (2010) noted that low-SES children had poor family modeling of healthy food choices and intake, which can lead to compromised emotional and physical health. Van Gundy et al. (2015) found that strong connections with parents and siblings decreased the probability of obesity and substance abuse issues in low-SES children. Jaeger (2012) suggested that the socioeconomic characteristics of extended family members, particularly grandparents, matter in the social and emotional success of low-SES students. Students of low SES must overcome challenges and hurdles academically, socially, and emotionally, as studies

have demonstrated. Conducting a project study to address all three of these issues was an important undertaking to assist school personnel in supporting the education of the whole low-SES student for future academic triumphs.

The review of literature included primary sources of empirical research, including peer-reviewed articles in professional journals, government reports, books, and websites of governmental and research organizations and professional associations. The Walden University Library was the main resource employed to find peer-reviewed sources, along with extensive searches of appropriate websites. Some of the key search terms used for finding resource articles were as follows: *socioeconomic*, *social*, *emotional*, and *low socioeconomic status*. The majority of the primary sources were from the last five years; however, some materials to support the research theory were from older sources from within the last 65 years. According to Lodico, Dean, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010), a *primary source* is an article that depicts initial research performed by the author of the article. Secondary sources were also used for the literature review. A *secondary source* is an article written by an author who is expressing research completed by others; therefore, the account is secondhand, according to Lodico et al. (2010).

Implications

The implications of conducting this project study were twofold: the potential benefits for students who would be the recipients of improved and expanded resources at the local middle school, and potential benefits for other middle schools with similar needs in the state of West Virginia. An at-risk survey designed to ascertain the specific needs of low-SES students academically, socially, and emotionally was developed and

implemented in the selected middle school from data gathered during the research study. Professional learning took place in the middle school to instruct teachers and other school personnel (administrators, school counselors, school nurse) on the use of the at-risk assessment and determining the unique needs of identified low-SES students. The professional learning focused on how to complete the at-risk survey and involved walking each staff person through the completion of a mock assessment to review as a group to check for understanding and ease of use. The professional learning also trained school personnel on educating the whole low-SES student academically, socially, and emotionally, in order to better prepare them to identify and more effectively address the individual needs of low-SES students for positive outcomes. The professional learning and the developed survey have encouraged social change for low-SES students by bringing their academic, social, and emotional needs to the awareness of the school personnel who instruct them and assist with their growth as young men and women.

The ability of schools to pinpoint the particular needs of low-SES students could help with furthering program enhancements and cost savings. The use of at-risk survey and professional learning training developed from data gathered during the course of the case study could improve educational outcomes for all low-SES students and bring about positive social change in the school, school district, and state. Park, Holloway, Arendt, Bempechat, and Li (2011) acknowledged that low-SES students are sensitive and responsive to supports that assist them in feeling emotionally supported and connected. Interaction and cooperation among parents, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel are crucial components in forecasting the success of individual low-SES

students and their schools, according to McCoach et al. (2010). Kremer, Maynard, Polanin, Vaughn, and Sarteschi (2015) concluded that low-SES students desire to feel that they belong and that their basic needs are being addressed to perform their best academically.

Summary

The literature provided a clear understanding of the challenges presented to schools with a high percentage of low-SES students. Polidano, Hanel, and Buddelmeyer (2013) remarked that international research indicates that the school dropout rate is much greater for students from low-SES families with minimal educational aspirations and decreased reading ability. The need for the selected middle school, as well as similar school systems in the state, to have targeted resources to support low-income students is magnified by the literature. The research design of a qualitative case study and the approaches for collecting data for this project study are discussed in greater detail in Section 2.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The research study design was a qualitative case study that used document review and interviews of middle school RLA teachers of Grades 6 through 8. Additionally, interviews were conducted with assistant principals, the school nurse, and the school counselors at the middle school. The interviews helped to ascertain, holistically, unfavorable conditions of low-SES students and provide information to support them. The specific type of case study that was used was an instrumental case study. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), in a case study, the main process for assembling data is participant interviewing, focusing primarily on a particular organization such as an individual school. The motivation for choosing a qualitative case study was to increase understanding of the circumstances that may add to or hinder a teacher's and other school personnel's ability to effectively educate low-SES students for positive educational outcomes.

There are several types of research designs that may be used in performing qualitative research, but for this project study, a case study approach was the most appropriate method. "Case study research is a form of qualitative research that strives to uncover meaning, to explore processes, and to expand knowledge into and in-depth understanding of an individual, group, or situation" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 269). Other qualitative research methods may concentrate on specific cultural groups (e.g., ethnographic studies), build theory from the narrative data produced in the study, or

develop a theory that could be generalized to other settings (e.g., grounded theory approach).

Sampling Procedures and Methods

The sample and setting for the case study involved middle school RLA teachers and low-SES students in 6 through 8 grades. The designated school was the second largest middle school in the county and educated students from both urban and rural areas of the district. The middle school had a 51% low-SES student population, according to the WVDE (2014). The overall poverty percentage for the county of the selected middle school was at 22%, according to Kids Count (2012) national data. The middle school had a total student population of 681. There were a total of 65 staff members, comprising one principal, two assistant principals, two school counselors, 44 total teachers (both general education [GE] teachers, and special education [SE] teachers), as well as additional service personnel. The sampling practice employed for this study was purposeful sampling. According to Creswell (2012), purposeful sampling occurs when participants or sites are deliberately chosen by examiners in order to comprehend the central phenomenon. Specifically, typical case sampling was exercised to look at the unique traits of the low-SES population in the school.

Typical case sampling, according to Creswell (2012), includes selecting a sample of what would be termed typical or average for a particular phenomenon. In this particular case, the phenomenon was the effect that the high number of low-SES students had on whole-student learning for positive outcomes in the selected middle school. According to Creswell (2012), the main view or notion examined in qualitative research

is the central phenomenon. The primary reason that the selected middle school was chosen for the case study was because it was located in the most populated county in West Virginia and had a good mixture of urban and rural students, as well as a high number of low-SES students. The selected middle school provided a research setting potentially transferable to other West Virginia public middle schools across the state. The middle school was also considered a focus school under the ESEA waiver, which included having one of the identified ESEA subgroups, low-performing, low-SES students who scored below state targets in RLA on the WESTEST. The WESTEST scores for the selected middle school's low-SES subgroup in Grades 6, 7, and 8 in RLA for 2013-2014 school year were 32.8% proficiency, whereas the state average for Grades 6 through 8 for RLA was 37.8% proficiency, according to the WVDE (2014).

To begin the process of selecting subjects for a research study, I had to obtain permission from the school gatekeeper. Creswell (2009) noted that gatekeepers are important figures in the research process because they are the individuals who can grant admission to the study location and consent to the research request. The subjects for the case study consisted of two RLA teachers from each of Grades 6 through 8, two school counselors, two assistant principals, and the school nurse, for a total of 11 subjects. The teaching and school staff were selected from the population of staff available who had experiences with the said students and could therefore provide a range of perceptions about working with them.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University reviewed the proposal in its entirety. Once the Walden University IRB committee gave approval, I

began the study process by communicating with the pre-selected staff. The participants were informed that the information they provided was held in strict confidence and was only used for research purposes. In no case were their names or the name of the school or district revealed. Pseudonyms were provided for each of the interview participants to assist with providing confidentiality of participant responses. An individual letter from A-K was assigned to each of the 11 participants to identify the participant for research purposes only. The participants were asked to sign an informed consent form. The form explained the protection of their rights, as can be seen in Appendix B. According to Creswell (2012), informed consent guarantees participants specific rights, such as the ability to leave the study at any time without repercussions.

In addition, the participants were told that they would not receive any financial compensation for their participation. They were also given information about the background of me, the intent of the study, and the content and procedures for the interviews. Participants who agreed to take part in the qualitative study were afforded protection from harm. Assurance of protection from harm provided participants with the knowledge that they would not experience extreme physical pain or death, severe psychological stress, personal embarrassment or humiliation, or other influences that might unfavorably influence them in a substantial manner. Additionally, participants were informed that they would be asked to conduct member checking of information they provided during the course of the study. Creswell (2012) noted that ethical reporting and writing are based upon research that is conveyed truthfully, that is provided to

participants, that is not swayed by special interests, that is not plagiarized, and that does not fail to credit or cite contributing authors.

Data Collection Methods

The compilation of data for the case study involved interviews and review of documents. The school principal was first contacted to gain permission to conduct the research within the selected middle school. An invitation letter was provided to each potential participant via an email explaining that participants would also receive an informed consent document via email to review. The potential participants had the opportunity to review the informed consent for 3 days. After 3 days, the potential participants emailed me back to confirm that they had reviewed the informed consent. Participants then met with me for up to 10 minutes individually at the school at an agreed-upon time on the fourth school day to review and sign the informed consent if they still chose to participate in the case study. This meeting took place at the school in a private meeting area. The first data-gathering effort consisted of 30-minute maximum interviews with each of the 11 selected participants, who all agreed to participate. I took written notes during the interviews with each individual participant and then immediately reviewed and added to my notes at the conclusion of each completed interview. The qualitative interview involved me, as the researcher, asking general and open-ended questions in a quiet setting. The interviews were conducted in a private conference room provided by the school. The main interview type employed was one-on-one interviews during the teachers' individual planning times and other school personnel's free time, as provided by the school. The interview questions were written in an ethical manner to

avoid any researcher bias toward any particular group or individual. The interviews were not audio recorded at the request of the school principal. Once all of the interviews had been completed and documented by me as the researcher, I then reviewed the responses from all of the interviewees to develop themes from the emerging ideas. The same interview questions were used for all school personnel interviewed to look for similarities or differences in their answers and perspectives. Using the same interview questions for all participants interviewed assisted in providing the understanding each participant had in educating the whole low-SES student for positive outcomes in all settings. The following is a sample of the interview questions:

- What do you feel are RLA teachers' strengths when providing instruction for educating the whole student (academically, socially, and emotionally)?
- What, if anything, is unique about providing instruction to students of different socioeconomic backgrounds, as opposed to a homogeneous group of students?
- How are teachers supported in the RLA classroom to meet the instructional needs of the whole student academically? Socially? Emotionally?
- What teaching strategies do you use to meet the diverse needs of all students you are providing instruction and guidance to in your classroom?
- How do students provide feedback, and what feedback do students provide, to teachers on how they feel supported academically? Socially? Emotionally?
- What discipline challenges do you face as a teacher or school personnel with students from different socioeconomic backgrounds?

The final data collection method were reviewing existing documents. “Documents consist of public and private records that qualitative researchers obtain about a site or participants in a study, and they can include newspapers, minutes of meetings, official memos, records in the public domain, and archival material in libraries” (Creswell, 2012, p. 223). The public documents for this study included the school strategic plan, ESEA plan, and Local School Improvement Council (LSIC) meeting notes, which supplied a look at the teachers’ and other school personnel’s discussions of low-SES students’ behaviors, social interactions, and academic performance. School improvement plans reflected what the middle school was doing to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students, including subgroups such as low-SES students. Public records that included deidentified standardized WESTEST RLA test scores for the sixth through eighth grade students provided insight into the academic performance of all students in the selected middle school and the low-SES subgroup in particular. The WESTEST standardized test consisted of a CTB and WVDE custom-designed assessment for all West Virginia public school students to measure student proficiency on RLA, mathematics, science, and social studies in Grades 3 through 12. The WVDE’s content specialists worked with CTB’s research specialists and content experts to select items according to research specifications. The viable statistics, *p*-values (percentage of students who answered items correctly), point biserials (correlation of the quality of the item to the entire set of items), and fit (does the item fit the statistical mode) were considered in the selection of each item (WVDE, 2014). “Specification documents showing *p*-values, point biserials, biases and fit served as technical roadmaps for item

selection” (WVDE, 2014). This standardized test quantified a student’s levels of performance on clearly identified standards and objectives and skills. Student scores were founded on test questions that had been created and aligned to content standards and objectives. This collection of documents provided information about how school personnel were addressing the academic, social, and emotional needs of students for positive outcomes. The documents also supported triangulation of findings from all sources. The interviews and review of documents served to provide several sources of information to substantiate the overall theme.

Serving as the sole researcher for the study assisted me in gathering data and reporting on it in a naturalistic manner. There was no preexisting professional relationship between the school district and myself. I work for the West Virginia Department of Education and had no direct authority over the selected middle school or school district. My employment was separate from the research study being conducted, which was explained to the participants when they received information on me and the study background. The halo effect results when the original impression influences all of the ensuing interviews, making them less precise or informative, according to Lodico et al. (2010). Participants from the research study checked for accuracy of findings through the process of member checking. This involved participants reviewing preliminary findings for authentic themes and truthful interpretations by me. According to Creswell (2012), member checking is the procedure whereby a researcher has participants in a study check the accurateness of the account. The member checking process was performed at the conclusion of all of the interviews to ascertain whether the notes taken

by me accurately reflected the participant's answers. Each participant had the opportunity to review the responses after the data were written down and coded for development of common themes. If participants felt that there was a discrepancy, they shared this with me in a 10-minute review of their interview responses. I then made changes to more accurately reflect the thoughts and opinions of the participants and developed a report that is credible. None of the participants felt that any changes should be made to the notes taken during the interviews.

Data Analysis Methods

The overall themes from reviewing the qualitative case study interview data were categorized and logged. According to Creswell (2012), themes are comparable thoughts that are grouped together to form a major idea. The selected themes for the interview and study were ones that supported what I might have expected to find when conducting the study, as well as other themes that emerged from all responses from the different participants in the study. Data analyzed at the conclusion of the study at the school level were in the form of positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes. For positive academic outcomes for reading, there was a positive difference in scale scores from one testing period to the next on the standardized state assessment. Positive social outcomes for low-SES students were measured by identifying the average number of disciplinary referrals for failure to follow school rules and expectations, as compared to the average for students of higher economic status for the middle school. Positive student emotional outcomes were measured by the number of referrals to the school counselor(s) for low-SES students as compared to all students for the middle school over the course of a

school year. The themes and the theoretical frameworks of educating the whole student assisted in crafting qualitative results for the research study. Conceptual frameworks provided categories such as *whole student education* and *life experiences* that coincided with emerging themes from the data.

The appropriate review of the research questions for this study provided the proper level of detail and description of the interview responses built around addressing the research questions. Interview responses were coded to assist in developing broader themes. The coding process was used to bring meaning from textual data, identify segments with codes, check codes for similarity and redundancy, and break down these codes into broad themes, according to Creswell (2012). Selected themes help in creating a portrait of individuals' thoughts and behaviors encapsulated in the interview process, according to Creswell (2012). The themes should clearly articulate answers to the interview questions provided by the subjects. Themes from the interviews showed that teachers and school personnel believe that low-SES students come to school at an academic and social disadvantage due to their lack of real-life experiences. Chan (2012) noted that low-SES students participate far less in real-life learning opportunities compared to high-SES students and struggle for deeper understanding and social acceptance in the classroom setting because of this lack of exposure. There were themes of low-SES students struggling to follow classroom rules and expectations. McLaughlin et al. (2012) noted that low-SES students' perceptions of social status and past experiences were strongly related to their ability to follow social norms and expectations, such as in a classroom setting. Themes from the data analysis were merged to formulate a

more specific theme to address issues recognized in the research questions, according to Lodico et al. (2010). The theme or themes provided tentative accounts of recurring concepts underlying what had been noted during the research.

To ensure the accuracy and credibility of data, triangulation was utilized to help in validating findings. Triangulation according to Creswell (2012), was the procedure of substantiating evidence from several individuals, types of data, or approaches of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative data. Triangulation for the case study came in the form of the interview responses from several participants and the review of documents, such as the school improvement plan and minutes from the school leadership team.

I worked to avoid personal bias during the collection of qualitative data. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), data attained from a study must bear the weight of any interpretation therefore, the researcher has to tackle his own opinions and prejudices with the data. This type of personal bias check practice occurred when gathering and reviewing data accumulated during the course of the study. Member checking was utilized for control of bias, by requiring participants to review the accuracy of their interview responses. Participants reviewed responses and provided feedback to me on the accuracy of my notes. My personal bias inclined me to believe there were significant difficulties that teachers and school personnel faced with educating the whole low SES student for positive outcomes. Being aware of this personal bias helped me rely strictly on data, rather than my own personal opinions or thoughts. Understanding my

biases also assisted in asking objective and non-influential interview questions for objective and truthful participant answers.

As the sole researcher for the research study I designed interview questions that were not leading or slanted toward a particular view point about the challenges of educating low SES students. The background knowledge I have had as an educator led me to believe there were extreme difficulties and challenges that go along with educating low SES for positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes. However, I relied on data obtained from the interviews and document reviews to provide the final say on what the challenges are for educating low SES students for positive outcomes and not my own opinions or perceptions. The key purpose of the research was to increase knowledge and understanding about the setting and not to pass judgment.

Data Analysis Results

Creswell (2012) noted the coding is a means to build themes from feedback from participants. Notes were taken during individual interviews of the 11 participants. Then additional notes were added for clarity at the conclusion of individual interviews. The coding process involved color coding consistent terms or phrases for each of the six interview questions and responses for the 11 participants. The identified phrases and words permitted analyzing data in a more uniformed approach.

The type of case study utilized for this research was an instrumental case study because it looked at the intersections among teaching, school counselors, the school nurse, and school administration professionals in improving educating for the whole low SES student for better educational outcomes. An instrumental case study is developed to

promote an understanding of specific issues according to Merriam (2002). There was one central phenomenon researched for this study, but many participants' thoughts and viewpoints were considered. I decided to document and analyze data by hand and chose not to use any electronic software program.

A limitation of this case study was that there were only 11 subjects interviewed from a specific school; therefore, the results may not be generalized to other similar settings. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2011) limitations are the aspects in a research study that might influence the outcome and are outside of the researcher's manipulation. To assure credibility member checking was used, with participants assuring documentation of their words and thoughts were correct. Triangulation was used by reviewing evidence in the form of public documents including; school strategic plan, ESEA plan, and Local School Improvement Councils (LSIC) meeting notes that support the participant interview question responses.

Findings

Identify what potential challenges the selected middle school's high number of low SES students has on the school's ability to educate the whole student for positive educational outcomes was the purpose of this qualitative research case study. "The purpose statement is a statement that advances the overall direction or focus for the study" (Creswell, 2012, p. 110).

A narrative discussion was utilized to communicate the results of this particular case study. "A narrative discussion is a written passage in a qualitative study in which authors summarize, in detail the findings from their data analysis" (Creswell, 2012, p.

254). The narrative analysis was accomplished by reporting interconnecting themes derived from the coding of the interview responses from the subject. The major themes and quotes gleaned from the interview supported the primary research questions and problem statement for the case study. There was evidence to support challenges that are unique to providing an education for the whole low SES student for positive outcomes. All 11 participants provided very similar responses to the interview questions even though participants included RLA teachers (Grades 6 through 8) and other school professionals (school counselors, school assistant principals, and school nurse) with different educational roles for low SES students. To provide a thorough analysis of identified themes and common quotes for each of the research questions (RQ) a summary was provided. The four major themes included 1) student focused instruction, 2) challenges to instructing low SES students, 3) supports needed to instruct low SES students, and 4) discipline challenges for low SES students.

Theme 1: Student-Focused Instruction

RQ1: What strategies do RLA teachers use to address the academic, social and emotional needs of their low-SES students? All participants discussed how classroom instructions had to be student focused or student-centered to reach all students effectively, including low SES students. Lessons were designed to encourage student expression and input. Try to incorporate lessons that are community-based learning or experimental learning. Co-Teaching has been utilized to provide more individualized or specialized instruction to individual students. Participant H commented, “We as teachers

need to encourage experiential learning, develop personal relationships and consider students feelings and aspirations.

RQ2: Why and how do teachers perceive these strategies as being effective?

RLA teachers and other school professional participants noted that the only way to reach individual student needs was to provide instruction that is student-centered. Several participants admitted that some of the teachers struggled with being student-focused in their instruction and are still teacher centered/focused. All participants acknowledged that community-based learning or experiential learning was very beneficial to low SES students. However, experiential learning has been a small but growing part of their instruction. All participants noted that co-teaching was done very poorly in their school, because of staff turnover, poor scheduling, and lacking of common planning time. Participant K stated, “When providing instruction for educating the whole student, teachers need to include the ability to produce a sense of safety, challenges, positive relationships between adults and students; and to focus on individual student-centered learning and development.”

Georges and Pallas (2010) identified family background of low SES students as having a strong influence on their lack of basic mathematical skills when beginning kindergarten and consequently having more difficulty progressing onto advanced mathematical skills compared to their average SES peers. Low SES students required more experienced based learning opportunities as noted by participants, to provide them with real life perspectives to apply to educational lessons. Strachan (2015) observed that

higher SES students with more life experiences provided more insight on read-aloud topics than did their low SES peers with limited life experiences.

Theme 2: Challenges in Instructing Low-SES Students

RQ3: What challenges do RLA teachers face when attempting to teach low SES students in a holistic fashion (i.e., academically, socially and emotionally)?

School professional personnel (assistant principals, school counselors, and school nurse) and RLA teachers had similar opinions and viewpoints about the challenges faced with educating low SES students. They felt low SES students are more socially withdrawn and isolated compared to students of higher socio-economic status. Low SES students have had fewer life experiences and prior educational related knowledge than a student from higher SES. Low SES students have had very little parent support at home or for school related activities. “Students from low SES backgrounds sometimes have limited experiences, limited vocabulary, and may set their expectations (academic) lower than their higher SES peers,” according to Participant J.

RQ4: Why do the RLA teachers perceive these challenges as barriers to teaching low SES students?

RLA teachers and professional school personnel perceive these challenges as huge barriers to effectively educating low SES students. Participant I stated, “ We need parent involvement and support regardless of the low SES student challenges, without the support we make little to no gain.” Low SES students seem to be more tactile or kinesthetic learners, and this requires more resources in the classroom and more preparation for teacher lessons, according to teachers and school personnel. Low SES students struggled with expressing their emotions in an acceptable manner.

RQ5: What suggestions do the RLA teachers offer to address the challenges of meeting the needs of these students? Suggestions that RLA teachers had for addressing the challenges of educating low SES students for positive outcomes included lessons that were personalized or tailored toward each student's individual needs. Teachers of low SES students should use a curriculum, that is differentiated and scaffold to reach all students instructional needs and help them grow socially and emotionally. Co-Teaching is recommended by RLA teachers for low SES students, so two teachers may use their expertise to provide a better education for all students in their classrooms. Participant D stated, "We need to meet students where they are academically and emotionally and help them grow through student centered/focused learning and instruction."

Acar (2015) explained that low SES students should receive instruction that is differentiated and personalized for increased achievement, as opposed to traditional instruction that is not designed to meet individual student needs. The participant responses supported that instruction should be student centered/focused and not teacher centered/focused. The student centered approach for personalized instruction should be implemented and endorsed by all school staff to meet the diverse needs of low SES students according to the research findings.

Theme 3: Supports Needed to Effectively Instruct Low-SES Students

RQ6: What additional supports do RLA teachers perceive they need to meet successfully low SES students' needs academically, socially, and emotionally?

Supports needed to meet the needs of low SES students involved having more character

education in the classrooms from the school counselors according to teachers and school administrators. Increased project and community-based learning opportunities for low SES students. Updated professional development on co-teaching and differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs low SES students. Additional technology in the classrooms and updated training on technology utilization. Low SES students should have more opportunities to share how they are feeling with teachers, counselors, and administrators. Teachers want more input from school counselors, the school nurse, and school administrators on some of the external challenges individual low SES students endure or face in their lives. Participant G commented “Teachers and other school personnel must communicate better about the individual low SES student needs to all staff involved with educating the student.” More face to face time talking to parents/guardians of low SES students.

Participant F said,

Teachers should be provided the most up to date professional learning training on co-teaching, differentiated instruction, project based learning (PBL) and the best use of technology in the classroom to effectively meet the educational needs of low SES students.

RQ7: How are the perceptions of the non-RLA staff similar to and different from the RLA teachers’ perceptions as related to their strategies, challenges, and needed supports? Some of the perceptions of low SES students and their needs that are different for non-RLA staff is that low SES student’s teachers should to take more time to get to know their students on a personal level. Participant B stated, “Teachers are not

approachable to all students, and low SES students feel afraid to talk with most of their teachers.” Teachers should have better classroom management of all students including low SES students. Low SES students are just as capable as higher SES students with minimal additional supports according to non-RLA staff. Non-RLA staff agree with RLA teachers on the majority of challenges, needs, and assistance needed to deliver an effective education for the whole low SES student.

RQ8: How do you as school personnel perceive that low-SES students are supported for optimal academic, social, and emotional success? Low SES students have access to character education provided in the classroom by school counselors on a periodic basis. Co-Teaching is provided to support the diverse learning needs of all students, including low SES students. Low SES students receive health information and education from the school nurse in the classroom setting periodically. “Low SES students need to feel supported in all areas academically, socially, and emotionally within the classroom to feel safe and learn at their optimal level” according to Participant C.

Forte (2015) noticed that effective collaboration is realized when all participants have an active voice and share responsibility for accomplishing a common agreed upon goal. Collaboration among all the staff that work with an individual low SES student is necessary to understand the specific challenges that student is encountering, as displayed in the findings. The educational staff involved with a low SES student should assist with identify and providing the required resources to foster success and minimize failure.

Theme 4: Discipline Challenges for Low-SES Students

RQ9: What differences are there for low-SES students compared to higher SES students with discipline referrals or infractions? Teachers and other school personnel (assistant principals, school counselors, and school nurse) were in agreement on the differences of low SES students compared to higher SES students. Low SES students struggled to follow rules and have more attention getting/seeking behaviors than their higher SES peers. Emotional outbursts were more common for low SES students compared to higher SES students, according to RLA teachers and school personnel. Understanding appropriate expression of emotions or how to act in social settings has been a major struggle for low SES students as noted in the interview responses. “Educators should always consider the child’s background because he/she may not know how to behave in certain social settings” according to Participant E. OSS is not an effective means of discipline for low SES students because their parents do not care if they are missing school as noted by teachers and school personnel. Participant D stated, “In my opinion low SES students need help rather than being punished and sent home with little to no supervision or access to their educational needs.” Participant A noted, “Low SES students tend to have more discipline issues and less family support or guidance.”

Griffin and Hu (2015) noted that low SES backgrounds are far less likely to apply for post-secondary school because of a lack of believe in their academic, social, and emotional abilities. Discipline issues with low SES students as depicted by participant responses goes hand-in-hand with their self-doubt and the minimal parental support and

modeling they have experienced. The research findings did reinforce the demand for educators to deliver academic, social, and emotional supports and resources necessitated for low SES students to be successful and meet societal norms and expectations.

Public Document Review

The public document review for the case study included the school strategic plan for the 2015-2016 school year, the ESEA Plan for the 2015-2016 school year, and the minutes from an LSIC meeting. The public documents utilized for the case study were all provided to me by the middle school principal. The strategic plan for the middle school has input from all administrators and teachers. The main focus of the plan was increasing standardized test scores in RLA for the low SES student subgroup in middle school. To achieve this goal more, PBL is being incorporated into the RLA curriculum. This is to assist in addressing the lack of life experiences that the majority of the low SES students have encountered. The requirement for additional PBL as part of the strategic plan goes along with the interview responses participants provided for RQ 2 and RQ 6 that addressed the reason it is more difficult to educate low SES students and the additional resources needed to effectively educate low SES students. The strategic plan also addressed the necessity for classroom instruction to be personalized and student focused. Teachers and school personnel agreed in their response to RQ 4 that strategies used to meet the academic needs of all low SES students, must be student-focused/centered and not teacher focused/centered and address the whole student, academically, emotionally, and socially.

The middle school ESEA Plan for the 2015-2016 school year had a similar but more specific focus on the low SES student subgroup than the school strategic plan. The low SES subgroups poor RLA scores on the state WESTEST is what contributed to the middle school being identified as a Focus School. This is due to the large gap in WESTEST scores between students of higher SES students and low SES at the selected middle school. Areas of concern identified in ESEA plan requiring attention were more instructional support and professional development for PBL, co-teaching, differentiated instruction, and technology utilization. The areas requiring improvement in the ESEA Plan support the comments from participants on RQ 1, RQ 3, RQ 5, RQ 6, RQ 7, and RQ 8 regarding how RLA teachers are supported in the classroom and what additional supports they need to meet the instructional needs of educating the whole low SES student for positive outcomes. Teachers and school personnel commented that co-teaching, PBL/community-based learning, and differentiated instruction have been helpful in educating the whole low SES student but continual, and updated training is essential.

The ESEA Plan also recognizes that communication about the academic needs of low SES students among teachers, school administrators, school counselors, and the school nurse is poor and must improve. This part of the ESEA Plan supports participant responses to RQ 6 about the additional supports needed for positive educational outcomes for low SES students. The high number of discipline referrals for low SES students were acknowledged as another area of concern as part of the ESEA Plan. Participant responses for RQ 9, considering if there is a difference between the number of discipline referrals

for low SES students and higher SES students, supported the ESEA concern for the high number of low SES discipline referrals. Participants remarked that low SES students have had a high number of discipline referrals and emotional outbursts compared to their higher SES peers.

The final piece of public documentation reviewed for the case study was the minutes of the middle school LSIC meeting. Many issues were discussed in the LSIC meeting about the middle school, with an emphasis on low SES students and discipline. It was recommended during the LSIC meeting that teachers and school administrators find alternatives to OSS for low SES students. Some alternative methods mentioned instead of OSS for low SES disciplinary infractions, were to refer students to the school counselors and better classroom management training for teachers. The ideas presented in the LSIC meeting about how to better handle low SES disciplinary issues reinforces the participant responses to RQ 9. Participant responses to RQ 9 “what differences are there for low SES students compared to higher socio-economic students with discipline referrals or infractions”; included OSS has not been an effective method of discipline for low SES students and helping educate low SES student on how to cope more appropriately with their emotions and act in social settings is vital.

The interview and document review findings supported the idea that educators feel that educating low SES students is a greater challenge compared to higher SES students. Collaboration of educational staff to clearly identify and provide the appropriate resources for low SES students to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally was a common theme throughout the research findings. Peterson, DeCato, and Kolb (2015)

noted that for low SES students to acquire and improve lifelong learning skills, experiential learning and self-awareness should be part of the student's holistic educational process.

Conclusion

The methodology section depicted how data were collected, analyzed, and reported for this particular case study. The procedure for gathering and storing data were communicated and explained. A thorough narrative reported and interpreted the data collected. The emergent themes were identified, and the answers to the nine corresponding research questions were categorized. Public documentation reviewed for the case study was acknowledged and discussed. The combination of participant responses and the review of public documentation provided triangulation of the results for the case study.

The findings, themes, and documentation all indicated that there is an obvious difference to educating the whole low SES student academically, socially, and emotionally for positive outcomes. Participants agreed that poor communication among staff on the needs of low SES students was a major barrier for positive educational outcomes. There was agreement with participants that resources were available to them for educating low SES students, but these resources were not enough to address the whole student, especially socially and emotionally. Section 3 of this study describes the project selected to address the findings and results. Section 4 supplied the proposed project's strong points and weaknesses and offered suggestions for approaching the problem in an alternative fashion.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The selected project to address the results of this case study and support the theoretical frameworks of experiential and humanistic theories applied to this research was in the form of professional development (PD) and implementation of an at-risk survey. The PD will take place at the middle school during 3 consecutive days of training to instruct teachers and other school personnel (administrators, school counselors, school nurse) on understanding the whole low-SES student and the use of the at-risk survey. The at-risk survey will assist in determining the unique needs of identified low-SES students. The at-risk survey was designed to ascertain the specific needs of low-SES students academically, socially, and emotionally at the selected middle school.

The at-risk survey and PD training, as seen in Appendix A, will support the selected middle school and other schools in using the resources available in their district in a more productive manner to support the needs of the whole low-SES student. The ability of schools to pinpoint the particular needs of students should help with furthering program enhancements and cost savings. The use of the at-risk survey and PD training could improve educational outcomes for all low-SES students and bring about positive social change in the school, school district, and beyond.

Description and Goals

As I looked at the themes that emerged from data collected for this case study, a clear project design surfaced. The main themes included the need to educate the whole low-SES student by identifying students' individual needs and providing corrective

resources to support those diverse needs. According to Slade and Griffith (2013), educating a whole child includes addressing the social, emotional, and academic improvement of students. I created a 3 day professional development training for teachers, counselors, assistant principals, and the school nurse on how to identify the whole low-SES student and assess the individual needs students have academically, socially, and emotionally.

The 3 day PD will focus on how to complete the at-risk survey and will walk each staff person through completing a mock survey to review as a group to check for understanding and ease of use. PowerPoint presentations will be completed to inform school personnel on what a low-SES student is and what the “whole student” encompasses. Handouts will be provided to support the information supplied in the presentations, and time to discuss materials and answer questions will be afforded to the participants. The PD will explain the referral process for the at-risk survey, along with how the school counselor will coordinate the appropriate school staff team to address the identified needs of each low-SES student referred. The main goal or purpose of the training is for teachers, school counselors, assistant principals, and the school nurse to identify low-SES students and to understand and implement an at-risk survey to identify and meet the needs of the whole low-SES student academically, socially, and emotionally. When academic institutions concentrate on the whole student, they offer an advantage not only to students, but also to the community in which they live, according to Roffey (2015).

Review of the Literature

Once all data collection occurred from the individual interviews and the public document review, an additional literature review was completed to support the themes from case study results and support the PD project. The PD project was constructed from collected research data and from the literature review, which reinforced the results of the case study. I found current peer-reviewed sources to assist in formulating the PD project, the focus of which is understanding and implementing an at-risk survey to meet the needs of the whole low-SES student academically, socially, and emotionally, by using the Walden University online research library. The Walden Library databases used included SAGE, ERIC, Education Research Complete, and Dissertations & Theses. The search terms used for finding current sources were as follows: *holistic education, low SES, student-centered education, staff collaboration, and whole student.*

Rationale for the Project Genre

The professional development/training model was the premier method for using study results to assist in finding solutions for educating the whole low-SES student for positive educational outcomes. Cubero and Perez (2013) noted that the actions and instruction conducted in a school are designed to promote a student's development as a whole. The PD will supply teachers, school counselors, assistant principals, and the school nurse with background knowledge to categorize the aspects of what is meant by the whole low-SES student. Eddy (2012) recognized that schools can use PD to increase staff competence in educating the whole student with a holistic approach that involves addressing all education areas academically, socially, and emotionally.

There were many reasons for identifying PD as the best project structure for addressing the problems or issues that teachers, counselors, administrators, and school nurses face in educating the whole low-SES student for optimal educational outcomes. Johnson and McCallen (2014) implied that using training and PD for teachers and other school personnel on educating the whole student with a uniform and productive message will have a positive and lasting impact for all students. The 3 day PD should provide teachers, administrators, school counselors, and the school nurse(s) with a consistent and constructive message on how to identify and address the individual needs of the whole low-SES student.

School administrators can focus on the whole student in PD by creating a strong commitment and relationship between educators and students for true success, according to Nitecki (2012). The PD format will allow for communication and training of all school staff who furnish educational services to the whole low-SES student, thus promoting a deeper understanding of the topic and professional collaboration. The PD will ensure that each staff person consistently and objectively identifies the whole low-SES, at-risk student and what individual needs may be unmet for that student. According to Yuksel (2013), low-SES students see themselves as being less capable in the areas of intellect, emotional stability, and social acceptance. Webster (2013) commented that education tackles the implications and intention of living a meaningful and whole life. The PD will supply all participants with current information and documentation via a PowerPoint presentation and handouts on the importance of student-centered learning and parent

expectations of low-SES students. Involved parents are critical to the healthy growth and development of all at-risk students, according to Reyes and Elias (2011).

The central objective in conducting this case study was to determine whether there were substantial challenges in educating the whole low-SES student and what resources could help in addressing these issues. Data showed that teachers, school administrators, school counselors, and the school nurse identified many obstacles to effectively educating the whole low-SES student. A consistent theme in the findings showed that teachers, administrators, counselors, and the school nurse all felt that communication among staff about the needs of the low-SES student was a major barrier. The results also revealed that teachers, school administrators, school counselors, and the school nurse believed that there was a major need for a way to identify and share the individual needs of the whole low-SES student with all staff working with the student. Darrow (2014) noted that school counselors, teachers, administrators, and parents must assist students from low-SES backgrounds by training them to acquire proper levels of emotional development and self-worth compared to their higher SES peers. The PD will offer teachers, school administrators, counselors, and the school nurse a more informed way to understand what a whole low-SES student encompasses and the means to attend collectively to such students' individual needs.

Rationale for Content of the Project

The content developed for the project resulted from the recognized demand for a better way for teachers, school administrators, school counselors, and the school nurse(s) to identify and provide the appropriate supports for the individual low-SES student.

Zhang and Wu (2012) explained that observing the instructing/learning process of low-SES students through a holistic view enables a broader understanding of the classroom and the collaboration between teacher and student, presenting the instructor occasions to increase the internal growth and social awareness of the low-SES student. Peckover, Vasquez, Van Housen, Saunders, and White (2013) acknowledged that school counselors need more PD and training in performing at-risk assessments to competently identify the needs of at-risk students.

The PD structure will furnish teachers, assistant principals, school counselors, and the school nurse with knowledge to increase self-awareness, develop content understanding, contribute during shared learning experiences, and ultimately evaluate the PD. The PD agenda and activities will focus on the goals and objectives of the project. Those objectives include providing all participants with information on how to identify the whole low-SES student and assess the individual needs that such students have academically, socially, and emotionally, as well as formulate a plan to address those identified needs. Four major themes emerged from the data, which determined the outline of the activities provided in the PD:

- Theme 1: Student-focused instruction
- Theme 2: Challenges in instructing low-SES students
- Theme 3: Supports needed to effectively instruct low-SES students
- Theme 4: Discipline challenges for low-SES students

Theme 1: Student-Focused Instruction

Data from interview questions and responses provided by participants consistently showed that in order for education to be useful for low-SES students, instruction should be student-centered, and include community-based learning. Olszewski and Clarenbach (2014) commented that it is essential to educate teachers and other educators to recognize and afford student-centered educational occasions to meet the needs of all students in their schools, including low-SES students and high-achieving students. Children have distinctive backgrounds and real-life experiences, so it is essential that public schools expose low-SES students to community-based learning to give them a reference to gain deeper meaning, according to Fried (2013).

Day 3 of the PD will include a training session dedicated to student-centered learning, in which any questions staff have about implementing quality student-centered learning in their school will be answered. There will also be discussion on community-based learning and experiential learning for low-SES students with limited life experiences. Service-learning or community-based learning provides low-SES students with real-life learning experiences and fosters a connection between education and community awareness, according to Andrews (2011). How one perceives a community from the outside may not be how the community is viewed by those living in it every day, according to Mackenzie (2011). Educators' perceptions of what students may know from their individual upbringing before they enter school may not coincide with reality.

Theme 2: Challenges in Instructing Low-SES Students

Participants from the research study specified in their interview responses that among the biggest challenges in instructing low-SES students are fully understanding what the whole low-SES student is and gaining parent involvement for at-risk students. To educate the whole student is to direct the student academically, socially, and emotionally as an accumulation of parts in a holistic fashion, according to Forbes (2003). Tedin and Weiher (2011) explained that parents who were active in their community tended to be more involved in their schools and that the parents of low-SES students lack involvement in both areas. Mackey and Mackey (2012) clarified that fathers make vital contributions to family dynamics and are critical to the healthy development of children. The school counselor is the logical school staff person to foster communication between parents and school personnel, as will be explained in the PD. Schaefer and Rivera (2014) observed that ownership and management inside the school were essential for program application, growth, and sustainability.

Day 1 of the PD will involve a keynote session (“What Is the Whole Student?”), along with Breakout Session 1 (“Educating the Whole Low-SES Student”) and Breakout Session 2 (“How to Identify a Low-SES Student”). Those individual PD sessions will include PowerPoint presentations and handouts that the participants will review with the presenter for a full understanding of the content. Day 3 of the PD will incorporate a session on reviewing and discussing a PowerPoint/handout on social class and parent expectations. Kesson (2011) noted that holistic education, when properly implemented, challenges students academically, and frees them to express and confront their inner

world and conflicts. Johnson and McCallen (2014) recognized that it is important to address low-SES students' home lives, classrooms, schools, and communities, as these help to support and shape their lives.

Theme 3: Supports Needed to Effectively Instruct Low-SES Students

Participants in the case study indicated in their interview questions and responses that many needs were addressed to support effective instruction of low-SES students. These responses included more PD in coteaching, differentiated instruction, better use of technology, and PBL. The answer that teachers, school principals, school counselors, and the school nurse agreed upon for supports required for successful instruction of low-SES students involved better identification of low-SES students' needs and communication of those needs to all school personnel providing educational services to the students. Brown, Bushfield, O'Shea, and Sibthorpe (2011) commented that developing communication among educators, students, and parents is critical for creating effective relationships and identifying the individual needs of each student. Faber (2012) noted that pupils and teachers both need to feel safe and encouraged to express their diverse opinions. Students who are well-rounded acquire social skills through cotaught classes and by building social connections through participation in school-sponsored extracurricular activities, according to MacAllister and Thorburn (2014).

The PD will give participants a useful tool in the newly created at-risk survey to identify the individual needs of the low-SES student. The school counselor(s) will be acknowledged through the PD as the clear leader(s) in reviewing and collaboratively organizing a plan to meet the needs of the low-SES student. School counselors

collaborate with parents, students, and school personnel, making them the ideal leaders for coordinated efforts for the betterment of all students, according to Atici (2014).

Having the school counselor(s) take the lead in collecting, reviewing, and facilitating a collaborative plan to meet the needs of low-SES students will lead to improved student academic outcomes.

On Day 2 of the PD, participants will receive training on what the at-risk survey entails and how to administer the survey. The PD will include training on who may complete the at-risk survey and which staff are responsible for collecting and evaluating the completed survey. For educators, the need to understand the diverse ways in which students learn and to address those individual needs for optimal learning to occur is critical, according to Lawrence (2012).

The school counselors will be the staff persons responsible for collecting the at-risk surveys and then setting up a plan to meet the identified needs of the low-SES student(s). Stanley (2012) acknowledged that the school counselor is in the ideal position to take the lead in the formulation of one coordinated plan to address the identified needs of students by consulting with teachers, school administrators, school nurses, and students' parents. On Day 2, the PD will enable all participants to complete a mock at-risk survey, with fictitious student demographic information provided, for a full understanding of how to complete the survey and glean useful information from the completed tool. Black (2011) acknowledged that leaders in education should increase educators' ability to learn new, innovative instructional techniques and not stifle their ongoing quest for knowledge.

Theme 4: Discipline Challenges for Low-SES Students

The teachers, assistant principals, school counselors, and the school nurse that participated in the interviews for the case study all agreed that low SES students struggle to express their emotions appropriately. All the interview participants expressed that they did not feel that punishment was always the most useful way to handle the emotional outbursts of low SES students and that identifying other positive alternatives were more supportive of the student. Holtzapple (2011) has found that positive behavior support programs improve pro-social competencies and decrease negative behaviors in students by increasing positive relationships between teachers and students.

The Low Socioeconomic Status (SES) Influence on the Whole Student for Positive Academic, Social, and Emotional Outcomes PD will attend to the concerns described by the research participants. The PD will include the Day 1 session understanding the whole low SES student and the social and emotional challenges they face. The Day 2 training will focus on the at-risk survey and how it assists school personnel in identifying the academic, social, and emotional needs of the low SES student. Cullen (2013) pointed out that school-based at-risk surveys/assessments and programs have been effective in reducing social fears in students.

The at-risk survey will look at items such as the number of discipline referrals made to school administrators and referrals sent to the school counselor(s) for social or emotional issues. Reviewing the whole child in the form of the at-risk survey will look at addressing current emotional or discipline issues, but more importantly, look at ways to proactively deal with student needs that could potentially lead to more emotional or

discipline issues. Snyder, Vuchinich, Acock, Washburn, and Flay (2012) acknowledged that successful schools possess a safe setting and culture, participation and fulfillment between students and staff, on-going school enhancement, honest and encouraged communication, quality learning, and shared leadership and responsibility. When students learn from teachers and other school personnel that they may choose how to follow their happiness, self-awareness has taken place, and a brighter future is attainable, according to O'Brien (2013).

Implementation

Needed Resources, Existing Supports, and Potential Barriers

The support of the school administration, teachers, school counselors, and school nurse will be imperative to the implementation and overall success of this project. The 3 day PD will be conducted in the school library to provide adequate space for teachers, school administrators, school counselors, and the school nurse. Having the technology to be reliable will be a needed resource in the form of a working computer and projector for the PD power point presentations. Internet access will be an additional resource used by the presenter and participants to look up the whole low SES resources that will be included in the power point presentation on day three. One barrier that may arise is supplying the appropriate bandwidth for access to the internet for all the participants taking part in the PD. The school technology integration specialist (TIS) should be able to resolve the internet connection issue for all PD attendees. There is also the fear with having all the appropriate school staff attend the PD training. However, the school principal is planning to assist with teachers, school counselors, assistant principals, and

the school nurse attending the 3 day PD over the summer faculty days in July 2016.

Conducting the PD in the summer will assist teachers and other school personnel in not missing instructional time during the school year. The school counselors will help play a vital role in promoting the at-risk survey and PD training for school personnel.

Timetable

The implementation of the project will occur in the summer of 2016. For successful implementation of the project, several steps were followed.

1. I will hold a meeting with the school principal to go over the details of the training and to gain approval to perform the PD in June 2016.
2. After receiving approval from the school principal to conduct the PD, I will contact the leadership team member at the school responsible for PD. We will discuss the agenda and content for the PD. (June 2016)
3. I will contact the school TIS to make sure the site for the training has the technology capabilities to provide the PD training. (June 2016)
4. I will meet with the school principal to secure the site for the PD and for the school principal to assist with presenting portions of the PD. (June 2016)
5. The school leadership team member and I will inform all the school personnel of the three-day PD scheduled for July 19, 20, and 21, 2016. (June 2016)
6. I will conduct the PD training during July 19, 20, and 21, 2016. (July 2016)

Roles and Responsibilities

I will be the primary presenter and planner responsible for executing and facilitating the PD to all the participants. The school principal will assist in presenting

parts of the PD and respond to participant questions. The middle school will supply the space to conduct the training (school media center), projector for power point presentations, and internet for all the participants and presenter(s). The school TIS will assist in providing additional internet bandwidth, if needed, so all participants and presenters would have access to the internet. I will provide all the handouts and resource materials for the PD. The school administrator will assist me in scheduling the days of the three day PD to avoid scheduling conflicts with other training. The school principal will also be instrumental in notifying all the participants about the time and dates of the 3 day PD.

Project Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan for the project shall include a formative evaluation to judge the value of the PD at the conclusion of the PD activities. The primary focus of the evaluation will look at the outcome of the PD and the PD's perceived value to the participants of the middle school. The evaluation will mainly glean participant feedback on the PD workshop content, design, the effectiveness of the facilitator, the results of the workshop will be beneficial to the participant's profession, and how to improve the delivery or content of the PD. The PD evaluation form, created by me, located in Appendix A will provide participants an instrument to rate different components of the PD in a positive or negative manner and to provide written responses on how to improve the PD for future use. The results of the completed evaluations will be used to determine what areas of the PD project should be enhanced or adapted to be more useful to the participants.

Justification

The use of the formative evaluation will aid in pinpointing the positives and negatives for the project and PD training. The completed project evaluations will provide feedback from the participants showing that the PD supplied the information and tools needed for school personnel to educate the whole low SES student for positive educational outcomes. Germaine, Barton, and Bustillos, (2013) noted that formative evaluations are applicable when educators see the reason for the PD when results and training are in agreement, and when the procedure is introspective. The evaluation outcomes should contribute in offering additional valuable PD throughout the school year. The project evaluation will provide beneficial formative results to stakeholders and foster on-going effective PD. The relevant feedback will be the reasons for the utilization of a formative evaluation for my project study.

Overall Goals

The central goal of the project formative evaluation will be to use participant suggestions and comments to upgrade the PD for future training. The evaluations should supply the participant's opinions about the workshop content, design, the effectiveness of the facilitator, and the results of the workshop will be beneficial to the participant's profession, and how to improve the delivery or content of the PD. Future training will also provide the opinions of different participants for additional enhancements for the PD.

Key Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders for the evaluation will be middle school teachers, assistant principals, school counselors, and the school nurse. These stakeholders encompass the school personnel that provide direct instruction to low SES students and will be applying what they learned from the PD in their profession. The input from the new participants will enrich the additional PD training so other school personnel may improve educational outcomes for low SES students. The school principal will be a key stakeholder in the evaluation process, as well, because of assisting in the PD training. The information obtained from the evaluations will better prepare the principal to assist in additional PD training.

Social Change Implications

The success of any school begins with the ability of teachers to instruct all students successfully for positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes. All students include low SES students who have fewer life experiences than their higher SES peers and less resource at their access to additional learning opportunities in their homes. Gilmore (2011) noted that teachers endorsing three fundamental attributes in low SES students including originality, self-assurance, and communications skills will enable them to connect with persons from diverse societies, upbringings, beliefs, and philosophies.

The social change implications of conducting this project study will benefit students who may be recipients of improved and expanded resources at the local middle school, and potential benefits for other middle schools with similar needs in the state of West Virginia, the United States, and worldwide. McCabe (2011) noted that many

countries educational systems supply a brand of instruction that fits several, or the majority, but not every student and they need to find ways to reach all students unique needs. The ability of schools to potentially pinpoint the particular needs of students should help with furthering program enhancements and cost savings.

The utilization of the at-risk survey and PD training should improve educational outcomes for all low SES students and bring about positive social change in the school, school district, and state. The newly developed at-risk survey and PD training for this project study should assist other schools to find better utilization of their resources and save funds to support the needs of the whole low SES student. Interaction and cooperation between parents, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel are crucial components in forecasting the success of individual low SES students and their schools, according to McCoach et al. (2010).

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

This section contains reflections on the project, a PD training generated as a product of a need that materialized from the research and project, as well as the knowledge I gained as a researcher and project developer. The reflection contains a description of the project's strengths; presents suggestions for alternative solutions to the local problem; addresses project development and evaluation, scholarship, leadership, and change; and contains my self-assessment as a competent project developer. This section ends with a discussion of the influence the project may have in promoting positive social change, along with propositions for future research.

Project Strengths

The project was designed to assist teachers, assistant principals, school counselors, and the school nurse to more effectively educate low-SES students for improved academic, social, and emotional outcomes. The project will allow for school personnel to share ideas and knowledge regarding the whole low-SES student and provide a tool in the form of the at-risk survey to pinpoint the individual needs of the low-SES student. The literature review supplied limited examples, if any, of significant instances in which a PD program and an at-risk survey tool were used to accomplish the goal of identifying the individual needs of the whole low-SES student.

There are many positive aspects of the project and the PD that will be provided to teachers, school assistant principals, school counselors, and the school nurse. One major benefit will be the collaboration of all school personnel as they receive clarifying

information and documentation on what “the whole low-SES student” entails.

Participants will have time to discuss the particular attributes of the low-SES student with one another and with their school principal for complete understanding. Schaefer and Rivera (2014) expressed that all school staff should believe that they are reinforced when involved in PD and the implementation of project activities and should see that their suggestions for the project are heard and respected.

The creation of the at-risk survey based on the results of the qualitative case study is another important aspect of the project. The at-risk survey will permit teachers, school assistant principals, school counselors, and the school nurse to ascertain the individual needs of the low-SES student. The at-risk survey will offer new and experienced school personnel alike the ability to identify and obtain the proper supports for each low-SES student in a collaborative fashion with other school personnel. Teasley, Canifield, Archuleta, Crutchfield, and Chavis (2012) found that collaboration involving teachers and additional school personnel was imperative for student academic outcomes and program development. The correct use of the at-risk survey by educational staff and collaborative efforts to supply the needed resources for the low-SES student should lead to improved student outcomes.

The project and the PD will provide the participants with a significant resource that they have felt is needed to effectively educate the whole low-SES student. The resource requested came in the form of an educator to take the lead in collecting and reviewing student data and information for developing a collaborative plan to address the identified needs of the low-SES student. The school personnel who will take the lead role

in the at-risk survey review will be the school counselor(s). Schaefer and Rivera (2014) remarked that there must be a recognizable leader who is responsible for program execution and referrals and who organizes the players needed to meet the individual needs of each student. The school counselor(s) are the educational personnel with the most access to all students, staff, and parents. The school counselor is deemed the most appropriate staff person to be the keeper, reviewer, and overseer of the collaborative process to meet needs of low-SES students identified in the at-risk survey process.

School administrators will gain the ability to have all staff thoroughly trained on the unique needs of the whole low-SES student. The school principal will now have a method available for coordinated efforts to recognize the needs of individual low-SES students and furnish resources to meet those needs for improved student outcomes. Having participants who will be trained in the PD and have access to a tool that may be used to assist in supplying the most appropriate educational resources for the low-SES student will lead to staff collaboration and improved academic outcomes for low-SES students.

Project Limitations

The project creation was an overall success, with some limitations surfacing as well. One limitation of the project is lack of any direct control over how willing the participants will be to internalize and retain the information learned in the PD and to use the at-risk survey. The school principal will be pivotal in making sure that the PD has a lasting effect and that the school personnel use the at-risk survey. Eddy (2012) noted that

in order for professional development to become part of the school culture and achieve complete buy-in from staff, leadership must support and believe in it.

A second possible limitation is the amount of emphasis put on using the at-risk survey to identify the individual needs of low-SES students without addressing an additional survey or assessment tool. The at-risk survey is a good tool for participants to use for identifying individual low-SES students' needs, but it is not the only means available for this purpose. School personnel will still need to use other outlets and assessments to make informed decisions about the needs of low-SES students. The newly created at-risk survey is a good option for initiating the referral process and fostering collaboration among all staff working with a low-SES student. Peckover et al. (2013) explained that most educators require the use of research-based interventions to assist in school improvement. Although the at-risk survey designed for this project was not research based, it could become a new, innovative support tool to improve educational outcomes for all students.

Recommendations

The PD project should provide many benefits to the middle school selected for the case study, but it could be made even better for future participants. The first suggestion is to mandate that all new teachers at the middle school attend the PD training to gain a complete understanding of the whole low-SES student and learn how to administer the at-risk survey. The next directive involves having all schools in the district provide the PD training and implement the use of the at-risk survey for an optimal academic experience for low-SES students. The project that is to be conducted in the selected middle school

should serve as a successful pilot for the school district and should make it an easier decision for the superintendent and school board of education to encourage full district implementation.

An additional suggestion will be to survey teachers, school administrators, school counselors, and school nurses who will participate in the PD training and have used the at-risk survey to determine how the project is impacting their school and low-SES students. The ongoing evaluation of school personnel would furnish data in two forms, one indicating how many staff have participated in the PD training and the second addressing the impact they feel the training and at-risk survey are having on educating the whole low-SES student for positive academic outcomes. The data gained from the evaluations could be used to ensure that all appropriate school personnel have participated in the PD training and that the suggestions for improvement are regularly considered to enhance the project for future training.

The alternative project that was contemplated to attend to the problem of educating the whole low-SES student for positive educational outcomes was a new character education curriculum plan for all school teachers, administrators, school counselors, and school nurse(s) in the middle school. The implementation of the curriculum would have taken place over a 9-week period during the school year. The primary goal of the character education curriculum plan would have been to provide supports to low-SES students in the classroom setting. The curriculum would have been presented by the school counselors in the general education core classes, and the instruction would have included expectations of all students academically, socially, and

emotionally in the school setting. The character education curriculum plan at the middle school would have served as the pilot for the school district if successful. The PD training model was selected instead of the curriculum plan for the quicker impact the PD would offer the middle school and potentially the other schools in the school district for positive academic outcomes for low-SES students.

Analysis of Scholarship

There are many ways in which I feel that I evolved in the area of scholarship while conducting my research study and completing my project. The first area in which I became more scholarly was the use of educational databases to search for current peer-reviewed resources for my research. Educational databases, such as SAGE, allowed me to enter search terms for the topics I wanted to research for my case study. These search terms produced peer-reviewed articles in the time frame I stipulated for the content areas needed for my research. The access to the databases allowed me to conduct a thorough literature review of relevant articles to assist in addressing my identified problem for my research study.

A second area in which I matured as a scholar was the use of the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) for the writing style for my qualitative case study and project. I had used APA writing style in completing my undergraduate degree in psychology, but it took a refresher to bring me up to speed with the sixth edition of the APA manual. After using the sixth edition for over 3 years, I now feel more comfortable and competent in my scholarly writing abilities.

The third way in which I advanced in scholarship was in compiling qualitative data and using thematic analysis to report my results in a narrative fashion. While collecting my data through participant interviews and document reviews, I performed ongoing data analysis and developed emerging themes for my results. I then reviewed my notes at the conclusion of each interview to prepare informative results in a narrative format.

The final way in which I progressed in scholarship was in using the data and results obtained through my case study to create the project. The project was designed as an informative and practical workshop that will be used for immediate educational intervention to improve educational outcomes for low-SES students at the selected middle school. The plan is for the project to have continued implementation throughout the school district in an ongoing manner for all new school personnel. The project has the potential to improve educational outcomes for all referred low-SES students in the selected middle school, in the school district, and possibly throughout the state and nation.

Analysis of Project Development and Evaluation

The idea of performing a research study and developing a project was daunting to me when I first considered completing my doctorate at Walden University. When I was fully engulfed in the research, I found that I enjoyed gathering data and documenting the views of participants and developing themes from their responses. Finding a solution to the identified issues facing the middle school was the next natural step after the results were analyzed. The PD project was the most logical way to provide the middle school the

supports that personnel stated that they needed to be successful and to educate the whole low-SES student for positive educational outcomes.

Participants in the study identified communication and collaboration among staff to address the individual needs of low-SES students as a significant challenge. Therefore, the project was designed to train all staff to understand the concept of the whole low-SES student. The project also included the at-risk survey, which fosters communication and collaboration to identify the needs of assessed low-SES students and the resources that are necessary to address those individual needs. Developing the PD and at-risk survey to attend to the problems facing the middle school gave me a strong sense of achievement and gratification because I would be making a difference for low-SES students in the middle school and for teachers eager to deliver the best education possible to all students.

Creating the project evaluation component allowed me to look at all the work I had completed for the research study and project. The work included identifying the school problem, completing data analysis and presenting findings, and developing the project. As I look back at the problem and review the results of my research, I feel that my project did supply a workable resolution to the problem for the middle school. I looked for evaluations that would provide participants with a device to provide clear feedback on what was working in the project and what might need to be improved. The evaluation needed to encourage participants to provide suggestions that would make the project better for future participants. Ultimately, I created an evaluation that would yield the information needed to assess the effectiveness of the project and make ongoing modifications, in addition to letting participants know that their opinions are valued and

appreciated. Reyes and Elias (2011) found that schools whose leaders encourage and respect the opinions of their staff have more supportive and considerate school cultures.

Analysis of Leadership and Change

The process of completing the research study and the project caused me to look inward at my own perceptions of myself as an educational leader. I realized more than ever that in order to be effective and innovative as an educational leader, one should constantly be learning. One may have to think outside the preverbal box and share leadership within their school, school district, or educational organization. The days of working in a silo are over, and fostering collaboration and communication is imperative for student, school, and school district success. The school or educational leader should be more than a manager; he or she should have high expectations for all students and staff and should fulfill the role of a visionary. The leader should be an instructional leader who promotes and requires student focused/centered learning to meet the diverse needs of the whole individual student.

Analysis of Self as a Scholar

The doctoral study forced me to be more aware of the different avenues I could use to gather credible sources for my research. In conducting an extensive literature review of current peer-reviewed articles about low-SES students, I found loads of information. However, not all of the articles or studies I read addressed all three areas of the whole low-SES student. I learned that each area of the whole student (academic, social, and emotional) is equally important, and when in harmony, efforts in these areas can produce improved outcomes for the individual student. I became very knowledgeable

about researching problems or issues and finding credible resources to support improving educational outcomes for low-SES students. My new and improved research understanding and skills should continue to help me find solutions for the advancement of education for all students and school personnel.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

I have served as a leader in many capacities inside and outside education, but I have always wanted to enhance my skills in order to be the most effective practitioner possible. My family has a long heritage of being involved in civic duties, government, and professions that help other people in society. I have gleaned leadership styles and traits from some of my former and current supervisors in my career as an educator. Completing the case study and the project showed me that in order to truly be a capable leader and practitioner, I should continuously grow my knowledge in education. Sharing leadership responsibilities within my school, school district, or educational organization became my style as a practitioner during the creation of my project. I gained an understanding that decisions I make as a practitioner must not only come from my heart and own understanding, but also from credible data sources to find answers to the problems that may be faced in education moving forward.

Analysis of Self as a Project Developer

Developing the project was an enlightening and challenging experience. Serving as the project developer, I reviewed the findings from the research to adequately develop a project that would assist middle school personnel in addressing the key problem of effectively educating the whole low-SES student for positive educational outcomes.

Choosing the PD model of training allowed me to collaborate with the school principal and participants to fulfill their requests for the supports required for school personnel and low-SES student success. The project I developed pushed me to take even greater steps forward as an educational leader and innovator by creating the PD and at-risk survey. The entire project development procedure taught me to look for new and improved ways to meet the educational needs of low-SES students, and all students for that matter. The project development process reinforced my belief that an educational leader should use credible data to make informed educational decisions that impact student learning. The next step is moving forward in my career to develop additional projects as an educational leader, developer, and advocate, so that all children may learn and perform to their optimum ability.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

The PD project training and the at-risk survey should have potential impact for positive social change for low SES students. The PD training will provide teachers, school administrators, school counselors, and school nurse(s) at the selected middle school with a complete understanding of what the whole low SES student encompasses and what resources are needed for individual low SES student educational success. The project will afford additional teachers at the middle school with the critical knowledge, and implementation of the project will hopefully begin in all the schools in the school district. The PD will be updated and improved based on input from participants. If the project has positive reviews, implementation could occur in additional school districts across the state and potentially nationally in other schools.

Finding ways to educate the whole low SES student for positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes has been and continues to be an ongoing problem locally, nationally, and worldwide. Planning to provide a PD training and an at-risk survey that addresses all these issues will be a great addition to allow schools to pinpoint the individual needs of the low SES student. The PD and at-risk survey could lead to big cost savings by providing low SES student's the specific resources to meet their diverse needs and not spend money on resources that are antiquated or unnecessary. Designing the project for staff collaboration that heightens social awareness of the challenges and needs of educating the whole low SES student was a great since of achievement.

Overall Reflections

Finishing my research study and completing the project were an intense and insightful learning experience. I am pleased and satisfied with the work accomplished during this long and rewarding process. I have conducted literature reviews before but never to this extreme. I was able to find a lot of research on the topic of low SES students but there was limited research looking at the whole low SES student. Having worked in both community mental health and education, I see the need for addressing the whole low SES student for optimal academic, social, and emotional outcomes. For the whole low SES student to be successful all participants agreed that academic, social, and emotional areas are addressed as a whole and not in a separate fashion.

During the process of collecting data from the research participants, it became obvious that the research I had done was valuable and very much wanted by the middle school staff. All the participants were appreciative to have taken part in the case study

because they all desired to find the best ways to educate the whole low SES student for positive educational outcomes. The analysis of the qualitative data was a new experience for me as a researcher, and it allowed me to take the data and develop themes for the narrative findings. Looking back at the middle school's initial identified problem, along with the results of the case study prepared me for formulating a project that could serve as a potential solution to the problem. The entire experience was rewarding for me as the researcher and project developer and hopefully to all the participants and indirectly to the middle school low SES students once the project is implemented. The support that I received from the Walden Library, my committee chair, my committee member, and my fellow colleagues was what kept me going through this long journey to my doctorate.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The primary goal of the study was to find a way for school teachers, school assistant principals, school counselors, and the school nurse to provide improved educational outcomes for the whole low SES student in the selected middle school. School personnel that will participate in the PD training and will learn how to use the at-risk survey should be more confident in identifying the needs of the whole low SES student and be able provide resources to meet those needs. The PD training will increase the communication and collaboration among all school personnel about the whole low SES student and how to more effectively address their individual needs.

The PD training will be a beginning training and will need to be continually evaluated to get input on improvements from new participants. The PD training should become vastly improved for future participants, as the training is delivered to additional

staff in the school, school district, and state. With ongoing upgrade to the PD and at risk-survey the greater the impact educational tools should have on making lasting social change for low SES students in West Virginia, nationally, and potentially internationally.

Future research could look at including additional assessment tools to identify the individual needs of the whole low SES student for the project. Further research could include interviewing more of the middle school staff to see if their opinions or point of views are vastly different from the personnel that did participant in the case study. Having observed how much the middle school staff appreciated participating in the case study for low SES students, makes me wonder what other topics or issues they would like addressed in their school. The continued input from school personnel would help target relevant research to meet the needs of students and staff that are the most impacted.

Conclusion

School teachers, school administrators, school counselors, and school nurse(s) desire to find effective ways to educate the whole low SES student for positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes. This case study strived to understand what the participants in the study saw as the biggest obstacles to effectively educating the whole low SES student for positive educational outcomes. The project was then designed to address the identified needs from participant responses. The project includes a PD training for participant full understanding of what the whole low SES student entails and the creation of an at-risk survey to identify the individual needs. The PD will be provided to all the appropriate school personnel. The at-risk survey will start to be utilized to organize a coordinated effort, led by the school counselor, identifying the individual

needs of referred low SES students and then provide the resources necessary to address those needs. The full support of school leadership and implementation of the PD and at-risk survey by school personnel, will lead to positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes for the whole low SES student.

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Appendix A: Project

Low Socioeconomic Status (SES) Influence on the Whole Student for Positive Academic, Social and Emotional Outcomes

(Purpose of Training: To understand and implement an at-risk assessment to meet the needs of the whole low SES student academically, socially, and emotionally.)

Target Audience: Teachers, school administrators, school counselors, and school nurse(s).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING DAY 1

8:30 – 9:30	Keynote: What is the whole student? (Power Point/Handouts)
9:45 – 12:00	Breakout Sessions (Small Groups) Session One: How to identify a low SES student. (Power Point/Handouts) Session Two: Educating the whole low SES student. (Power Point/Handouts)
12:00 – 1:00	LUNCH
1:00 – 3:30	Breakout Sessions (Small Groups) Session One: Educating the whole low SES student. (Power Point/Handouts) Session Two: How to identify a low SES student. (Power Point/Handouts)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING DAY 2

8:30 – 9:30	Whole Group Review Activity – WORDLE
9:30 – 10:30	What is the At-Risk Survey? (Power Point/Handout) How to Complete the At-Risk Survey. (Power Point/Handout)
10:30 – 12:00	Mock Student At-Risk Survey Activity (Discussion/Handouts)
12:00 – 1:00	LUNCH

1:00 – 2:00	Outcome of At-Risk Survey: What do we do now? (Discussion/Handouts)
2:00 – 3:30	Discussion: Role of the Guidance Counselor Role of the Teacher Role of the School Administration Role of the School Nurse

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING DAY 3

8:30 –10:00	Whole Group Review Activity –
10:00 –12:00	Available Resources (Power Point/Handout)
12:00 – 1:00	LUNCH
1:00 – 3:00	Question / Answer Session Power Points (Handout 1 and Discussion, Handout 2 and Discussion)
3:00 – 3:30	Evaluation

Day 1 PowerPoint – Keynote Presentation

The following table summarizes the content of the 9 slides shown in the image:

Slide Number	Section Header	Key Points
1	THE WHOLE CHILD EDUCATING THE WHOLE LOW SES CHILD	
2	The Whole Child Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle. Each student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults. Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community. Each student has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults. Each student is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment.
3	The Whole Child Students Must Be HEALTHY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research confirms that students do better in school when they are emotionally and physically healthy. They miss fewer classes, are less likely to engage in risky or antisocial behavior, concentrate more, and achieve higher test scores. Unfortunately, too many students go to class in less than optimal health.
4	The Whole Child Students Must Be SAFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling safe at school translates into higher academic achievement, increased student well-being, and greater engagement, according to numerous studies. Children who don't feel safe can't concentrate on their studies, don't connect with their classmates, and don't go to school at all.
5	The Whole Child Students Must Be ENGAGED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To learn at their best, students must be supported and inspired. Substantive research shows that students who feel both valued by adults and a part of their school perform better academically and also have more positive social attitudes, values, and behavior. Plus, they are less likely to engage in drug use, violence, or sexual activity. After-school programs can promote academic achievement, but their success requires targeted investment, stakeholder commitment, focused academic support, quality programming, and a process of continual improvement.
6	The Whole Child Students Must Be SUPPORTED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to improving students' academic performance, research shows that supportive schools also help prevent a host of negative consequences, including isolation, violent behavior, dropping out of school, and suicide. Central to a supportive school are teachers, administrators, and other caring adults who take a personal interest in each student and in the success of each student.
7	The Whole Child Students Must Be CHALLENGED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To succeed in college, other postsecondary education, and the workplace, students need higher-level thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills as well as knowledge of the world and its people. These are all products of a curriculum that challenges students to work harder as they investigate a wide range of real-world subjects. What's more, our high school graduates who pursue college must be adequately prepared, yet too many are taking remedial courses, which raises deep concerns about the value of their high school diploma.
8	The Whole Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We live in a global economy that expects our students to be prepared to think both critically and creatively, evaluate massive amounts of information, solve complex problems, and communicate well. A strong foundation in reading, writing, math, and other core subjects is still as important as ever, yet by itself is insufficient for lasting success. For too long, we have committed to these strategies, coursework, instructional methods, and assessment designs more than a century ago. The current definition of student success is too narrow. It's time to put students first, align resources to students' multiple needs, and allow room for a more balanced approach.
9	The Whole Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What works best for children? What must we do—educators, families, policymakers, and community members—do to ensure their success? Answering these questions pushes us to redefine what a successful learner is and how we measure success. A child who enters school healthy and feels safe is ready to learn. A student who feels connected to school is more likely to stay in school. All students who have access to challenging and engaging academic programs are better prepared for further education, work, and civic life. These components must work together, not in isolation. That is the goal of whole child education.

Handout

Whole Student/Child Handout

KEY TERMS AND PHRASES:

- **Whole child-** attending to cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and talent development of children and youth from widely diverse backgrounds.
- **Holistic education-** simply means cultivating the whole person and helping individuals live more consciously within their communities and natural ecosystems. Is concerned with the development of every person's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative, and spiritual potentials.
- **System coordination-** is responsible for organizing, planning, coordinating, directing, and administering the educational needs of the whole student.
- **System theory-** is the interdisciplinary study of systems in general, with the goal of discovering patterns and elucidating principles that can be discerned from, and applied to, all types of systems at all nesting levels in all fields of research.
- **Strategic collaboration-** is generally defined as a process of participation through which people, groups, and organizations form relationships and work together to achieve a set of agreed-upon results.
- **Ecological theory-** identifies five environmental systems (Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem, and Chronosystem) with which an individual interacts. This theory provides the framework from which community psychologists study the relationships with individuals' contexts within communities and the wider society.
- **Developmental perspective-** is our development shaped more by our genetics or our environment, do we develop in stages or continually, how do we change throughout our lifespan and what elements remain stable.
- **Developmentally responsive practice-** are based on extensive research about child development and learning; what is known about the unique needs, strengths, and interests of each child; and what is known about the cultural and social environment in which each child lives-in other words looking at the whole child.
- **Transitions-** typically refers to the three major transitional points in the public-education system: when students move from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, and from high school to college. While students experience other "transitions" during their educational journey—such as advancing from one grade level to the next—the three "major" transition points are a particular focus of educators and school reformers because

transitioning students often experience significant academic, social, emotional, physical, or developmental changes that may adversely affect their educational performance.

- **Health disparities-** are the inequalities that occur in the provision of healthcare and access to healthcare across different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups.
- **Social-emotional health-** is forming secure relationships, experiencing and regulating emotions and, exploring and learning.
- **Child poverty-** Children that fail to meet the minimum acceptable standard of living for the nation where that child lives are said to be poor. (Students that qualify for free and reduced lunch programs in public schools.)
- **High-risk behaviors-** Feel they do not "belong" at school; Are very quiet/withdrawn; Exhibit disruptive behavior and rebellious attitudes; Have a low level of self-esteem; Are below expected grade level for their age; Have low achievement test scores; Exhibit language difficulties; Are gifted or talented and perhaps bored with school; Have poor home-school communications; Are frequently absent or tardy; Request frequent health referrals; Are invisible dropouts (present in body but not in mind); Are parents; or Have difficulty relating to authority figures or structured situations.
- **Alternative education-** Alternative education, also known as non-traditional education or educational alternative, describes a number of approaches to teaching and learning other than traditional publicly- or privately-run schools.

Day 1 Breakout Sessions: Session 1 Power Point - How to identify a low SES student

The screenshot shows a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation in Slide Sorter View. The title slide (slide 1) is highlighted with an orange border and contains the following text:

Practical strategies for engaging students from low SES backgrounds

Training

The presentation consists of 12 slides, numbered 1 through 12, arranged in a 3x4 grid. The slides are as follows:

- Slide 1:** Title slide: "Practical strategies for engaging students from low SES backgrounds" and "Training".
- Slide 2:** Overview:
 - An overview of the research
 - Conceptual framework
 - Principles
 - Six practical strategies
- Slide 3:** To Do's for Educating Low SES Students:
 - Values and respects all students;
 - Encompasses an institution-wide approach that is comprehensive, integrated and coordinated through the curriculum;
 - Incorporates inclusive learning environments and strategies;
 - Empowers students by making the implicit, explicit; and
 - Focuses on student learning outcomes and success.
- Slide 4:** Four Major Themes Educating Low SES Students:
 - employs inclusive teaching characteristics and strategies;
 - enables student growth and life experiences;
 - facilitates life and learning support; and
 - is cognisant of students' financial challenges.
- Slide 5:** Six practical strategies for engaging Low SES students:
 - Know and respect your students
 - Offer them flexibility, variety and choice
 - Make expectations clear, using accessible language
 - Scaffold your students' learning
 - Be available and approachable to guide your students' learning
 - Practice reflectively
- Slide 6:** 1. Know and respect your students: Workshop questions:
 - Why would this be important?
 - How might this be achieved in class and online?
- Slide 7:** 2. Offer students flexibility, variety and choice: Workshop questions:
 - Why would this be important?
 - How might this be achieved, without compromising standards?
- Slide 8:** 3. Make expectations clear, using accessible language: Workshop questions:
 - Why is this important?
 - How would you know this has been achieved?
- Slide 9:** 4. Scaffold your students' learning: Workshop questions:
 - Why is this important?
 - How can this be achieved with large numbers of students?
- Slide 10:** 5. Be available and approachable to guide student learning: Workshop questions:
 - Why is this important?
 - How might the challenges of being available be overcome?
- Slide 11:** Summary:
 - Draw on their existing knowledge and make them feel they belong
 - Give them choices, where feasible
 - Use plain language
 - Stage and support their learning
 - Be approachable and helpful
- Slide 12:** Take home messages/questions:
 - What is 'double' in your context?
 - What are the obstacles?
 - How might the obstacles be (at least partly) overcome?
 - What support do you need?

Handout

Education and Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status (SES) is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. It is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. When viewed through a social class lens, privilege, power, and control are emphasized. Furthermore, an examination of SES as a predictor or continuous variable reveals variation in access to and distribution of resources. SES is relevant to all realms of behavioral and social science, including research, practice, education and advocacy.

SES Affects Our Society

Low SES and its correlates, such as lower education, poverty and poor health, ultimately affect our society as a whole. Inequities in wealth distribution, resource distribution and quality of life are increasing in the United States and globally. Society benefits from an increased focus on the foundations of socioeconomic inequality and efforts to reduce the deep gaps in socioeconomic status in the United States and abroad. Behavioral and other social science professionals possess the tools necessary to study and identify strategies that could alleviate these disparities at both individual and societal levels.

SES and Educational Issues

Research indicates that children from low-SES households and communities develop academic skills more slowly compared to children from higher SES groups (Morgan, Parkin, Hoffmeyer, & Mackay, 2009). Initial academic skills are correlated with the home environment, where low literacy environments and chronic stress negatively affect a child's phonological skills. The school systems in low-SES communities are often underresourced, negatively affecting students' academic progress (Aiken & Barbara, 2010). Inadequate education and increased dropout rates affect children's academic achievement, perpetuating the low-SES status of the community. Improving school systems and early intervention programs may help to reduce these risk factors, and thus increased research on the correlation between SES and education is essential.

SES and Family Income

Families from low-SES communities are less likely to have the financial resources or time availability to provide children with academic support.

- Children's initial reading competence is correlated with the home literacy environment, number of books owned and parent distress (Aiken & Barbara, 2010). However, parents from low-SES communities may be unable to afford resources such as books, computers, or space to create the positive literacy environments (De, 2010).

- In a nationwide study of American kindergarten children, 39 percent of parents in the lowest-income quartile read to their children on a daily basis, compared with 82 percent of parents from the highest-income quartile (Coley, 2012).
- When enrolled in a program that encouraged adult support, students from low-SES groups reported higher levels of effort towards academics (Kaylor & Flores, 2010).

SES and the School Environment

Research indicates that school conditions contribute more to SES differences in learning rates than family characteristics (Aiken & Barbara, 2010).

- Schools in low-SES communities suffer from high levels of unemployment, migration of the best qualified teachers and low educational achievement (Maup, Flann, Chapman, Seid, & East, 2009).
- A teacher's years of experience and quality of training is correlated with children's academic achievement (Fletcher, Bell, & Wallace, 2017). Yet, children in low-income schools are less likely to have well-qualified teachers. In fact, of high school math teachers in low-income school districts 27 percent reported no mathematics in college as compared to 41 percent of teachers who did so in more affluent school districts (Operswold, 1999).
- The following factors have been found to improve the quality of schools in low-SES neighborhoods: a focus on improving teaching and learning, creation of an information-rich environment, building of a learning community, continuous professional development, and involvement of parents and community funding and resources (Maup et al., 2009).

SES and Academic Achievement

Research continues to link lower SES to lower academic achievement and slower rates of academic progress as compared with higher SES communities.

- Children from low-SES environments acquire language skills more slowly, exhibit delayed letter recognition and phonological awareness, and are at risk for reading difficulties (Aiken & Barbara, 2010).
- Children with higher SES backgrounds were more likely to be proficient on tasks of addition, subtraction and ordinal sequencing and math word problems than children with lower SES backgrounds (Coley, 2012).
- Students from low-SES schools earned high school 1.1 grade levels behind students from higher SES schools. In addition, students from the low-SES groups learned less over 4 years than children from higher SES groups, graduating 4.1 grade levels behind those of higher SES groups (Fletcher, 2010).

- In 2017, the high school dropout rate among persons 18-24 years old was highest in low-income families (16.7 percent) as compared to high-income families (1.2 percent) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

Psychological Health

Increasing evidence supports the link between lower SES and learning disability or other negative psychological outcomes that affect academic achievement.

- Children from lower SES households are about twice as likely as those from high-SES households to display learning-related behavior problems. A mother's SES was also related to her child's inattention, distractibility, and lack of cooperation in school (Morgan et al., 2009).
- Identifying as part of a low-income class in college has been associated with feelings of not belonging in school and intentions to drop out of school before graduation (Langford, Drake, & Rowlett, 2009).
- Perception of family economic stress and personal financial concerns affected emotional distress symptoms in students and their academic outcomes (Merry, Besser, Tan, & Kim, 2010).

What You Can Do

Include SES in Your Research, Practice and Educational Endeavors

- Measure, report and control for SES in research activities related to education support and academic achievement.
- Take SES into consideration in all published work. Report participant characteristics related to SES.
- Contribute to the body of research on the educational and societal barriers experienced by students from low-SES communities and the impact of these barriers on academic achievement and psychological well-being.
- Establish practice opportunities in community settings where students have access to diverse social class populations.

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Handout (Continued)

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Breakout Session 2 – Day 1
PowerPoint: Educating the Whole Low-SES Student

1

**Educating the Whole Low
SES Student / Child**

2

"Surely we should demand more from our schools than to educate people to be proficient in reading and mathematics" (Noddings, 2005)

3

Educating the whole child

- ▶ Social development- friendships, caring, sharing.
- ▶ Cognitive development- brain, reading, learning, memory,
- ▶ Physical development- gross motor, fine motor, growth, nutrition.
- ▶ Emotional development- coping with stress, learning how to control and regulate emotions, dealing with emotions in acceptable ways, happiness.

4

"If a time traveler of 100 years ago were to pass the earth today the only institution he or she might recognize is education" (anonymous).

5

Questions to ask ourselves?

- ▶ What really are the aims of education?
- ▶ Why has the educational institution not changed?
- ▶ What are your views about No Child Left Behind Act as it relates to educating the whole child?
- ▶ How do you think this has affected education?

6

Consider these aims of education???

- ▶ Happiness
- ▶ Health
- ▶ Command of fundamental processes
- ▶ Worthy home membership
- ▶ Worthy use of leisure
- ▶ Vocation
- ▶ Citizenship
- ▶ To encourage creativity, invention, cooperation, and democratic participation.

Day 2— What is the At-Risk Survey PowerPoint and Handout

Whole Student (Academic, Social, and Emotional) At-Risk Survey/Referral Tool

Teachers or other school personnel for the following questions, please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. In responding to the questions please use a range from 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Please circle one response choice per question. Please answer each individual question.

A= Academic, S= Social, E= Emotional

When questions ask about parents, please consider parents as either parents or other guardians where applicable. Provide the at-risk survey to the school counselor when completed.

Student Name: _____ Student #: _____

Evaluator Name: _____ Date: _____

	SD	D	N	A	SA
There are clear and focused goals for students learning. A	1	2	3	4	5
The student is engaged in learning during class time. A	1	2	3	4	5
The student's parents play an active role in their education. A	1	2	3	4	5
The student is not paying attention during class time. A	1	2	3	4	5
The student freely expresses their opinions or concerns to the teacher. SE	1	2	3	4	5
The student's misbehavior frequently interferes with classroom learning. E	1	2	3	4	5
Students in class and school feel welcome and valued regardless of their racial/ethnic background. S	1	2	3	4	5
Students in class and school feel welcome and valued regardless of their socioeconomic background. S	1	2	3	4	5
I have regular contact with my student's parents. ASE	1	2	3	4	5
Parents participate in important decisions about their children's educational and behavioral needs. ASE	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers meet regularly to assess student's progress. ASE	1	2	3	4	5
The student is attentive to teacher delivered instruction. A	1	3	3	4	5
Parents attend parent-teacher conferences when requested. ASE	1	2	3	4	5
Parents are welcome in the classroom and attend periodically. A	1	2	3	4	5
I maintain positive relationships with the parents of the student. ASE	1	2	3	4	5
I am frequently discussing behavioral and disciplinary issues regarding this student with school personnel. E	1	2	3	4	5
The student clearly understands expectations of appropriate behavior while attending school. SE	1	2	3	4	5
The student clearly understands the school's discipline code of conduct. E	1	2	3	4	5

Discipline infractions by this student are handled fairly. E	1	2	3	4	5
The student has been referred to the school counselor in the past for emotional concerns. E	1	2	3	4	5
The student is disengaged from learning. ASE	1	2	3	4	5
The student rarely participates in classroom discussions. AS	1	2	3	4	5
The student is frequently late turning in homework assignments. A	1	2	3	4	5
The student has limited interaction with peers. SB	1	2	3	4	5
The student has trouble being accepted by peer groups. S	1	2	3	4	5
The student appears sleepy or tired during class. SE	1	2	3	4	5
The student appears nervous or agitated during class. SE	1	2	3	4	5
The student is frequently tardy for class. SE	1	2	3	4	5
The student is frequently absent from class. SE					
The student's appearance is disheveled. S	1	2	3	4	5
The student demonstrates poor hygiene. S	1	2	3	4	5
The student frequently wears the same items of clothing. SE	1	2	3	4	5
The student is frequently ill or complains of sickness. SE	1	2	3	4	5
The student has a flat affect. SE	1	2	3	4	5
Contacting the student's parents/guardian is difficult. (Due to frequent address changes, phone number changes, etc.) SE	1	2	3	4	5
Student has limited or no access to technology in their home. AS	1	2	3	4	5

Day 2 – Mock Student At-Risk Survey Activity

Mock Student At-Risk Survey Activity (Student Demographic Background Information)

Name	John Doe
Grade Level	7
Discipline Referrals	2/3 per week
Counselor Referrals	Once per week
Grades	Failing 2 or more core classes
Free / Reduced Lunch	Free
Attendance	Absent at least one day per week
Homeless	Living with grandparents
Health Issues	Nurse referral once per week/ appear unhealthy / tired
Classroom Engagement	Majority of the time student is not engaged in classroom discussion/learning
Homework Completion	Consistently refusing to complete homework assignments
Student's Appearance	disheveled, unkempt
Student's Hygiene	Body odor
Social Interaction	No friends/ unengaged / withdrawn
Emotional Outbreaks	Inappropriate emotional behavior
Extra Curricular Activities	Does not participate
Parental Involvement	Are Not Involved
Special Education / 504	No

(The information documented in this form is not reflective of a real student, the

Day 3, Resources:

Resources for Low SES and the Whole Student/Child

Get involved

- [Support for the arts in schools](#) [Full report on research on the effectiveness of arts in schools](#), [Full report on the effectiveness of arts in schools](#), [Full report on the effectiveness of arts in schools](#)
- [American School Boards Association](#)
- [American School Boards Association](#)
- [AASA's 2013 Survey on the Effectiveness of Arts in Schools](#)
- [AASA's 2013 Survey on the Effectiveness of Arts in Schools](#)

Whole Child Partners



We are proud to join forces with leading education, health, arts, and civic organizations to further the Whole Child Initiative. The organizations below have signed on as partners to support a whole child approach to education. Browse our [resources](#) for reports, research, tools, and articles from our partners.

United States

- [American Association of School Administrators](#)
- [American Association of School Librarians](#)
- [American Association of School Principals](#)
- [American Music Society](#)
- [American School Counselor Association](#)
- [American School Health Association](#)

- [Americans for the Arts](#)
- [American String Teachers Association](#)
- [American Theater Alliance](#)
- [Arts for All Initiative](#)
- [Association for Middle Level Education](#)
- [Campaign for the City Museum of Toledo](#)
- [Center for Civic Education](#)
- [Center for Music Health in Schools at UCLA](#)
- [Center for the Collaborative Classroom](#)
- [Character Education Partnership](#)
- [Coalition for Community Schools](#)
- [Coalition for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#)
- [Center School Development Program](#)
- [Council for Exceptional Children](#)
- [Division of Health Promotion and Education](#)
- [Educational Theatre Association](#)
- [Engaging Schools](#)
- [Forum for Education and Democracy](#)
- [Forum for Youth Investment](#)
- [G.I.S.T.N. for Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign Foundation](#)
- [Institute for Global Ethics](#)
- [International Society for Technology in Education](#)
- [John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts](#)
- [League of American Orchestras](#)
- [Libraries Center Institute](#)
- [National Alliance of Youth School Education](#)
- [National Art Education Association](#)

- [National Association for Gifted Children](#)
- [National Association for Music Education](#)
- [National Association of Chronic Disease Directors](#)
- [National Association of Elementary School Principals](#)
- [National Association of School Nurses](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists](#)
- [National Association of Secondary School Principals](#)
- [National Association of State Boards of Education](#)
- [National Coalition for Academic Service-Learning](#)
- [National Dance Education Organization](#)
- [National Education Association](#)
- [National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grade Reform](#)
- [National Network for Educational Renewal](#)
- [National Parent Center](#)
- [National Parent Teacher Association](#)
- [National School Health Association](#)
- [National School Climate Center](#)
- [National Summer Learning Association](#)
- [Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc. \(Northeast Foundation\)](#)
- [Oasis America](#)
- [Phi Delta Kappa International](#)
- [Playworks](#)
- [P.E.D.S. Foundation](#)
- [School Board Health Alliance](#)
- [School Social Work Association of America](#)
- [SHAPE America](#)
- [Shark Our Strength](#)
- [Society for Public Health Education](#)

Question/Answer PowerPoint Day 3, Session Handout 1:

Social Class & Expectations

- When asked what they want to be when they grow up, many times children and adolescents mention careers similar to those of their parents.
- Even when the occupations differ, individuals tend to select jobs that will allow them to maintain the same level of socioeconomic status (SES) in which they were raised, thus indicating that social class, also referred to as SES, is transmitted from generation to generation.

Social Class & Expectations

- Parental expectations in the cultivation of educational expectations beyond the combination of academic achievement and grade.
- Parental expectations for their children and the accuracy of children's perceptions of the educational goals that their parents have for them are critical for students to appear for attending college and post graduate school.
- Low SES students' parents' expectations for their children are much lower than that of parents of higher SES students.

Social Class & Expectations

- Students who perceive that their parents have high educational expectations for them are more likely to have increased educational aspirations themselves.
- The importance of educational expectations in the intergenerational transmission of social class. Therefore, it is imperative for children and adolescents to understand the importance of education in preparing for their future careers, specifically how their educational parents align with their occupational goals.

Social Class & Expectations

- Educational expectations may be the vehicle in which social mobility takes place, and so, as counselors and educators, need to work with students of all SES to help to facilitate the achievement of the level of education necessary for their future endeavors.
- It is essential for parents to realize the significance of having high educational expectations and the effect they have on the goals of their children.

Social Class & Expectations

- It is crucial for parents to be cognizant of the messages they send because of the potential effect of these messages on the educational and occupational decisions of their children.
- It is critical for educators to work with low SES students of all backgrounds to make their educational and occupational dreams a reality.

Social Class & Expectations

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Day 3, Professional Development Evaluation:

SAMPLE WORKSHOP EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Workshop Name: _____

Training Location: _____

Participant Name (optional): _____

Date: _____

Job Title: _____

Years in present position? <1 1-3 3-5 5+

INSTRUCTIONS

Please circle your response to the items. Rate aspects of the workshop on a 1 to 5 scale:

1 = "Strongly disagree," or the lowest, most negative impression

3 = "Neither agree nor disagree," or an adequate impression

5 = "strongly agree," or the highest, most positive impression

Choose N/A if the item is not appropriate or not applicable to this workshop. Your feedback is sincerely appreciated. Thank you.

WORKSHOP CONTENT (Circle your response to each item.)

1=Strongly disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neither agree nor disagree 4=Agree 5=Strongly agree
N/A=Not applicable

- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 1. I was well informed about the objectives of this workshop. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 2. This workshop lived up to my expectations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 3. The content is relevant to my job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |

WORKSHOP DESIGN (Circle your response to each item.)

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 4. The workshop objectives were clear to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 5. The workshop activities stimulated my learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |

Sample Workshop Evaluation Questionnaire

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 6. The activities in this workshop gave me sufficient practice and feedback. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 7. The difficulty level of this workshop was appropriate. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 8. The pace of this workshop was appropriate. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTOR (FACILITATOR) (Circle your response to each item.)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 9. The instructor was well prepared. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 10. The instructor was helpful. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |

WORKSHOP RESULTS (Circle your response to each item.)

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 11. I accomplished the objectives of this workshop. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 12. I will be able to use what I learned in this workshop. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |

SELF-PACED DELIVERY (Circle your response to each item.)

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 13. The workshop was a good way for me to learn this content. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 14. How would you improve this workshop? (Check all that apply.) | | | | | | |

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study. Your professional background as a reading language arts teacher, school assistant principal, school counselor or school nurse who provides direct instruction or other educational related services to low socio-economic students has qualified you to receive an invitation to participate in the research study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Matthew Dotson, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. Mr. Dotson does not have any direct role or responsibilities with the school or school district participating in the research study.

Background Information:

The purpose of the study is to identify the challenges and strategies a local middle school uses to educate the whole low SES student academically, socially and emotionally for positive outcomes.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a 30-minute interview conducted during an agreed upon time by me the researcher and you the participant, that will have the responses documented and will not be shared with anyone other than me.
- Member checking will involve participants to review the accuracy of their interview responses. Participants will review responses and provide feedback to me in a 10 minute review and discussion meeting held during an agreed upon time with participants.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at the West Virginia Department of Education or the County School District, will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There will be minimal to no risk to participating in this doctoral project. School personnel may become anxious by being interviewed by a fellow educator. None of your individual comments will be shared with anyone in the district. Also, if something you say could be directly connected to you, it will not be included in the report. Benefits from the research study could provide the school with a better

understanding of the individual needs for educating the whole low SES student for better educational outcomes.

Compensation:

There is no compensation for participating in doctoral project.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone or email. You may also contact the doctoral project committee chair via phone or email. You may contact a Walden University Representative via phone if you have questions about your rights as a participant.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above. Please include your email address if you will participate in the doctoral project detailed above:

Signature _____

Date _____

Email _____

Appendix C: Invitation Letter

Invitation Letter

Dear School Personnel:

I am writing to you because you are being asked to take part as a participant in a research study.

This research study is being conducted by me, Matthew Dotson, I am doctoral student and researcher at Walden University. I do not have any direct role or responsibilities with the school or school district selected for the research study.

The purpose of the study is to identify the challenges and strategies your middle school uses to educate the whole low SES student academically, socially and emotionally for positive outcomes. More details will be provided about the research through an email containing an informed consent form for your review.

The email will be sent to you with the informed consent and you will have three days to review the informed consent form. Your decision to participate in the study is voluntary and you will have an opportunity to ask any questions you may have about the research study. Please email me after you have had the opportunity to review the informed consent and you decide to participate. If you chose not to participate please disregard the email. An individual meeting will be mutually scheduled with each potential participant to answer questions pertaining to participating in study.

Sincerely,

Matthew Dotson,
Doctoral Student Walden University

Appendix D: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Number

IRB Approval Number: 09-24-15-0354302

Matthew Dotson

Walden University