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A Classic Delphi Study: To Identify and Describe How Elementary School Teacher Leaders Create and Foster a School Culture That Supports Social-Emotional Learning

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Social-Emotional Learning

A Dissertation by

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To my family, I could not have imagined that I would be here today without you constantly believing in me. To my husband of 35 years, Gary, my partner, my love, the voice in my head, and my always present cheer section, thank you for always having faith in me and believing in my dreams. We have sacrificed our time together during this journey of classes, projects, cohort meetings, immersion weekends, and study sessions, knowing the reward would be there in the end. Thank you for being a safe space for me to land, rest, and renew. Love Always! To Catherine, my sunshine, my Navy girl, you have pushed me in ways I am still realizing and so grateful for. Your love and support throughout the triumphs and challenges of this journey is what kept me going. I love you to the moon and back! To Garret, my wonderful Navy boy, you pushed and pushed until I realized that our dreams for my future were one in the same. Thank you for believing in your momma and always being there to give a loving nudge when I needed it. "I love you forever, I'll like you for always, as long as I'm living my baby you'll be" (Munsch, 1986, p. 1). Together we believed I could, so I did!

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Just like moons and like suns, With the certainty of tides, Just like hopes

springing high, Still, I'll rise.

<div align="right">—Maya Angelou, Hearst Magazine Media</div>

ABSTRACT

A Classic Delphi Study: To Identify and Describe How Elementary School Teacher

Leaders Create and Foster a School Culture That Supports

Social-Emotional Learning

by Nicole Lindemuth

Purpose: The purpose of this Delphi study was to identify the strategies that elementary teacher leaders use to create and foster a school culture that supports the five Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competencies (self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision making). An additional purpose was to identify what teacher leaders perceive to be the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture that supports these social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies.

Methodology: This study used the Delphi method to collect data from elementary teacher leaders serving Grades TK–6 to identify their strategies to create and foster a school culture that supports SEL. Participants were selected using specific criteria and recommendations based on purposeful sampling. The researcher used Google surveys via email to collect the data.

Findings: Examination of results of the Delphi study and based on the results of the effectiveness ratings, six key findings were identified. These key findings were based on the highest mean effectiveness ratings and reflected some combining of similar strategies that were identified for different competencies. The key findings included professionalism, communication, collaboration, and having a growth mindset.

Conclusions: The study supported the teacher leaders and staff members who support one another through professionalism, creating and maintaining agreed upon norms of behavior, and establishing communities to share ideas. It adds to the current knowledge on SEL and the effective strategies that teacher leaders use to create and foster a culture of support for the cognitive, academic, and emotional development of children.

Recommendations: Based on the findings of this study, school district leaders and site administrators should further the growth of teacher leaders through professional development that is focused on teacher relationships and the sharing of best practices in education. When teachers learn from their peers with real-life examples, it is more impactful and improves the organizational culture of schools. In addition, this study provided recommendations that would enhance the social-emotional culture of schools and school districts through teacher-led activities and committees.

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Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.

—Theodore Roosevelt, Brainy Quote

The 1st day of school for most elementary students can be a mix of emotions. Some students are feeling excited about their new teacher, seeing old friends, and making new ones. Most students arrive at school in new clothes, carrying a new backpack that is filled with supplies for the year. However, not every student fits this description. Some students come to school in clothes from last year, wearing worn shoes, and maybe with or without a backpack; many students are enrolled in school food programs to address food insecurities. In other words, when the basic needs of students are not being met, learning and achievement become a secondary focus (Bomer & Maloch, 2013). For these students, academics may not be their sole focus, and school is not just a place for academic learning; school is a haven where other needs are also met. Therefore, for these kids, starting a new school year is exciting despite the fact that their top motivator may not be learning. As educators, learning the story behind students' behavior and outward appearance to meet their emotional needs is crucial to provide an encouraging and supportive environment in which all students can flourish.

As interests grew in the intersection of emotional, child development, and prevention science, a group of experts came together in 1994 to more formally address skills and competencies that students need to thrive in school (Goleman, 1995). The result of the coming together of various disciplines is known today as social-emotional learning (SEL). According to Weissberg et al. (2015), the accepted definition of SEL is a process by which students effectively gain and use acquired skills such as empathy,

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applying knowledge that enhances personal development, mastering the attitudes and relationship skills that are needed to productively build relationships, and participating in productive decision making. Students who participate in SEL programs geared toward the intentional instruction of these skills experience less anxiety, aggression, and hyperactivity (Corcoran et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; Zieher et al., 2021). As schools and school districts began adopting SEL as an approach to teaching and learning, critical questions emerged. How should schools and school districts adopt SEL? What are the best methods for classroom and school-wide implementation? Also, how does the culture of a school impact the implementation of SEL?

Within the last 3 decades, various school districts have pushed to implement SEL districtwide as a means of preparing students with not only academic skills but also life skills. In 2011, Durlak et al. published an article in *Child Development* titled "The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions." This article investigated how 270,234 students, K–12, from 213 schools using SEL were impacted. The findings of this study revealed that "SEL not only improves achievement by an average of 11 percentile points, but it also increases prosocial behaviors (such as kindness, sharing, and empathy), improve student attitudes toward school, and reduces depression and stress among students" (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 417). Social-emotional competencies are geared toward increasing student academic outcomes by focusing on a school environment that enhances supportive relationships while creating and maintaining positive relationships (Durlak et al., 2011).

School principals are primarily the driving force behind shaping the school culture, but as the complexities of building and sustaining school culture become more

sophisticated, the responsibility of successfully building and sustaining a school's culture also relies on teachers, support staff, and parents. Teacher leaders, by sharing what they have learned, can be instrumental in shaping school culture. Teacher self-efficacy (believing in one's own abilities) and staff collective efficacy (believing in the effectiveness of the group) can influence student achievement, the behavioral environment, and culture of the school (Bandura, 1977; Thorton et al., 2020). Bandura (1993), emphasized the effect of efficacy on how educators themselves think, feel, and behave and its effect on the culture of a school and the fact that it enhances teacher efforts, such as integrating literacy instruction and obtaining parent support and effective methods of dealing with problem behaviors (Donohoo et al., 2018; Hattie & Zierer, 2018).

According to Bond (2021), schools have created various leadership roles that provide opportunities for teachers, such as mentors, cooperating teachers, department chairs, and team leaders, to collaborate and support their peers. In addition, Durlak et al. (2011) stated that teacher leads have the opportunity to impact the school culture and academic progress and to motivate others. Moreover, as SEL evolves and becomes a major component of education, teacher leaders have a personal stake in shaping an SEL-focused school culture. School leaders would benefit from understanding the role teacher leaders play in adopting such a philosophy in the school culture.

Elementary Education

Elementary education is vital to the development of an individual's character and provides a foundation for academic and social-emotional skills development (Ecoff, 2023). In elementary or primary school, which covers transitional kindergarten (TK)

through fifth grade, students begin to learn about the world through math, reading, and writing while also developing socialization, collaboration, and communication skills (California Department of Education [CDE], n.d.-a). Although each school district may have various configurations of elementary education, such as TK through sixth or eighth grade, according to the CDE (n.d.-a), sixth through eighth grade are commonly referred to as middle school, and TK through fifth grade are considered elementary.

Foundational Theories on Child Development

Various theories have been generated over several decades to explain how children learn and grow physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally and how this growth affects all aspects of their life. Constructivist theorists, such as Vygotsky (1962), Piaget (1963), Bruner (1990), and ecological theorists, such as Bronfenbrenner (1977), used their research to generate theories describing how children develop their knowledge and interpret their world through lived experiences. In addition, this approach to research explains a child's development as a process that is affected and changed by thoughts, morals, and relationships beginning in early childhood (Saracho & Evans, 2021). This development and behavior can be positively or negatively influenced by the environment of the child and the nature of the relationships that are established and maintained.

Constructivist Theory

The constructivist theory considers how an individual interacts and constructs knowledge of the environment through experiences. As children acquire new knowledge of their environment, their views are adjusted. This process begins at birth and continues throughout an individual's life (Saracho & Evans, 2021). Piaget (1963) acknowledged

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that children use their physical (senses) and social knowledge (customs and norms) as the basis for their understanding and constructing of their personal knowledge. Vygotsky (1962) differentiated between natural and cultural development. He also stated that the foundation for learning is achieved through experiences in people's daily lives and the practices of their community and culture (Vygotsky, 1962). Bruner (1990) studied the relationship between language and thought and established theories on how children learn; create; and adjust perceptions, memory, and cognition (Saracho & Evans, 2021). These developmental theories share common characteristics regarding children's learning and how it progresses, but each has unique qualities and variations.

Ecological Systems Theory

The intricate process of understanding and interrelatedness of how children develop can be viewed through the lenses of ecological systems that include how home, school, community, and culture can affect how children learn and develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, as cited in Saracho & Evans, 2021). The interpretation of experiences and the creation of relationships can affect children's emotions throughout their life. These relationships either at home, school, or in the community can affect how children develop (Saracho & Evans, 2021). Bronfenbrenner (1992, as cited in Soyer, 2019) noted that positive relationships of people develop with consistency, and there is a mutual benefit of established and nourished relationships over time.

Social-Emotional Development in Elementary School

The development of social and emotional skills in early education enables students to participate in discussions, explain their points of view on various topics, and regulate their emotions (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). In addition, when students lack these

necessary skills, it can lead to a disconnection from school, which affects their academic performance, behavior, and overall health. Therefore, schools play a vital role in fostering both cognitive and social-emotional development.

School environments have been shaped in various ways by the enactment of both state and federal government measures geared toward the improvement of student learning, quality of instruction, and school safety. The initial passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965 as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society program created what is now known as Title 1 (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-b). The 2002 reauthorization of ESEA, known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was signed into law by President George W. Bush. The enactment of NCLB was the first time that federal legislation held schools accountable for how well their students learned. This accountability relied heavily on standardized test scores (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-b). In 2015, the subsequent reauthorization of ESEA, known as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), was signed into law by President Barack Obama. The goal of ESSA was to correct the inequalities created by NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-a) and to provide a clear focus on preparing students for success in college and careers. Although ESEA focused on student learning, other measures focused on school safety. The Gun Free Schools Act (GFSA) of 1994, signed into law by President Clinton, sought to increase school safety (Irby & Coney, 2021). The GFSA became known as the beginning of the zero-tolerance policies, which required that all states receiving federal funds expel students from public schools for the possession of a weapon (Irby & Coney, 2021). Each of these legislative initiatives had the goal of creating a rigorous academic learning environment for all students while ensuring student

safety. Also, they allowed a broadening of the definition of school success to include social and emotional competency as a part of the learning environment.

Elementary School Discipline

School Suspensions

Traditionally, the focus of school discipline has been on exacting punishments for student offenses, either perceived or witnessed, in an effort to control future behavior (DeSantis et al., 2023). Following the passage of GFSA, there was an increase in student suspensions that could be attributed to accountability policies such as zero tolerance (Cobb-Clark et al., 2014). Student suspension requires a student to be removed from the classroom or school building for a period of time following an offense that occurred on school grounds. In general, these student offenses involve violence toward another student or a staff member. Suspensions can be in school, by which a student is removed from the classroom but remains on campus, or out of school, by which a student is not permitted on school grounds for a specified number of days. These disciplinary actions should only be used when other alternatives have been tried and have not been successful in changing the student's behavior (Martinez, 2009).

New Regulations for Suspensions in California

According to CDE (2021), suspensions or expulsions have been used as a method of addressing student behavior. However, according to research, removing students from the learning environment does not address the behavior or the antecedent for the behavior. In 2013, California passed legislation prohibiting the suspension of students in Grades K–3 for defiance or disruption (Assembly Bill 420; CDE, 2021). In 2019, this legislation was amended as Senate Bill 419 to include students in Grades 4–8. California

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guidelines on discipline state the need to support students and to provide an educational environment that is geared toward creating and fostering the social-emotional well-being of students as a component of academic success (CDE, 2021). Section 48900(v) of the California Education Code encourages the superintendent of a school district or the principal to provide alternatives to suspension and expulsion (CDE, 2021).

The COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on Schools

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted in-person schooling and forced educational leaders and students into teaching and learning virtually. When students returned to the classroom more than a year later, educators found an increased need to teach the competencies of SEL in response to students' frustrations, lack of social interactions, and trauma resulting from the school closures (Zieher et al., 2021). By integrating social-emotional learning into culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom, teachers can foster these skills in the students they teach and interact with daily. The need for the intentional teaching of social-emotional skills with a focus on working collaboratively and respectfully was never more evident than it was after returning to in-person instruction.

SEL in Elementary School

SEL refers to the ability to manage stress more effectively and emotions more proactively rather than reactively, which is critical to students' long-term success in all areas of life (Mahoney et al., 2018). According to Long (2019), the effective implementation of SEL in the classroom reduces the need for reactive classroom management and instead instills critical thinking skills. In addition, when social, emotional, and academic development are integrated, student's motivation, engagement,

and incentive to achieve academically also improves. Gaias et al. (2020) reported that a supportive social and emotional climate can improve mental, physical, and behavioral health by fostering students' perceptions of support and safety. The implementation of social and emotional learning can increase academic performance and better equip students to cope with their emotions (Zieher et al., 2021).

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, n.d.-c), school teachers support social-emotional development through the intentional teaching of interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills. These skills support psychosocial functioning and development. According to the CASEL website, the fundamentals of SEL are

> the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel, and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. (Fundamentals of SEL – CASEL section)

A school teacher's ability to increase engagement, improve the school culture, enhance effective learning skills is essential. Relationships and emotional development are affected by what people learn from school, family, and the community. Therefore, for students to receive the greatest benefit, these skills must be addressed effectively as part of the educational process (Elias et al., 1997).

In addition, for the implementation of SEL to be successful, the stakeholders need to create and foster a caring and supportive school climate (Kennedy, 2019). Effective SEL interventions require a consistent and systemic approach that provides

developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant techniques that account for school culture and climate (White et al., 2020). According to Cohen (2006), creating and fostering a school culture focused on social-emotional development will prepare students to be successful in all aspects of their lives. Assembly Bill 982, enacted in 2019, made provisions for the implementation of the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) with the inclusion of restorative practices, SEL, and school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) as meaningful methods of repairing harm and helping students to understand the impact of their actions on others (CDE, 2021).

PBIS in Elementary Schools

PBIS is an evidence-based, multitiered system that organizes behavioral strategies focused on improving, promoting, and reinforcing positive student behaviors while improving academic, social, emotional, and mental health (Center on PBIS, n.d.-a). PBIS is a school-wide system that encourages students to be safe, responsible, and respectful. These three attributes reinforcing positive student behaviors contribute to an overall positive school culture.

MTSS

MTSS, similar to PBIS, is a framework that relies upon the interdisciplinary approach that focuses on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as part of the core instruction with differentiated learning (CDE, n.d.-c. Differentiated learning is intentional teaching and lessons that are developed and based on individualized student needs. The alignment of these systems to ensure the success for all students' academically, behaviorally, and socially is the premise behind the MTSS (CDE, n.d.-c). The MTSS functions to improve the quality of academic instruction, SEL, and behavioral

interventions of students in schools (Center on PBIS, n.d.-b) through a tiered system of supports from core support given to all students to intensive support given to students who need it.

Restorative Practices in Elementary School Settings

The term *restorative practices* refers to strategies that involve the changing of relationships that places the responsibility for actions on the students while fostering communication. Students receive encouragement from teachers, counselors, and other students when asking for and accepting help to address their behavior or the behavior of others (Mirsky, 2007). Restorative practices use varying degrees of conflict resolution, along with initiative-taking interventions, to create and strengthen the social and emotional bonds within the school community (Kervick et al., 2020). Restorative practices support healthy relationships and promote the integration of proactive social and emotional systems of support. According to Gregory et al. (2016), restorative practices has the goal of focusing on prevention and intervention to transform the interactions between students and adults to create a positive school culture. The promotion of social and emotional skills serves as an alternative method to teach students how to manage conflict and accept responsibility for their actions.

Current initiatives associated with SEL have primarily been focused on restorative practices and interventions. Researchers have explored the alignment between proactive interventions, such as PBIS and MTSS, and restorative practices as a means of reducing exclusionary discipline, building a positive school community, and increasing instructional time (Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018; Swain-Bradway et al., 2015; Vincent et al., 2016). Research has also found that students who participate in targeted

SEL instruction, either within the classroom or schoolwide, have shown long-term and short-term benefits in their social-emotional skills and academic outcomes (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). The effective implementation of any of these initiatives requires that the school culture be one that promotes and supports SEL as a core value.

Elementary School Leadership

Successful leadership can foster positive relationships and create a positive school culture and climate (Branson et al., 2015) that empower members of the school community to be socially aware individuals who work toward the cohesiveness of all stakeholders. The foundational and primary role for school leadership is to create a culture of support in which the students feel that the teachers are always there for them (Beatty & Campbell-Evans, 2020).

Leaders today need to possess and effectively use social and emotional skills if they want to be successful (Goleman et al., 2013). They need to be able to cultivate and collaborate in teams, understand and internalize another person's perspective, and demonstrate cultural sensitivity (Committee for Children, 2018). School leaders must know how to handle the demand for students to meet or exceed the expectations and goals of skill mastery on district and state standards testing while fostering social and emotional development. School leaders must also build a culture of collaboration based on a shared sense of purpose and vision through shared leadership (Cohen, 2006). Developing a shared vision and culture across the grade levels allows all stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process and fosters collaboration and buy-in.

Elementary School Principals and Assistant Principals

Principals and assistant principals share the same basic job description of ensuring student achievement, motivating instructional leadership, and maintaining district professional standards. As the leaders of the school, principals and assistant principals share the responsibility of modeling and fostering the school culture (Beatty & Campbell-Evans, 2020) to improve the social-emotional competency of all students and staff. The assistant principal's role is to support the principal in conducting school business, overseeing all academic programs, and collaborating with the principal to maintain student discipline.

Teacher Leaders

Leadership in a school functions as multiple layers in which leadership responsibilities are distributed or shared among people in an organization rather than one person acting as leader (Bond, 2021). Within the structure of a school or school district, tenured teachers provide the support for buy-in needed by the administration to achieve the shared vision and mission of the school (Salamondra, 2021). Lead teachers often function as a bridge between the administration, other school leaders, and the other grade-level teachers. Lead teachers may be instructed to meet regularly with the administration to discuss school business, budget, and upcoming events and to provide instructional support through peer mentoring and to disseminate information to their grade level.

Each school district or school may have different methods or requirements regarding communication and meetings. Teacher leaders can increase individual teacher efficacy through mentoring and collective efficacy through opportunities for

collaboration (Thorton et al., 2020). According to Donohoo et al. (2018), the effectiveness of teacher efforts on student learning are increased when the culture of the school reflects the efficacy of the teachers. Teacher leaders can influence the school beyond their classroom while maintaining their connection to students. This level of school involvement allows the teacher to remain in the classroom and have greater decision-making authority in the school without becoming an administrator.

Organizational Culture in Schools

Culture is the patterns, values, and beliefs shared by all stakeholders; it defines how individuals behave either individually or collectively. In addition, it involves the process by which each individual learns to function in society (Durlak et al., 2015). This can take many forms that include the majority or small minorities within a single organization. The culture of a school or school district impacts which policies are adopted, who benefits from these policies, and how these adoptions will affect the school as a whole.

A caring school culture that fosters social-emotional development prepares students for a successful life and positive participation in society (Cohen, 2006). The building of positive relationships with teachers influences students' sense of belonging to the school and therefore enables the culture of the school to be enhanced and improved. The organizational structures of a school can support the development of positive relationships between students and teachers (Sheras & Bradshaw, 2016). By laying the foundation for authentic, meaningful relationships between teachers and students, social-emotional development of the students allows them to be able to positively cope with complex emotions, which increases their level of academic learning. Bonding with

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students from the 1st day creates a culture of consistency and security that fosters learning and allows this learning to be more productive (Long, 2019). The administration at each school site or district site plays an active role in creating a positive school culture and fostering a cohesive environment in which teachers and students feel accepted and safe to express their opinions and desires. How this is accomplished differs from school to school and is interpreted in different ways.

Foundational Theories

Leadership

The traditional role of leadership has been to maximize the output of the workforce while keeping cost at a minimum. Effective leadership involves collaboration and communication within a group to develop a social relationship of shared visions and goals. It involves the ability to influence others, either directly or indirectly, to problem solve with shared roles in the decision-making process. The amount of influence displayed by a leader or group of leaders is dependent upon the ability to respond appropriately in any given situation and the type of organization (Dimmock, 2011). Dimmock (2011) simplified the definition of leadership: "Leadership is a social influence process guided by a moral purpose with the aim of building capacity by optimizing available resources towards the achievement of shared goals" (p. 7).

Leadership in Education

Beatty and Campbell-Evans (2020) identified that successful educational leaders build collaborative and supportive cultures and foster a shared sense of purpose and a cohesive school with positive relationships between students and teachers. The relationships that develop among district administrators, school site principals and

assistant principals, teacher leaders, and students have a direct impact on the culture and environment of the school (Torres, 2022). According to Durlak et al. (2015), school principals impact student growth and academic achievement by providing a school culture that motivates and engages students to achieve. In addition, school principals can positively shape a school's culture when they distribute leadership to others, such as teacher leaders, as they create and foster learning communities (Torres, 2022). When the members of the group work together to achieve common goals (i.e., cohesive teams), all members from principal to teacher leaders to students are supported and encouraged to grow (Ganotice et al., 2022). The emotional attachment gained from these relationships encourages all to perform at their best (Adriansyah et al., 2023).

In recent years, the need to address the social-emotional health of students in public schools has become increasingly evident. Kendziora and Yoder (2016) demonstrated that implementing SEL curricula in schools builds both social awareness and relationships while improving student academic achievement. The SEL curriculum involves the development of multiple skills that enable students to improve their academic knowledge, build positive attitudes and behaviors, and form positive relationships. Bond (2021) stated that the function of leadership in a school is represented as multiple layers in which leadership responsibilities are distributed or shared among people in an organization.

Distributive Leadership

The use of distributed leadership, sometimes referred to as shared leadership, creates a system in which decision making by all is prioritized (Diamond & Spillane, 2016; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). This can be achieved through a variety of practices,

including the flexibility and teams that involve individuals with different roles to problem solving along with the implementation and development of processes for curriculum instruction that is led by educators (Spillane, 2012). Distributed leadership in schools means developing teacher leaders as part of the school leadership team. Teacher leadership is described as having a specific set of skills and knowledge that teachers possess. The application of these skills when transforming schools improves the overall school culture and improves student achievement.

Emotional Competence Theory and the Role of Emotional Intelligence

Mayer and Salovey (1997) used the term *emotional competence* to refer to one's ability to observe surroundings quickly, evaluate the emotions expressed by others, recognize how feelings and emotions are connected actions, and regulate one's emotions in various settings. In addition, emotional intelligence (EI), which may also be referred to as emotional competence (Pavlović et al., 2021), is the possession of the ability and knowledge of self and self-emotions. Emotional competence is believed to occur when an individual attains emotional achievement, which allows the individual to respond emotionally appropriately in different environments. According to Macias (2020), the key to success in various environments, such as school, social situations, and the workplace, is the development of emotional competence.

EI

EI is a set of 12 skills or competencies that allows an individual to make effective and productive decisions even in stressful or emotional situations. The 12 key EI competencies are interrelated and are dependent upon the four domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, 1995).

Individuals are challenged with the ability to effectively deal with emotions every day. Possessing the skill to react rationally rather than emotionally is critical. According to Bradberry and Graves (2009), the effective communication between people's rational brain and their emotional brain is EI. Emotions can improve or impede an individual's academic progress, and the building of relationships can affect what and how the individual learns. Schools must effectively address this process because numerous students lack the social-emotional competencies, which results in a disconnect from school. This lack of connection can negatively impact students' academic performance, behavior, and overall health (Durlak, 2011). Schools play a significant role in fostering not only academic development but also social-emotional development.

Conceptual Framework: CASEL

The CASEL organization was created in 1994 under its original name, the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (Elias et al., 1997). In the same year, the Fetzer Institute hosted a conference for researchers, educators, child advocates, and others in the field with the goal of discovering the missing piece in education (CASEL, n.d.-b). Nine CASEL collaborators, who worked in multiple fields and on various projects, coauthored the book *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators*, which formally defined the field of SEL. These nine coauthors joined with the common goal of preventing violence and drug use in schools, promoting healthy choices for students, supporting partnerships with community organizations, and promoting and increasing responsible behavior. The CASEL (n.d.-c) conceptual framework consists of five interconnected competencies and supports integration of data-driven social and emotional learning as a vital part of the educational process.

The fundamentals of the CASEL framework in regard to SEL focuses on human development as an integral part of education and states that individuals acquire knowledge skills, develop their identity, and manage emotions as they demonstrate empathy for others and develop relationships (Durlak et al., 2015). The five CASEL competencies are self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision making.

Competency 1: Self-Awareness

The first competency is self-awareness, which focuses on the feelings and emotions, thoughts, and beliefs about an individuals' world, such as norms and rules; the relationship between these beliefs; and their effect on behavior (CASEL, n.d.-c). The culture of an individual's environment influences the stability of self-awareness. It also gives students the tools to engage in meaningful collaboration and to develop effective communication skills (Durlak et al., 2015).

Competency 2: Social Awareness

The second competency is social awareness, which includes the ability of an individual to feel compassion for others and recognize how family, school, and the community can support the individual. To be socially competent is also to understand the culture norms for socially appropriate behavior in different settings (CASEL, n.d.-c; Durlak et al., 2015).

Competency 3: Relationship Skills

The third competency is relationship skills, which includes possessing the skills to communicate clearly, be an active listener, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem solve and negotiate conflict constructively. This competency also includes the ability to

adjust thinking and reactions to diverse cultural and social situations. Another component of this competency is the ability and willingness to ask for help when it is needed (CASEL, n.d.-c).

Competency 4: Self-Management

The fourth competency is self-management, which includes the beliefs, rules, and expectations of society and the building of heathy relationships. The individual must learn the skills to regulate emotions in all situations, maintain impulse control in challenging situations, and delay gratification until goals are achieved. Positive self-management relies on learning self-discipline to manage stress while having the courage to take the initiative to accomplish goals (CASEL, n.d.-c; Durlak et al., 2015).

Competency 5: Responsible Decision Making

Last, the fifth competency is responsible decision making, which is influenced by family culture and is the ability to be open-minded when analyzing information. This competency requires the tools and strategies to analyze and consider the effects of the individuals' actions on themselves and others, to make personal choices regarding behavior and social interactions in different environments, and to make ethical decisions about cause and effect in regard to behavior choices and consequences (CASEL, n.d.-c; Durlak et al., 2015).

In recent years, the need to address the social-emotional health of students in public schools has become increasingly evident. Kendziora and Yoder (2016) demonstrated that implementing SEL curricula in schools builds both social awareness and relationships while improving student academic achievement. The SEL curriculum involves the development of multiple skills that enable students to improve their

academic knowledge, to build positive attitudes and behaviors, and to form positive relationships.

Statement of Research Problem

Research has been conducted over the past decades regarding positive behavior interventions and multitiered support systems as well as the importance of social and emotional learning for students. Studies have been conducted on the effective implementation of restorative practices and SEL as components included as a change in the approach to student discipline. Kendziora and Yoder (2016) highlighted recommendations that influence the academic and behavioral growth of students through SEL. They also stressed the importance of a consistent, systematic SEL approach to benefit all students and to foster a positive school culture. In addition, students' behavior reflects their feelings, and these behaviors can have a positive or negative effect on their academic growth. Students who feel that school is a safe and supportive environment are more likely to engage in school and focus more on academic content, resulting in improved academic performance (Mirsky, 2007).

In addition, research has been conducted on creating a positive school culture. Torres (2022), Trujillo (2019), and Cohen (2006) are some of the researchers on this topic. Within their research, the need for creating connections through meaningful relationships and mutual respect was addressed. Moreover, White et al. (2020) and Sheras and Bradshaw (2016) explored the intersection of school culture and SEL by examining the supports available. School administrators and educators have responded to students' needs with SEL lessons and restorative practices, and have intensified counseling efforts to create a positive school climate. However, although research has

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been conducted on the impact of intentional social and emotional practices on student outcomes (White et al., 2020), little has been done on the allocation of time and resources needed to sustain the implementation of restorative practices and SEL communities. Also, researchers have agreed that building emotional skills in elementary school is crucial, but precisely how school leaders influence this growth still needs further study. According to Beaty and Campbell-Evans (2020), there is a need to understand how leaders influence school culture and positive relationships to effectively foster student social-emotional development.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this Delphi study was to identify the strategies that elementary teacher leaders use with other staff members to create and foster a school culture that supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies (self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision making). An additional purpose was to identify what teacher leaders perceive to be the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture that supports these SEL competencies.

Research Questions

1. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies?
   a. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports self-awareness?
   b. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports social awareness?

c. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports relationship skills?

d. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports self-management?

e. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports responsible decision making?

2. What do elementary teacher leaders perceive to be the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture with other staff members that supports SEL?

Significance

Recently, there has been a renewed interest in SEL and how intentional instruction addresses the student's mental health as well as the academic benefits it can produce (Torres, 2022). Studies have been conducted on the effective implementation of SEL. According to CASEL (n.d.-a), students must understand and manage their emotions and behavior as well as effectively communicate and participate in the decision-making process.

Durlack et al. (2015) published a handbook titled *Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice*. This handbook provided specific and intentional teaching of the SEL competencies and has been instrumental in the implementation of SEL at school sites by teachers, instructional assistants, and support providers in special education. This study investigated how school leaders foster a positive school culture through SEL. With a focus on school culture through SEL, this study extends the work of Durlack et al. Social-emotional curriculum developers may

benefit from this information as they construct a more productive and effective method of collaborating with teacher leaders who interact with students daily.

School leadership is one of the most influential factors that affect student academic achievement and how a culture of growth and achievement is accomplished (Patti et al., 2015). School leaders could benefit from this information as they develop specific strategies to build and foster a positive culture within a school or school district and they work together to promote the benefits of social-emotional education. Patti et al. (2015) published an article titled "Developing Socially, Emotionally, and Cognitively Competent School Leaders and Learning Communities." This publication reviewed the work of Goleman et al. (2013) in which specific skills designed to address a leader's social awareness and relationship building were examined. With a focus on social-emotional skills, this study may extend previous works by identifying and describing how elementary school teacher leaders use these social-emotional skills to promote a positive school culture that fosters SEL competencies.

Kendziora and Yoder's (2016) study focused on the social-emotional competencies that promote a positive learning environment and higher academic achievement. The specific supports needed to foster improved behavior and discipline were identified as well as the necessary skills that build positive relationships (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). This study contributes to the existing literature by Kendziora and Yoder by providing a clearer understanding of how teacher leaders' perceive their role in the development of a school's culture. In addition, it may also extend the knowledge on the importance of SEL and the actual implementation practices necessary for school-wide success. Stakeholders, such as the California Teachers Association (CTA), the

Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), and district professional development, could use this information as they direct the instruction of teachers and administrators to promote SEL within schools.

Definitions

Expert. For this study, to be considered an expert, the elementary school teacher leaders must meet the following criteria: (a) have 5 or more years of TK–5 teaching experience in a Southern California elementary education setting (b) have 2 or more years serving at their current site, and (c) have implemented social-emotional lessons schoolwide at their site.

Relationship Skills Competency. Relationship skills involve creating and sustaining healthy and supportive relationships and effectively communicating and collaborating with individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds (CASEL, n.d.-c).

Responsible Decision Making. Responsible decision making is making caring and thoughtful choices about a person's own personal behavior and social interactions in various situations. This includes the ability to consider the cause and effect of people's actions and how to be accountable for those decisions (CASEL, n.d.-c).

School Culture. School culture is the various needs, characteristics, and attitudes that distinguish schools from other organizations. School culture is reflected in the rules and decision-making processes and shared experiences of all stakeholders (Torres, 2022).

Self-Awareness Competency. Self-awareness involves the understanding of emotions, personal goals, and values and requires the ability to identify how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interrelated (CASEL, n.d.-c; Durlak, 2015).

Self-Management Competency. Self-management is the ability to effectively respond to one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in a variety of situations and to create and achieve personal and academic goals. This includes handling delayed gratification, managing stress, and feeling motivated to achieve (CASEL, n.d.-c).

Social Awareness Competency. Social awareness involves the ability to understand the perspectives of others and to empathize with others, including those from different backgrounds and cultures by actively listening, acknowledging emotions, and responding with understanding. It also requires the ability to identify and recognize the strengths in oneself and others and to possess the ability to understand other perspectives as a component of collaboration (CASEL, n.d.-c; Durlak et al., 2015).

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). SEL is the process of learning that is based on explicit teachings that are student centered and helps students engage in academic, social, and emotional skills to develop effective and positive communication skills and to build and maintain positive relationships (CASEL, n.d.-a).

Teacher Leaders. Within the structure of a school or school district, tenure teachers provide the support for buy-in needed by the administration to achieve the shared vision and mission of the school. Successful teacher leaders support a collaborative culture through distributed or shared leadership (Beatty & Campbell-Evans, 2020).

Delimitations

This study was delimited to full-time teachers identified as teacher leaders in public elementary schools who taught TK through fifth grade students in Riverside County, California, and who had knowledge of teaching practices, social-emotional

curriculum, and experience teaching prior to, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The following delimitations clarified the boundaries of this study:

1. The study was delimited to a minimum of 15 expert panel members comprising (a) current elementary school teacher leaders with 5 or more years of experience, (b) teachers who have been at their current site for more than 2 years, (c) school-wide, social-emotional lessons that have been implemented. This limited the ability to generalize the results of this study to other areas throughout the nation or the world.

2. The focus of the study was delimited to gaining a consensus on the strategies teacher leaders use to create and foster a school culture that supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies.

3. This study did not support a predetermined assumption or hypothesis.

Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduced the study, including background information, the statement of the problem, the significance of the study, definitions of terms used, and study delimitations. Chapter II provides a thorough examination of the literature on elementary education and how teacher leaders build cohesive teams through the use of various strategies. Chapter II specifically examines leadership within elementary education, including the challenges faced by teachers as they provide social and emotional instruction as a basis for academic growth. Chapter III provides the methodology used for the study, including the research design, study population, and sample criteria used for the study. Chapter IV offers a detailed analysis of the findings of the study. Finally, Chapter V concludes the study by providing an

interpretation of the data, offering conclusions and implications based on analysis of the study results, and proposing recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Elementary Education

I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better.

—Maya Angelou, Hearst Magazine Media

The primary purpose of public education is to provide foundational skills, such as reading, writing, and mathematics, for all students. The earliest form of education in America began as a method of religious education in the 1600s. However, as more people migrated to the country with different religious views, private education became the norm and only available to the wealthy. The creation of public education was first suggested by Thomas Jefferson in the 19th century, and his ideas became the foundation for educational systems to follow (Thattai, 2017).

Until the 1840s, education was a benefit only available to the wealthy. In the 1860s education became an institution, and schools were organized into grades and were associated with the amount of content that was necessary for children to learn within a given year (Aksoy, 1998). The reformation of education promoted that all children would benefit from education by "creating good citizens, uniting society, and preventing crime and poverty" (Thattai, 2017, p. 2). In addition, as a direct result of the educational reformers such as Horace Mann, elementary education became available to all American children, and by 1918, elementary school was mandatory in all states.

In the 1920s the reformers once again acted and began to demand that elementary education was also responsible for the social-emotional adjustments of all students. Horace Mann, one of educational reformation leaders, also recommended that communities create common or public schools that are funded by tax dollars to assist

student education (Wright & Wright, 2021). Mann believed that children who were from different social, religious, and economic backgrounds would learn acceptance and respect if they were educated together. These common schools would also teach common values that included self-discipline and tolerance for others (Aksoy, 1998).

These common or public schools would be tasked with improving children's academic education, socialization, interpersonal relationships, and social conditions. Throughout the next 10 decades, the federal government and state agencies would pass laws, such as *Brown vs. the Board of Education* in 1954, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, and Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, geared toward the improvement of education of all children, including students from racial minority groups, females, and students with disabilities (Luster, 2018; Wright & Wright, 2021).

Theoretical Background of Child Development

There are several different theories on how children develop and how this development affects their early childhood education. Each theory provides insight on the meaning of child development and behavior (Saracho & Evans, 2021). These theories are based on observed phenomena, such as children's behavior, language development, and their relationship to the environment (Saracho & Evans, 2021). Both constructivist theory and ecological theory have relevance to the social-emotional development of elementary children.

Constructivist Theory

Cognitive psychologists, also known as constructivists, such as Jean Piaget (1896–1980), Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896–1934), and Jerome Bruner (1915–2016),

considered how individuals construct their knowledge of the world and themselves through lived experiences (Saracho & Evans, 2021). This knowledge helps to create their interpretation of the world, aids their understanding, and teaches them how to adjust their understanding as they develop. In addition, constructivists theorized that children use the physical and social knowledge they have gained to interact with the world. This social knowledge "refers to the social customs that society has defined" (Saracho, 2023, p. 19). An important aspect of the constructivist framework is that the responsibility to learn is placed on the child rather than the teacher, and the role of community for social-emotional learning is emphasized.

Jean Piaget referred to cognitive development as the way in which children process information as they acquire knowledge, gain intelligence, make perceptions about their experiences, and develop language skills (Saracho & Evans, 2021). The manner in which children develop their understanding of the world is the foundation of cognitive development. This understanding is viewed through two interactive processes, or schemas, known as assimilation and accommodation. Children in the assimilation stage expand their knowledge by adding new information through interaction with their environment to the prior knowledge they possessed to further their understanding. When they learn something new that is similar, they construct a new schema to accommodate the new information. This process is referred to as accommodation. Piaget (1963) believed that children go through various stages of intellectual development that are influenced by maturation, experience, social transmission, and maturation/self-regulation. These influences control cognitive development, and their integration are necessary for effective progression through each stage (Saracho & Evans, 2021).

Vygotsky's (1962) theory is based on the idea of zones of development and their impact on learning. His theory of cognitive psychology focused on two types of development: the natural and the cultural. Unlike Piaget's theory of accommodation in which individual's knowledge is expanded through normal levels of development (Saracho, 2023), the natural is associated with maturation, and the cultural resulted from the development of language and reasoning (Saracho & Evans, 2021). For students to progress in their development, even when cognitively ready, as stated by Piaget (1963), students need to be supported socially and emotionally by those in their environment. They need to participate in positive social interactions that enrich their language development and develop their ability to think conceptually to learn how to connect ideas, strengthen their understanding, and create new ideas about their environment (Saracho & Evans, 2021). Vygotsky's theory also introduced the concept that a child's cognitive development can be hindered by the zone of proximal development (ZPD). In the ZPD, children are able to progress in their cognitive development but require support and social interaction to advance through this stage. Children in this zone expand their ability to think creatively and maturely while improving their independent skills as they are presented with challenging problem-solving tasks. Children are attached to their environment and rely upon it to shape their understanding of the world and where they fit. The ZPD is a culturally mediated stage and is an indicator of how a child's functioning progresses through social interactions (Shabani et al., 2010).

Jerome Bruner was also interested in the relationship between thought and language, and he established theories on multiple aspects of learning, such as perception, learning, and memory (Saracho & Evans, 2021). Bruner (1990) introduced the American

educational system to the theories on cognitive psychology originally developed by Piaget (1963) and investigated a child's individual perceptions of values (right and wrong) and Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Bruner's (1990) framework, under the umbrella of cognitive development/constructivism, introduced teaching methods such as scaffolding and spiral curriculum in which information is structured and builds a child's knowledge based on prior skills that are retaught yearly to reach mastery (Saracho & Evans, 2021). Each year, the information became more difficult but relied on information previously attained. Bruner (1990) agreed with Vygotsky's (1962) theories that learning impacts development and that intellectual development is impacted by the environment. Each of these theorists emphasized the importance of the environment for the child and the child's ability to learn. They also saw the social and emotional importance of cognitive, social, and academic development.

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1977) studied the ecology of human development and how environmental factors affect the process. Ecological theory states that development continues throughout the individuals' life, and it reflects their understanding of the environment and how they relate to it. This development is a process of interacting between personal characteristics (such as age, temperament, gender, and intelligence) and the environment (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). The development of a child is contained within four systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

Microsystem

The immediate environment of individuals is their core and includes themselves and the interactions at this level that indirectly affect development, which is referred to as

the microsystem. A microsystem is constructed of complex relationships between the developing individuals and their immediate environment in various settings. For students, this environment primarily consists of school, neighborhood or community, and home (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The strength of relationships at this level can foster positive emotional development, and it is a fundamental element because it helps the individual to further develop relationships with others (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022).

Mesosystem

The mesosystem includes the interaction of relationships in the individuals' major settings at specific points in their life. For a developing child, this may include home, school, friends, and religious organization. Simply stated, the mesosystem is the inclusion of several microsystems and how they are interrelated (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Exosystem

An exosystem extends the mesosystem by embracing other aspects, such as formal and informal settings, that do not directly include the developing person or child but influence and may determine what occurs in that environment. For students, this system includes school, media, social media, government agencies such as law enforcement, and transportation (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Macrosystem

A macrosystem differs from the other systems in that it is not the specific environment that affects the developing person but more of the culture or subculture that exists in each setting. Individuals develop the implicit thoughts, feelings, and customs that are transmitted from one setting to another by individuals in their cultural environment and in their everyday life and explicitly through laws, regulations, and rules.

As a child is developing, the explicit and implicit rules and regulations are primarily transferred at school (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Research into the effects of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological theory has emphasized the importance of building positive relationships and their indirect effect on a child's academic achievement and academic motivation and the following of school rules. Research has also indicated that the association between positive school relationships can create positive behavioral outcomes (Allen et al., 2018; El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). Martin and Dowson (2009) found that feeling connected to school "teaches students the beliefs, orientations, and values needed to function effectively in academic environments" that are crucial for development in the macrosystem (p. 329).

Social-Emotional Development in Children

Through education, children are provided with experiences that help them learn how to think. The sociocultural theory describes learning as a social process and a representation of the society or culture children are raised in. A child's development begins on a social level and then becomes more individual (Saracho & Evans, 2021). According to Foster et al. (2022), social-emotional learning (SEL) is "a process that aims to develop competencies that maturing people need to navigate the world around them" (p. 225). The social aspect of SEL refers to the interpersonal development, including relationship skills and social awareness. The emotional component refers to the intrapersonal development of people to achieve self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision making. The learning component encompasses people's ability to grow and create connections with others as their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills mature (Durlak et al., 2015; Elias et al., 1997). Learning is a highly social process, and

the primary focus in education needs to be investing in the development of social-emotional skills as well as the creation of positive and supportive learning environments (Hachem et al., 2022).

SEL refers to a person's ability to handle stress more effectively and manage emotions proactively rather than reactively, and it is critical to students' long-term success in all areas of life (Mahoney et al., 2018). According to Long (2019), the ability to succeed in school, life, and beyond requires that students begin to develop coping skills early in life. SEL involves the development of skills, knowledge, and behaviors to form positive relationships and work effectively and ethically (Zins et al., 2004).

Predicting academic performance can be directly linked to an individual's understanding of social cues and the ability to appropriately respond and is indirectly linked to emotional competence through the effect of social competence. Early research into social cognition noted the connection between social cognition and learning. Vygotsky (1962) defined social cognition as the way students process and use information in social contexts and is an integral part of learning. According to Jacobsen et al. (2019), students in elementary school are developing their social skills and are in the process of being socialized to respond appropriately in various emotional situations. In addition, behaviors that are viewed as aggressive, such hitting, kicking, fighting, and using profanity or vandalism, often are the strategies chosen by students who are not adept at positively processing emotions in stressful situations (Jacobsen et al., 2019). Teachers providing specific and intentional instruction within the classroom that focuses on social-emotional development and the use of positive behaviors can help students deal effectively with stress and emotions. Clearly defining behavioral expectations helps to

develop a common language for teachers, students, and parents to use in a variety of environments. This common language provides opportunities for students to practice appropriate behaviors and encourages relationship building (Carter & Pool, 2012).

Exclusionary Discipline in Elementary Education

The use of exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions or expulsions, were designed for serious offenses in school and on school property. However, the increase in school violence has led to the use of strict discipline in schools and the enactment of laws geared toward creating safe school environments. Many schools and school districts apply strict discipline for minors' behaviors that do not meet the guidelines for exclusionary discipline. This use of suspensions and expulsions have the potential to create a disconnect between students and school (Luster, 2018).

Elementary Suspensions and Expulsions

In general, suspensions and expulsions were intended to be used as a last effort to correct and decrease inappropriate student behavior in school (Wilkerson & Afacan, 2022). According to the Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (2024), a suspension "is the temporary removal of a child from the learning setting," either from a class or school (What is suspension and expulsion? section). Suspension is defined by Education Code (EC) section 48925 as the removal of a student from "ongoing instruction for adjustment purposed" (Portillo, 2023, p. 6). It also specifically stated that the student is not to be reassigned to another classroom or removed from a classroom without a referral to the principal and the parent or guardian contacted.

In California, Education Code 48900 allows for the suspension of students or the recommendation for expulsion if they commit a violent crime, are found in possession of

drugs or drug paraphernalia, or commit violent or sexual acts against others (National

Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, n.d.). Suspensions cannot exceed 20

days in any school year or more than 5 consecutive days. If a student is suspended from

another district but changes districts, the days of suspension can be counted toward the

maximum number of days in the new district (CAEDC 48903; National Center on Safe

Supportive Learning Environments, n.d.). After the completion of a suspension, students

are permitted to return to school the following day. Expulsion is the permanent removal

of a student from the educational setting. According to the National Center on Safe

Supportive Learning Environments (n.d.), "Suspension and expulsion typically occur as a

response to a child whose behaviors challenge or overwhelm the adults in that setting"

(p. 1). Students recommended for expulsion must receive a hearing within 30 days, and

they may be expelled for the remainder of the school semester and up to a full school

year. Students who are expelled may be given the opportunity to return if outlined

provisions have been met (American Civil Liberties Union Northern California, n.d.).

Zero Tolerance Policies and the Effect on Education

In the 1980s, school districts in various states began to implement policies with a

mandated student expulsion for any offenses related to gangs, drugs, or violence on a

school campus and surrounding property. However, this soon became the means by

which schools and school districts began to remove students from schools for other

reasons. The term *zero tolerance* came about as a result of increased drug trafficking on

ships in the military. According to Skiba and Knesting (2001), this program first received

national attention "in 1986 by the U.S. Attorney Peter Nunez in San Diego" as a method

to condone the impounding of vessels that were found to have drugs aboard ship (p. 5). In

addition, this culminated as a response to drug trafficking on land or sea when the "U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese, in 1988, ordered customs officials to seize the vehicles and property of anyone crossing the border with even trace amounts of drugs, and charge those individuals in federal court" (Skiba, 2000, p. 5). Under the direction of President Ronald Reagan, the passage of the Drug-Free Schools and Campuses Act was enacted to assist schools in combating the war on drugs (Library of Congress, 1989). The severity of discipline implemented culminated in the Gun Free School Zones Act in the early 1990s, which was intended to remove students from school campus for offenses related to the use of a firearm.

In the aftermath of school violence, specifically shootings, schools and school districts took strong actions to ensure the safety of their students and staff. According to Skiba and Knesting (2001), the policy of zero tolerance was intended to relay the message that inappropriate student behaviors would not be tolerated on school grounds, and any offenses would be met with severe consequences. This idea ultimately transferred to include any behavior that was deemed disruptive or did not follow the stated rules of the school. These behaviors included violating dress codes, disrespecting an authority figure or insubordination, bringing toy guns or swords to school, or bringing items that could be perceived as a threat (Martinez, 2009). District administration viewed zero tolerance against smaller offenses as a deterrent against larger more aggressive behaviors in the future. Students were disciplined with a predetermined code of conduct regardless of circumstances (California Legislative Information, 2024). Zero tolerance was later used in schools and school districts as a method of combating the increase in gang violence, drug use, and school shootings, which required school administration to

react to school offenses using specific and consistent codes of discipline California Legislative Information (2024).

The policies of zero tolerance were seen as a way to enforce discipline for all students regardless of race and ethnicity and the situation or circumstances. In addition, although the implementation of these policies varied from school to school, and school district to school district, the overall understanding and design was to create a safer school environment and to improve the school culture (Skiba et al., 2014). Although the intention was to have uniform enforcement of behavioral expectations, issues of fairness and questions about whether or not these actions actually had a positive impact on school safety and behavior arose. The zero tolerance discipline codes seldom allowed for flexibility (such as counseling and parent involvement) when dealing with disruptive or aggressive student behaviors in the school setting, which fractured the relationships between educators and students. The exclusionary discipline actions on a student, such as suspension and expulsion, disrupts the learning environment for these students "and may cause feelings of being undervalued, unwelcome, and misunderstood" (Luster, 2018, p. 2). The reformation of school and district policies following zero tolerance resulted in school mandates to better serve students who were identified as at risk due to various factors, such as home environment and their connection to school (Zins et al., 2004).

In 2011, the Obama administration enacted several initiatives that authorized schools and school districts to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions and instead enact policies and procedures geared toward alternative methods of discipline. The Department of Education and the Department of Justice launched the Supportive School Discipline Initiative as a coordinated effort toward alternative discipline

(Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). Steinberg and Lacoe's (2017) research cited the negative

effects of disruptive peers on all students and the need to recognize the adverse effects.

Although a considerable amount of time and energy has been given to decreasing

student behaviors deemed inappropriate, less time has been given to proactive

interventions aimed at preventing the behaviors that may lead to suspension and

expulsions. Teachers providing intentional and specific instruction on strategies and tools

that help students manage their emotions did not come into focus until recently (Jacobsen

et al., 2019). Students who are suspended or expelled may feel disconnected from school

and their education because the root cause of the behavior is not being addressed, their

learning is being disrupted, and they do not feel valued. Therefore, school district

administrators in coordination with the district superintendents are encouraged to find

alternative methods to reduce inappropriate behaviors while maintaining positive

academic progress (Luster, 2018). It is important to find and implement strategies and

programs to address and meet the needs of all students.

In elementary school, also known as primary education, students are still

developing and being socialized on the appropriate behavioral norms associated with

attending a public or private elementary school (Jacobsen et al., 2019). Suspensions were

originally designed as a response to extreme or violent behaviors on a school campus.

Skiba et al. (2014) revealed that more than 2.7 million students are removed from school

each year because of disruptive behavior in the classroom or on school grounds.

However, few of these students are suspended for substance use, violence, and carrying

or using a weapon. According to Gregory et al. (2016), the implementation of these

policies did not demonstrate a reduction in behaviors nor did they increase an atmosphere of safety within school.

Jacobsen et al. (2019) found that "harsh or excessive punishment such as suspension or expulsion can foster negative emotions, particularly if the child feels" they have been "treated unfairly" or their intensions have been "misunderstood" (p. 977). In addition, these emotions may increase if the student falls behind academically or cause increased stress within the home environment. Agnew and Brezina (2010) found that physically aggressive behaviors, such as those that may lead to suspensions or expulsions, may be methods of coping for elementary students who are still developing their verbal skills and obtaining strategies to regulate their emotions. As a way to reduce the negative effects of suspension such as the loss of instructional minutes, which can result in a decrease of academic progress, Assembly Bill 98, passed in 2019, required that students suspended for 2 or more days receive homework through the district local educational agencies if requested by their parent or legal guardian (California Legislative Information, 2018).

New Regulations for Suspensions

Suspensions and expulsions, also known as exclusionary discipline, in California were amended in 2013 to exclude willful defiance and disruptions as grounds to remove a student from the learning environment. California passed Senate Bill 419, which prohibited suspensions for students in Grades K–3, and in 2019, Grades 4–8 were also included (CDE, 2021). As a result, school districts have moved toward the use of alternative methods of discipline, such as the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), social-emotional learning (SEL) and

the use of restorative practices to address behavioral concerns while addressing academic needs of all students (CDE, 2021).

Further provisions were made to address the root cause of student behaviors and limit the negative effects of exclusionary discipline. California Education Code (EC) 48900.5 (California Legislative Information, 2024) states that suspension, which included supervised suspension (also known as on-campus suspensions), should only be used when all other methods and interventions have been attempted and did not achieve the desired results to modify or change student behavior. This provision also states that district superintendents and principals are encouraged to use research-based alternatives to support and improve the behavioral and academic outcomes and to correct specific misbehavior (CDE, n.d.-a). The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was enacted in 2013 to focus on data-driven continual improvement that strengthens the use of support for students dealing with the effects of trauma, disability, or socioeconomic disadvantages. This is part of a framework to review the suspension rate of school districts in California and to analyze and address the underlying causes of student behavior. The LCFF provides support and goals for students returning to school after a suspension or expulsion with a focus on implementing positive disciplinary measures and the development of positive school relationships that are inclusive and evidence based (CDE, n.d.-d).

Transitioning From Zero Tolerance to Emotional Health

Mirsky (2007) explored the connections between a student's emotional health, the classroom environment, and the teacher's ability to effectively address students' emotional needs without detracting from their academic needs. Prior research has done

little to expand the knowledge on understanding why certain behaviors occur. Using strategies aimed at correcting behavior deserves consideration to reduce the amount of instructional time that is lost on student behavior and to increase student skills academically, socially, and emotionally. Martens and Andreen (2013) stated,

> Student misbehavior adversely affects instruction, the learning environment, and the overall school climate, as well as the overall school culture is affected by the behavior of the school and the staff. Behavior issues interrupt and displace classroom instruction when teachers are forced to redirect and consequence the misbehaving student. (p. 313)

Teachers providing students with the skills and strategies to self-manage their behaviors and response to behaviors will decrease the amount of time used for handling disruptive behaviors and increase the focus on academic, social, and emotional skills that are geared to improving not only the classroom but also the school as a whole.

For all learners to reach their full potential within the school, there must be trust, cohesiveness, social awareness, and relationship building with teachers that allow students to work as cohesive teams to bond, grow, and learn together. All students have the right to attend a school or learning program that supports them and provides a feeling of safety in which they are able to access education. The ability to access educational services is critical to ensuring that students enter the workforce with skills necessary to provide economically for themselves and to be contributing members of society (CDE, n.d.-a). The consistent instruction of children from kindergarten through 12th grade in the areas of identifying emotions, attitudes about themselves and others, positive social

behaviors, behavior, emotional stress, and academic performance is crucial for student success both in and out of school (Mahoney et al., 2018).

COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on Schools

Beginning in March of 2020, schools nationwide shut their doors and switched to distance learning as a result of the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19). Distance learning was the transition from in-person, face-to-face learning to teaching and learning using synchronous systems, such as Zoom and Google classroom (Zieher et al., 2021). Many of the schools in California remained closed until the beginning of the fall 2021 school year, and some school leaders made the decision to allow students to remain online indefinitely (Hoeven, 2021). This disruption in conventional schooling resulted in students and parents relying on computers, television, or radio to supplement learning (Schleicher, 2020).

In California specifically, education evolved and grew as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many districts were already required to provide data-driven support within the schools and to collaborate with the communities they serve (CDE, 2021; Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). The interventions were designed to improve school accountability, reduce discriminatory discipline practices, and improve student outcomes. However, the abrupt transition to online learning presented major disruptions in education, in student learning, and in family routines. The school closures created challenges for teachers and students in stress levels; in behaviors and their participation in school; and in being disconnected physically, emotionally, and technologically (Breaux, 2023; Santibanez & Guarino, 2021).

Emotional Competence Theory and the Role of Emotional Intelligence

Researchers and authors have used the terms emotional competence and emotional intelligence (EI) interchangeably to describe a set of skills that individuals need to acquire throughout their lives. According to Pavlović et al. (2021), EI can be viewed as the prerequisite that allows the development of emotional competence. EI is the foundational skills and abilities that allows an individual to attain emotional achievement to deal effectively and appropriately with emotions in multiple situations and environments. Learning to master the social and emotional competencies includes individuals' ability to show concern for others, regulate their own emotions in various environments, maintain positive relationships, and improve problem solving and decision-making skills (Durlak et al., 2011).

Emotional Intelligence

EI involves the development of four specific domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Within these domains are competencies that people develop according to their ability to manage and improve the outcomes of social situations and to better manage relationships (Bradberry & Graves, 2009; Goleman, 1995). EI is people's ability to effectively communicate and understand the emotions of themselves and others. It also includes having the awareness, both socially and personally, to recognize and regulate emotions (Durlak et al., 2011). All emotions can be seen as the need to act. This need is implicit in every action, but how people react can be taught and learned. The ability to display or restrain one's emotions is a product of culture (Goleman, 1995). Children begin to develop their emotional skills as their frontal lobes starts to develop during the first 6 years of their life, and the habits of

emotional management continue until adolescence. Children learn emotional

management skills, such as self-soothing and behavior modification, as they mature from

young children to adults. Knowing one's own emotions, the competency of self-

awareness, is the foundation of EI (Goleman, 1995). These skills can improve or impede

people's ability to gain social and emotional competence.

Emotional Competence Theory

To develop emotional competence, it is crucial to develop the EI skills of self-

awareness and self-management. Mayer and Salovey (1997) were the first to coin the

term emotional competence in scientific literature as "the ability to quickly observe,

evaluate, express emotions; recognizing and generating feelings that facilitate thinking;

understanding emotions and knowledge about emotions, and the ability to regulate

emotions in order to promote emotional and intellectual development" (p. 10). Goleman

(1995) used the term emotional competence to refer to the ability to understand one's

own emotions, the ability to listen to others and empathize and process the information

imbedded in emotions, and the ability to express emotions productively. The education of

emotions is developed and strengthened by social interactions in people's environment,

and the development of emotional competency is the key to improved mental health and

academic progress (Pavlović et al., 2021).

<div align="center">

SEL in Elementary School

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The effective implementation of SEL by teachers in the classroom reduces the

need for reactive classroom management and instead instills proactive skills into the

classroom. Teachers trained to become skilled in social and emotional awareness increase

their capacity to handle the complex challenges of their students (Donahue-Keegan et al.,

2019). Research has identified that students who participate in SEL programs experience less anxiety, aggression, and hyperactivity. The decrease in these areas because of the implementation of social and emotional learning increases academic performance (Zieher et al., 2021). The use of social and emotional frameworks such as CASEL, which concentrates on five competencies (self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making), can better equip students socially and emotionally.

The concept of SEL began in 1994 when a group of educators, child advocates, and researchers met at the Fetzer Institute to discuss academic performance and social-emotional competence of students. The primary goal of SEL was based on rigorous research, which found that people's emotions and relationships affect how and what they learn. SEL promotes positive development, reduces problem behaviors, and improves academic performance. Durlak et al. (2015) are early pioneers of SEL. Since its inception, SEL has evolved and transformed to become an integral part of education today. SEL has several constructs, such as positive behavioral intervention and supports (PBIS), MTSS, and CASEL. Durlak et al. stated that social-emotional instruction involves the intentional teaching and practicing of specific student-centered skills and strategies that enhance learning and behavioral health. Educators today must be equipped to instruct students from different ethnic, economic, religious, and academic backgrounds. SEL instruction provides educators with a common language and a way to organize activities and collaborate within and across various grade levels to provide a consistent curriculum between classrooms.

Research has demonstrated that students who participate in SEL programs geared toward the intentional instruction of these SEL skills experience less anxiety, aggression, and hyperactivity. The decrease in these behaviors, in connection with the implementation of social and emotional learning, can increase academic performance and better equip students to cope with their emotions (Zieher et al., 2021). By integrating SEL into culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom, teachers can foster these skills in the students they teach and interact with daily. SEL is not a set program but a set of specific skills that can be taught to individuals in all age groups, ethnicities, and economic levels. The teaching of SEL as integrated strategies into MTSS and PBIS (Durlak et al., 2015) facilitates a school culture that fosters positive perceptions of safety and improves behavioral health for students (Gaias et al., 2020).

Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Interventions

Researchers have explored the alignment between PBIS, MTSS, and restorative practices as a means of reducing exclusionary discipline, building a positive school community, and increasing instructional time (Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018; Swain-Bradway et al., 2015;Vincent et al., 2016). This approach is an alternative that instructs students how to handle conflict through strategies, such as accepting responsibility for their actions without shifting blame to others, repairing relationships with those who have been harmed, and allowing the process of forgiveness to begin (Lash, 2019).

Studies have been conducted over the past decades regarding positive behavior interventions and MTSS and their impact on education. Information gained regarding the importance of social and emotional learning and the experiences for students have also indicated the added academic benefits of focusing on how students learn and process

emotions. Studies have been conducted on the effective implementation of restorative practices and SEL as components included as a change in the approach to student discipline. Districts and educators have responded to students' needs with SEL lessons, restorative circles, and intensive counseling efforts to further the promotion of a positive school culture.

PBIS in Elementary Schools

The policy changes following zero tolerance resulted in school mandates to better serve students who were identified as at risk. The interventions are designed to improve school accountability, reduce discriminatory discipline practices, and improve student outcomes. Interventions such as PBIS focus on the student's needs academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally through the use of a three-tiered system of support in which students are provided with the level of intervention based on their individual needs with a focus on culture and equity (Center on PBIS, n.d.-a; see Figure 1). The primary goal of PBIS is to prevent inappropriate behaviors by providing schoolwide support to all students, within all school settings, and to identify students that require additional targeted support because of behavior that impedes their learning or the learning of others. According to Swain-Bradway et al. (2015), the implementation of PBIS requires a problem-solving team to select and implement a range of interventions and supports based upon the needs of the student population and to adjust those supports through data-driven, continual progress monitoring.

Figure 1

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Model

Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered Model of Prevention
(Lane, Kalberg, & Menzies, 2009)

Goal: Reduce Harm
Specialized individual systems
for students with high risk

Tier 3
Tertiary Prevention (≈5%)

Goal: Reverse Harm
Specialized group systems
for students at risk

Tier 2
Secondary Prevention (≈15%)

Goal: Prevent Harm
School/classroom-wide systems
for all students, staff, & settings

Tier 1
Primary Prevention (≈80%)

| Academic | ◇ | Behavioral | ◇ | Social |
| Validated Curricula | | PBIS Framework | | Validated Curricula |

Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered Model Of Prevention

From: Lane, K.L., Kalberg, J.R., & Menzies, H.M. (2009).
Developing schoolwide programs to prevent and manage
problem behaviors: A step-by-step approach. NY: Guilford

Note. From *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports*, by California State University, n.d. (https://inclusive.calstate.edu/pbis.html). In the public domain.

PBIS is divided into three intervention tiers that address student's needs. In Tier 1, universal supports, practices, and systems are provided to all students in all school settings (classroom and nonclassroom). In Tier 2, targeted supports, practices, and systems are for students who are identified as at risk for developing more serious problem behaviors. Tier 2 targets specific interventions to address those behaviors before they begin. Last, in Tier 3, students receive more intensive, individualized support to improve their behavior and academic outcomes. At Tier 3, the students persistent behavioral concerns are demonstrated, Tier 2 supports have not proven insufficient, and schools rely on formal assessments to determine a student's need and provide individualized support

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(Center on PBIS, n.d.-a). Schools and school districts are monitored for their level of

implementation (bronze, silver, gold, and platinum) and receive awards based on

effective implementation (Center on PBIS, n.d.-a).

Students in a school that has implemented PBIS are recognized both in and out of

the classroom for meeting behavioral expectations through a points system that allows

students to accumulate points and trade them in for tangible items (Center on PBIS, n.d.-

a). The majority of studies reviewed indicated a positive impact on a school's climate and

culture because of the implementation of PBIS. Furthermore, research has stated that the

use of this support system provides academic benefits for all students, improves student

engagement, and increases student attendance.

MTSS

The MTSS framework was created from the integration of response to

intervention and PBIS. Response to intervention is a model of assessment that originally

was introduced as a part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to

identify students who would benefit from more intensive interventions and supports

(CDE, n.d.-c). The MTSS is a proactive approach created to identify and improve a

variety of academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs of all students. The MTSS

(see Figure 2) relies upon the interdisciplinary proactive approach of early identification

of student needs, instructing the core curriculum and PBIS into three tiers that function to

improve the quality of academic instruction, SEL, and behavioral interventions of

students in schools (CDE, n.d.-c).

Figure 2

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
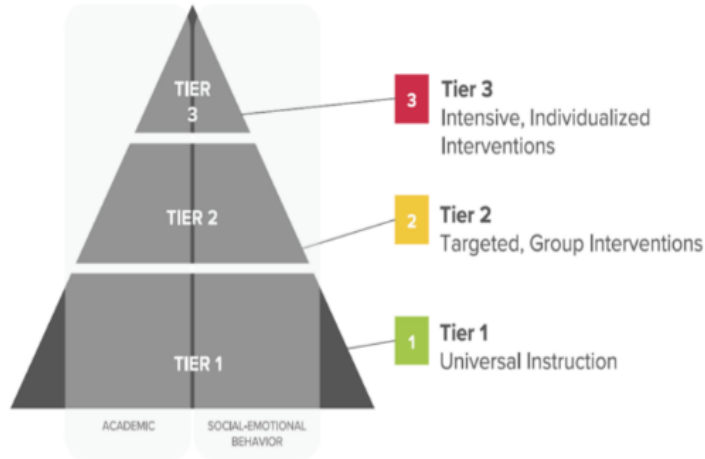
Note. From *A Deep Dive Into MTSS Tiers and MTSS Interventions*, by L. Ehlers & K. Pechacek, 2019, Renaissance, Understanding the MTSS pyramid section (https://www.renaissance.com/2019/09/13/blog-a-deep-dive-into-mtss-tiers-and-mtss-interventions/). Copyright 2024 by Renaissance Learning, Inc.

As an important component of SEL integration, the MTSS for each school or school district focuses on student-centered learning and the supports needed for all students to be successful (CDE, n.d.-a). Decisions are data based and incorporate lessons in social and emotional learning. The three tiers address the varying levels of intervention based on student needs. Students move throughout the tiers as circumstances in their lives change and as indicated by their response to intervention.

This approach views learning and instruction throughout the curriculum building positive relationships through character instruction and through support. The three tiers address the varying levels of support given to all the students and then these supports are monitored to respond to student needs. Students move throughout the tiers as

circumstances in their lives change and as indicated by their response to intervention (Center on PBIS, n.d.-a).

The implementation of MTSS began as a means of assessing the interdisciplinary and cross-curricular needs of all students based on data. In more recent years, it has been used as a replacement for the policies of NCLB and ESEA for standards-based education and zero-tolerance policies. The MTSS division of tiers (as shown in Figure 1) is composed of Tier 1 (supports for all students), Tier 2 (supports for some students or supplemental), and Tier 3 (supports for a few students or individualized). The exact services and interventions offered vary by school and/or school district. Teachers, support staff, and administrators attend professional development training events in which the framework is explained, and the school goals are developed. In California, the core components of MTSS work together as an integrated system that focuses on Common Core State Standards (CCSS), core instruction, and differentiated learning that combine to achieve academic, behavioral, and social success for all students (CDE, n.d.-b).

Restorative Practices in Elementary School Settings

More than 3 decades ago, the philosophy, strategies, and techniques of restorative practices were developed by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), a graduate school in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and the Community Service Foundation (CSF) and are viewed as an alternative to exclusionary discipline (Mirsky, 2007). Restorative practices use varying degrees of conflict resolution, along with proactive interventions, to create and strengthen the social and emotional bonds of teachers and students within the school community. Restorative practices is a multitiered model. Tier 1 focuses on the prevention of disruptive behaviors, skill building with a focus on

community; Tier 2 addresses the negative effects of behavior choices; and Tier 3 provides intensive intervention techniques for students (Kervick et al., 2020). The body of literature identified restorative practices as a means of reducing exclusionary discipline and increasing academic progress (Kervick et al., 2020). Restorative practices support healthy relationships and promote the integration of proactive social and emotional systems of support. The purpose of restorative practices is to shift the focus of discipline from reactionary, zero tolerance, to one that incorporates proactive methods into the structure of school discipline that is geared toward the prevention of disruptive behaviors. The concept behind this shift is to place the responsibility to change negative behavior on individual students or student groups by using proactive strategies instead of relying on educators to merely react to the behaviors (Zieher et al., 2021). Restorative practices such as SEL is an intentional, instructional approach that builds student self-esteem and confidence.

According to Gregory et al. (2016), restorative practices has the goal of focusing on prevention and intervention to transform the interactions between students and adults to create a positive school climate. The promotion of social and emotional skills serves as an alternative method to teach students how to handle conflict and accept responsibility for their actions. Students who are more aware of their actions learn to self-regulate their behavior, which allows them to better focus on academics and less on disruptive behaviors (A. D. Watkins, 2017). Restorative practices such as SEL provides a time to teach and use intentional language through conversations that build student self-esteem and confidence.

The use of restorative practices can aid in the building of personal relationships through intentional social and emotional lessons that foster the desire to build a cohesive school community. Restorative practices, a means of supporting healthy interpersonal relationships and building cultivating life skills, involves the integration of proactive social and emotional systems of support. Restorative practices is an umbrella of actions that encompasses the process of proactively building a positive school community. SEL programs support the goals of restorative practices by providing teaching and modeling of specific skills that allow students to identify and manage their emotions, develop empathy to appreciate the perspectives of others, create positive goals, make responsible decisions by problem solving, and enhance their connection to school (Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018).

One aspect of restorative practices in the classroom is the use of restorative circles. Restorative circles combine the specific instruction of SEL skills such as communication with restorative practices. Teaching students SEL skills to manage conflict through restorative circles can have a positive effect on the culture of the school and create meaningful relationships.

Elementary School Leadership in Education

The position of school leaders involves working with the school district, the school, the staff, the students, and their families. It is the responsibility of school leadership to disseminate information, guidelines, rules, and regulations from the district office down to the classroom. How each individual leader handles this position is the key to this process, and it contributes to the overall school culture (Torres, 2022). The school community is formed in various ways: (a) the principal hires the staff, (b) the school

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district hires the staff, (c) staff who were at the school previously remain but may change roles, and (d) the district classified/noncredentialled staff is hired or retained.

When individuals come together to form a group, such as a school community, the group immediately begins to assess one another for abilities, weaknesses, sense of humor, and years of service. This is common human behavior.

Elementary School Principals and Assistant Principals

Principals and leadership teams are tasked with reading the internal learning environment, such as classrooms, and shaping the conditions for student learning for the school as a whole. According to Murakami et al. (2019), principals must intentionally develop relationships between themselves and their teachers to set the direction of the school, develop the talents of teachers, and create an atmosphere that uses culturally responsive instructional practices to the expectations for behavior and academic achievement. According to Murphy (2021), the responsibilities of a school principal fall into three main categories: administration (supervision, evaluation, planning, budgeting, and training), discipline (enforcement of school/district policies, attendance, and counseling), and instructional leadership (curriculum selection, observation and evaluation of teaching, and professional development).

Distributive Leadership

School leaders have a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to impact student behavior and social, emotional, and academic progress. An effective leader must encourage collaboration and cohesiveness within the school organization (Durlak et al., 2011). School leaders guide themselves and others to reflect on their words and actions and how those choices affect others (Spillane et al., 2004). To completely share

leadership, the leader of the school needs to encourage collaborative leadership structures that include all staff from administration, certificated and classified employees, and the custodial staff (Durlak et al., 2011). According to Minckler (2014), "In order to truly share leadership, leaders build social capital; they motivate and develop potential leadership candidates from within their staff who are willing to take on the responsibilities and assume leadership role"(p. 439).

Leadership in Schools

Elementary school teacher leaders are primarily certificated staff who have been assigned or voted in as the lead for a particular grade level. Typically, they have 5 or more years of teaching experience and have been in the same grade level for 2 to 3 years. In addition, counselors, professional development staff, and noncertificated staff, also known as classified, choose a lead person. According to Spillane et al. (2004),

> we define school leadership as the identification, acquisition, allocation, co-ordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning. Leadership involves mobilizing school personnel and clients to notice, face, and take on the tasks of changing instruction as well as harnessing and mobilizing the resources needed to support the transformation of teaching and learning. (p. 9)

Elementary Leadership in Schools

In an elementary school, there can be seven to eight teacher leaders who represent all teachers from transitional kindergarten (TK) to fifth grade. Although this is typically the case, some schools and school districts range from TK to sixth or eighth grade. In

middle and high schools, teacher leaders may be referred to as department leads and represent different subjects areas (math, English, foreign language, etc.).

Lead Teacher Roles and Responsibilities

Teacher leaders serve as intermediaries between the teaching staff and the administration. As a group, the teacher leaders, both certificated and classified, meet at least monthly with the school administration to discuss budget, training opportunities, events, and concerns. Each representative is involved in the decision-making process for the entire school and presents their grade level's questions and concerns to the administration. Teacher leaders may also be responsible for organizing and attending after-school events in and around the community.

Outcomes

When teachers believe that they not only teach but also cause learning, this knowledge can be powerful. Teachers can use this knowledge to help themselves, their students, and others succeed. Hattie (2016) referred to the belief in one's own abilities as self-efficacy. Teacher leaders mentoring and collaborating with others in a nonthreatening and evidence-based environment to bring about positive change, collective efficacy, can impact student learning and efficacy. According to Thorton et al. (2020), the culture of a school influences teachers' perceptions of efficacy and their teaching behaviors. Effective teachers who have positive relationships between themselves and their leaders support the achievement of positive academic and behavioral outcomes for all their students.

Organizational Culture and Schools

In an organization, culture is the consistent and observable patterns of behavior and shared beliefs and interpretations of belief about the organization. The crucial purpose of culture is to focus members of the organization toward a shared mission and vision. It is the shared language of its members and the shaping of behavior via incentives that encourage its members to achieve the same goals. The culture of an organization changes and develops as the organization evolves in response to changes from the community and its members (M. D. Watkins, 2013). School leaders have a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to impact student behavior and social, emotional, and academic progress. An effective leader must encourage collaboration and cohesiveness within the school organization (Durlak et al., 2011).

Elementary School Culture

Torres (2022) examined the different forms of cultural expression that can exist within a single school or school district. In education, the belief that positive and cohesive cultures are able to foster academic achievement became the focus of research determined to prove this belief. Torres stated that all schools have a culture that is developed both internally and externally by the size and age of the school, the age of the teaching staff, the political climate, and the tenure of those employed within the school and the district. A school's culture evolves, positively or negatively, over a period of time in which the values and beliefs are constructed and reconstructed as a reflection of its stakeholders. In addition, the culture of a school is reflected in the rules and decision-making processes that are evident within the school structure. The diversity of a school's teaching staff and students provides insight into the strengths and weaknesses, allows for

opportunities to become more culturally aware, allows appreciation of the differences, and builds relationships. The real question is not whether or not a school has a culture but the way they express that culture, the effects of this culture on student and staff interactions, and the overall academic success of each student.

According to Torres (2022), the development of a school culture can be viewed from the perspective of looking at the structure of a tree. Each layer of the tree, from the roots to the canopy, overlaps, and this interaction shapes the culture of the school, student and staff behavior, and the development of all social interactions.

Improving Elementary School Culture

Leadership plays a crucial role in the development of both the internal processes (school regulations and codes of conduct) and the external relationships (community partnerships) and their impact, positively or negatively, on the school's culture (Trujillo, 2019). When individuals feel that their concerns are listened to and addressed, they are more likely to engage and create sustainable connections. The type of leadership expressed has a direct effect on the development of the culture. Torres (2022) noted that there have been several changes in the realm of education when it comes to policy and school management. In recent decades an interest in the issue of culture, specifically school culture, has been renewed. A school's culture is greatly impacted and can be manipulated by its leadership and by the extent that leadership is distributed. Connolly et al. (2011) explored organizational cultures, their development, and their impact on the organization or school. Their research revealed how the topic of school culture brings various perspectives together. To understand the impact of a school culture on the school staff and students, educators need to understand the nature of social behavior.

Conceptual Framework: CASEL

Goleman's (1995) research on the creation of EI and its impact on emotional and academic development is the foundation for the CASEL framework. Goleman's work laid the groundwork for the five CASEL competencies that were created to incorporate the four domains of EI and was the catalyst for SEL. CASEL (n.d.-a) defines the competencies of self-awareness and self-management as an intrapersonal (individual/emotional) process, social awareness and relationship skills as an interpersonal (social) process, and responsible decision making as both an intrapersonal and an interpersonal process. For this study, the conceptual meaning attached to social-emotional development is the way students manage themselves, their relationships, and their learning through responsible decision making. Students managing themselves encompasses self-awareness and self-control of their emotions and includes coping skills, resilience, and a sense of self-worth.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to recognize one's own strengths and limitations and the confidence to develop a growth mindset with the knowledge that learning can be a process of failures that requires effort (Weidner & Skolar, 2021). Individuals with self-awareness develop the self-confidence to recognize their own emotions and know who they are personally and socially and possess the ability to understand the link between feelings, values, and thoughts (CASEL, n.d.-d). Individuals who have reached self-awareness can recognize true feelings as they happen and are able to monitor these emotions, which allows them to have more confidence about their personal decisions (Goleman, 1995).

Social Awareness

Social awareness is the individual's ability to understand the perspectives of others and to empathize with others from different backgrounds and cultures (CASEL, n.d.-b). This also includes the capacity to feel compassion, to understand social norms, to adjust one's own behavior in different situations (CASEL, n.d.-b), and to develop interpersonal skills that are critical for positive interactions with others (Durlak et al., 2015). Social awareness allows children to develop the necessary skills to initiate and maintain relationships with others outside of their family (Holochwost et al., 2022). Durlak et al. (2015) stated that social awareness also includes the recognition of resources and available support and determining when support is needed.

Relationship Skills

The goal of relationship skills is to promote positive and effective interactions with others by initiating and maintaining conversations. It is also the ability to develop friendships, resolve conflicts, and recognize the needs of others (Durlak et al., 2015). According to CASEL (n.d.-b), competency of relationship skills includes the capacity to work cooperatively with others, collaborate to solve problems, and seek or offer help to others. In addition, competency of relationship skills involves communicating clearly, actively listening during interactions, and resisting the desire to act inappropriately because of peer pressure (Gresham et al., 2020).

Self-Management

Handling the emotions of another requires self-management and aids in the development of relationships (Goleman, 1995). Self-management includes the ability to delay or suspend gratification through patience and the regulation of emotions. To

achieve personal and academic goals, self-management requires staying focused throughout challenging situations to manage stress. Therefore, individuals learning and using stress management skills by remaining calm and relaxed when things do not go as planned is essential (CASEL, n.d.-b). CASEL (n.d.-b) describes self-management as displaying courage, perseverance, and self-discipline.

Responsible Decision Making

Responsible decision making is critical to everyday interactions. Individuals must learn to develop the ability to analyze different social situations, to identify when there is a conflict, and to effectively problem solve with peers. In addition, responsible decision making includes making decisions ethically and following rules while developing personal responsibility for actions as an aspect of self-reflection (Durlak et al., 2015). CASEL (n.d.-b) describes responsible decision making as the ability to evaluate the benefits and consequences of choices, be open-minded to ideas, and learn to make confident decisions.

A core component of a social and emotional climate is students' sense of belonging and connection to school, which is driven in part by their relationships with their teachers. Positive student–teacher relationships predict short- and long-term academic success, often mediated by school belonging, student engagement, and improved behavior (Gaias et al., 2020). Teacher leaders can significantly influence schools' culture and operations and personally engage with every aspect of the school (students, families, community, teachers, and administration). As the needs of students increase, schools must shift to address these needs beyond academics to meet the social, mental health, and economic requirements of their communities, and teacher leaders are

in a position to help lead their schools to meet those challenges (DeSantis et al., 2023).

Allen et al. (2018) found that student achievement is enhanced indirectly by a sense of

belonging that allows students to feel greater motivation to achieve and provide increased

school engagement. The CASEL (n.d.-b) framework can be used by teacher leaders

within schools and school districts to foster and create a culture that supports knowledge,

skills, and positive attitudes across all five areas of social and emotional competence. In

addition, when students learn in an environment that they believe is safe, supportive, and

connected, they can develop the social and emotional competencies they need to be

successful.

Synthesis Matrix

A synthesis matrix was developed to support the organization of variables

identified and explained in the literature review. Authors and APA citations were used to

organize the synthesis matrix data and variables (see Appendix A).

Summary

Although education has historically been a method of providing the skills of

reading, writing, and math, it has developed to meet the needs of students socially,

emotionally, and mentally. Elementary education has been the vehicle for introducing

young children to the educational environment that will require various skills for them to

be successful in life. The theoretical background on child development has offered

different theories on how children develop cognitively and academically and the roll

discipline has played in this learning process. The evolution of discipline has resulted in

policies and procedures aimed at developing and controlling appropriate behavior to

maintain safety and academic integrity. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

and the transition from zero tolerance and exclusionary discipline has forced the public educational system to adjust and change.

SEL has become one of the main focuses of education through the intentional instruction of five core competencies: self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision making. The literature review examined the research on SEL as a method of providing interventions geared toward not only the academic progress of students but also their mental health. Various social, emotional, and behavioral interventions were reviewed as well as the influence of teacher leaders on the creation and fostering of a culture that supports SEL for all students.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you

did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

—Maya Angelou, Hearst Magazine Media

Research has demonstrated that students who participate in social-emotional

learning (SEL) programs experience less anxiety, aggression, and hyperactivity.

Academic performance increases with the implementation of social-emotional learning

(SEL) skills (Zieher et al., 2021). Teacher leaders play a crucial role in the educational

process in all grade levels (Marzano et al., 2005). The use of the CASEL social-

emotional framework concentrates on five competencies (self-awareness, social

awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision making) to

better equip students socially and emotionally. The framework of CASEL (n.d.-d)

integrates evidence-based social and emotional learning as a vital part of education. SEL

is the process of acquiring and applying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to

develop healthy identities; managing emotions and achieving personal and collective

goals; feeling and showing empathy for others; establishing and maintaining supportive

relationships; and making responsible and caring decisions.

The Delphi methodology was chosen for this study. Principals at 68 elementary

schools that have been awarded the PBIS Platinum Award for Implementation were

asked to recommend individuals they believe are expert teacher leaders. To find the most

effective strategies to create and foster a culture that supports SEL, the recommended

teachers were invited to participate and were asked to provide strategies and then rate the

effectiveness of those strategies based on their experience and expertise. This Delphi study was part of a thematic team consisting of two researchers, part of UMass Global University, exploring the same topic with different educational leaders and the support of faculty leads. This Delphi study examined the strategies that elementary school teacher leaders applied to create and foster a culture that supports SEL. Chapter III includes the purpose statement, research design, description of the population and sample population, data analysis procedures, reliability and validity, limitations, and ends with a summary of the chapter.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this Delphi study was to identify the strategies that elementary teacher leaders use with other staff members to create and foster a school culture that supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies (self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision making). An additional purpose was to identify what teacher leaders perceive to be the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture that supports these SEL competencies.

Research Questions

1. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies?

    a. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports self-awareness?

    b. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports social awareness?

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c. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports relationship skills?

d. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports self-management?

e. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports responsible decision making?

2. What do elementary teacher leaders perceive to be the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture with other staff members that supports SEL?

Research Design

Qualitative studies may consist of a smaller sample size than quantitative research, and the data are described in words rather than in numbers, such as in graphs, tables, and charts. Qualitative research and inquiry can be obtained from multiple sources of data that seek to find meanings, patterns, and themes that provide insights into how individuals understand and interpret the world around them (Patton, 2015). In qualitative research, the researcher interacts with the participants of the study so the findings are mutually created within the context of the study (Sale et al., 2002). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) emphasized that quantitative research maximizes objectivity using numbers, statistics, structure, and control to measure and describe the data collected.

Researchers may use a mixed methods study combining a qualitative approach as a frame of their work and a quantitative approach to link the data to a larger concept (Patten & Newhart, 2018). A Delphi methodology was used for this study. Data for this study were collected through in-depth, semi structured, open-ended Google surveys and

Likert-scaled electronic surveys. Dalkey and Helmer (1963) developed the Delphi technique at the Rand Corporation in the 1950s. According to Hsu and Sandford (2007), the Delphi technique is recognized as an accepted method to achieve consensus by employing both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. The process of a Delphi study uses iterations or rounds to achieve consensus, allows the participants to modify their responses, and provides anonymity through controlled feedback (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). The Delphi approach allowed me to investigate and gather information from a body of experts on the most effective strategies that elementary teacher leaders use to create and foster a school culture that supports the five CASEL competencies that support SEL. The Delphi method is viewed as a valid and reliable method of collecting data, specifically when there is a lack of knowledge on a specific topic, problem, or subject, and it can be characterized as a method of collecting group communication from different individuals (Linstone & Turoff, 2002).

This study used the classic Delphi study method to gather data from transitional kindergarten (TK) through sixth grade elementary teacher leaders who have worked at a PBIS platinum awarded school for at least 2 years, have taught for a minimum of 5 years, and were recommended by their school principals for creating and fostering a school culture that supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies. An additional aim was to identify what teacher leaders perceive to be the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture that supports the SEL competencies.

I considered other methodologies; however, I concluded that a Delphi study was the best technique to gather effective strategies that support SEL at the elementary level. Hsu and Sanford (2007) stated that the Delphi technique is a popular and widely

recognized way of collecting data from respondents within their area of expertise. Moreover, I also took into consideration the population and sample size for the selection of the methodology. This method allowed me to use virtual technology to gather experts from surrounding areas. The Delphi approach also has the advantage of allowing several modifications, giving experts the chance to refine or reject a notion that was initially proposed (Salkind, 2010). According to Dalkey (1969), the Delphi methodology allows anonymity, controlled feedback, and statistical group response. Using Google Forms electronic surveys, anonymity was accomplished and reduced the effect of bias by dominant individuals. After each round, controlled feedback on the results was communicated to all participants.

Population

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a study's population comprises a group of individuals who meet the requirements for generalizing the findings and for selecting the sample. The population for this study was elementary school teacher leaders in Riverside and San Bernadino counties in California. In 2023, CDE (n.d.-a) reported 5,857 elementary schools in California. Because there are typically between five and 10 teacher leaders per elementary school, the study's population was 29,285–58,570 elementary teacher leaders in California.

Target Population

A target population consists of people selected from the general population from which conclusions can be drawn using the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). To narrow the population to those with expertise in creating and fostering a school culture that supports SEL, the target population for this study was elementary teacher leaders in

Riverside County and San Bernardino County schools that have been recognized with the California PBIS Platinum Implementation Award. According to the Center on PBIS (n.d.-a), a PBIS Platinum Implementation Award is presented to a school that documents it has implemented all aspects of PBIS with 70% fidelity for all three tiers using the Tiered Fidelity Inventory. This inventory addresses the following measures of effectiveness: discipline strategies, the reduction in suspensions, attendance, and improvement in academic performance. The purpose of the Tiered Fidelity Inventory is to provide a valid, reliable, and efficient measure of the extent to which school personnel are applying the core features of schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). I hand counted the elementary schools listed under each district on the California PBIS (2022) website that have been given this distinction and identified 68 elementary schools in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Given that there are typically five to 10 teacher leaders per elementary school site, the target population for this study was 340 to 680 teacher leaders.

Sample

The group of participants or subjects from which the data are gathered is defined as the sample group (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Nonprobability purposeful sampling was used for the study. Purposeful sampling occurs when researchers, based on their knowledge of the population, choose specific demographic members to represent or provide information on a particular issue of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), in qualitative studies, a purposeful sampling is a strength because it allows a researcher to select information-rich

participants with an in-depth understanding of the topic studied. The sampling criteria were as follows:

- They worked at an elementary school that was designated as a PBIS Platinum Implementation awarded school in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

- They worked for 5 or more years as an elementary school teacher in Riverside or San Bernardino county.

- They served within the last 3 years as an elementary school teacher leader at their site.

- They assisted in establishing a school culture that promotes SEL based on a recommendation by another professional in the education field.

The sample size for this study was 15 elementary teacher leaders. These leaders were recommended by their principals as experts in creating and fostering a culture with other staff members that supported SEL using the five CASEL competencies. They have worked at the same PBIS platinum school for at least the last 3 years.

Sampling Selection

I contacted school principals at the 68 PBIS platinum schools in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, asking for referrals and recommendations of elementary teacher leaders who have demonstrated success at fostering a culture that supported SEL and met the criteria set for the expert panel. From those recommendations, I contacted the potential participants to solicit their participation (Appendix B). Potential participants who responded with interest in participating were sent a study information and the Participant's Bill of Rights and were asked to confirm they met the selection criteria. The first 15 participants who met the criteria and agreed to participate were selected for the

study, ensuring that they represented a variety of schools throughout the counties. No more than three teacher leaders from any one site were included. Selected participants were sent the informed consent form and the Participant's Bill of Rights before starting the study (Appendix C).

Instrumentation

I was aware of the challenges involved in creating surveys that may potentially expose the study as well as the possible threats to reliability and internal and external validity. McMillian and Schumacher (2010) referred to validity as "explanations about observed phenomena approximate what is reality or truth, and the degree to which explanations are accurate" (p. 104). Patten and Newhart (2018) stated that validity is "the extent that it measures what it is designed to measure and accurately performs the functions it is purported to perform" (p. 123). Patten and Newhart also noted that a test is identified as reliable "if it yields consistent results" (p. 136). Although the authors stated that "a measure must be both reliably valid and reasonably reliable" (Patten & Newhart, 2018, p. 137), they also stated that it is more critically important for a measure to be valid than to be reliable.

According to Patten and Newhart (2018), instrumentation refers to the tools the researcher uses to evaluate or measure the items of the study in data collection. This Delphi study used Google Forms to send the electronic surveys and collect the information (Appendices E–H). No email addresses were collected from the participants. To address the research topics for the study, I conducted three rounds of questions; Round 1 consisted of open-ended questions. In Round 2, the experts rated the effectiveness of the strategies synthesized from Round 1 using a 4-point Likert scale. In

Round 3, participants rated the strategies again to determine consensus on the most effective strategies. The strategies were the subject of Round 3's expert interpretations of the most effective strategies.

Round 1

Participants who met the criteria for the study were sent an email with the hyperlink to the informed consent form and the Participant's Bill of Rights (Appendix D). Once acknowledgment of the Bill of Rights and the informed consent form was received, I sent a second email to those participants with the hyperlink to the Round 1 Google Forms survey. Participants were given a week to complete their responses. I used open-ended questions in Round 1, and participants were asked to provide at least three strategies for each prompt. An example of the Google Forms is provided in Appendix E. Round 1 collected a list of strategies the expert panel used with other staff members that created and fostered a school culture that supported the five competencies from the CASEL framework. The responses from Round 1 were analyzed, and similar ideas were combined to be presented in Round 2.

Round 2

After Round 1 was completed by all participants, I sent a second cover letter email with the link to Round 2 survey (Appendix F). In Round 2, the synthesized strategies for each social-emotional competency from Round 1 were presented to participants to be rated for effectiveness using a 4-point Likert scale as the instrument for the strategy's effectiveness. The Likert scale ranges were 4 = *very effective*, 3 = *effective*, 2 = *somewhat effective*, and 1 = *not very effective*. The participants were also given the option of no opinion. Participants were also allowed to provide any additional strategies

they used to create and foster a culture that supports the five social-emotional

competencies. An example of the Round 2 Google Forms is provided in Appendix G.

Participants were given the opportunity to provide additional comments or information

when I asked the following open-ended questions:

1. Are there any other strategies you use with staff members to create and foster a
   culture that supports self-awareness? If so, please list below.

2. Are there any other strategies you use with staff members to create and foster a
   culture that supports social awareness? If so, please list below.

3. Are there any other strategies you use with staff members to create and foster a
   culture that supports relationship skills? If so, please list below.

4. Are there any other strategies you use with staff members to create and foster a
   culture that supports self-management? If so, please list below.

5. Are there any other strategies you use with staff members to create and foster a
   culture that supports responsible decision making? If so, please list below.

Once all responses were received, I used the data of the related strategies to

prepare the questionnaire for distribution in Round 3. I calculated the mean for each of

the identified strategies and organized those strategies based on the expert panel's

rankings (Appendix H).

Round 3

Participants were sent an email with the link for the Round 3 survey

(Appendix H). To reach a consensus in Round 3, participants received the hyperlink to

the Google Forms with the mean ratings for all of the strategies from Round 2.

Participants were then asked to rerate the strategies using the same 4-point Likert scale

(Appendix I). Additional strategies generated in Round 2 were also presented for rating.

To maintain consistency, experts were given 1 week to complete Round 3 of the study.

Those strategies that received a mean rating of 3.0 or higher in both Rounds 2 and 3 were

identified as the most effective in creating and fostering a school culture that supports

SEL.

Data Collection

After completing the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) for

Social-Behavioral Educational Research Certification in protecting human subjects

research (Appendix J) and obtaining approval from the UMass Global University

Institutional Review Board (UMIRB; Appendix K), I collected the data and surveyed the

participants. I used the Delphi methodology for this study, which consisted of three

rounds of surveys using the Google Forms platform because of its easy accessibility and

user friendliness. I followed the sampling selection process to ensure all participants met

the criteria. I then emailed each participant an invitation to participate in the study.

Before starting the study, I sent an email that included the purpose of the study, key

definitions, the informed consent, and the Participant's Bill of Rights. Those participants

who met the criteria and agreed to participate were sent the Google Forms with a survey

hyperlink to Round 1. Initially, emails were sent to principals at PBIS platinum

implementation schools in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The purpose and

method of the study were explained, and the principals were asked to recommend teacher

leaders who met the criteria needed as an expert for the study prior to requesting

participation.

I maintained, stored, and collected data using the Google Forms platform. All information gathered was kept in a password-protected electronic file that was only accessible by me and was destroyed 3 years after the study's conclusion. Participants' emails were collected but not shared with anyone to maintain confidentiality and were only used by me to send Google Forms for the three rounds to complete the study.

Round 1

I sent each expert on the panel an email with the Google Forms link to participate in Round 1. Before starting Round 1, participants were required to acknowledge receipt of informed consent and Participant's Bill of Rights to access the Round 1 survey. Participants began Round 1 by responding to a few demographic questions. They were then asked to identify at least three strategies they use to foster and create a culture that promotes SEL for each CASEL competency. Participants were given 1 week to complete and submit their responses.

Round 2

I analyzed the strategies provided by the participants from Round 1 and combined similar ideas to generate the data used for Round 2. Participants received a second email with the link for the Round 2 Google Forms. In this round, participants were asked to rate each of the strategies for effectiveness using a 4-point Likert scale (4 = *very effective*, 3 = *effective*, 2 = *somewhat effective*, and 1 = *not very effective*). Participants were also given the option to add additional strategies or ideas. They were given 1 week to submit their responses.

Round 3

In Round 3, the same strategies from Round 2 were presented along with the mean ratings from Round 2. Participants were asked to rerate the strategies using the same 4-point Likert scale used in Round 2. To maintain consistency, participants were provided 1 week to complete Round 3 of the study.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2015), interpretation and analysis of the data will create a better understanding of those data. Similarly, Patton (2015) stated that data analysis involves analyzing the data, grouping data according to themes, and making justifications leading to final findings. During this process, themes and behaviors are revealed, and the researcher can exclude irrelevant data. The survey responses from Round 1 generated qualitative data that were analyzed, and similar ideas were combined to make sure that all ideas were represented without duplication. Intercoder reliability was used to calibrate the analysis of participant responses. A second member of the thematic team was used as the intercoder for the Round 1 data. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), intercoder reliability is attained when peer researchers agree at least 80% of the time.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The data from Rounds 2 and 3 produced quantitative data. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify the mean effectiveness ratings for each strategy. Descriptive statistics is a way to recap data that are vital to the understanding of the results (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The mean rating for each strategy from Rounds 2 and 3 was calculated. The threshold for consensus on the most effective strategies was

set at a mean rating of 3.0 or higher in both Round 2 and Round 3. The strategies that met this threshold were identified.

Validity and Reliability

Validity describes the practice of using specific methods to verify the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2015). According to Patten and Newhart (2018), validity is the ability to accurately assess that the instrument measures what it anticipates measuring. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that validity is the most important aspect of research, and it implies proper interpretation of the data gathered and gives credibility to the study. Considering the importance of validity, I paid close attention to forming the questions to ensure the study's validity. Selecting an expert panel with a specific criterion increased the study's validity. To strengthen the validity of the data, I included qualitative and quantitative data collected through Google Forms. Because this was a thematic dissertation, I and a coresearcher developed the questions for the first round. According to Creswell (2015), using different methods to address validity is crucial for the accuracy of the findings and to strengthen validity.

Patton (2015) referred to reliability as consistency throughout all aspects of the research. Creswell (2015) referred to this as validity, which covers the accuracy of the results and processes. I examined the themes and methods to identify recurring themes and patterns to ensure instrument reliability (Patton, 2015). I also employed honesty and transparency to assure reliability through the data-acquiring procedure (Creswell, 2015). In addition, a field test was conducted to establish transparency and clarity of the research questions in Round 1 to strengthen the reliability of this Delphi study further.

Field Test

To ensure the study's validity and reliability, a field test was conducted with a doctoral student in the thematic study. Each doctoral student conducted the field test with two participants who met the criteria for the study but were not part of the study. The field-test participants responded to all three rounds. Based on the field-test participants' feedback, I was able to modify the instrument by adding content-specific questions that pertained to teacher leaders collaborating and communicating with other staff members, clarifying definitions of the five CASEL competencies, and using specific language geared toward eliciting more detailed responses to maintain the study's clarity and methodology.

Limitations

In any given study, there is the potential for various limitations from assumptions to data collection and measurement errors (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Patton (2015) stated that limitations, controlled or not, can negatively impact the results of a study. Fink-Hafner et al. (2019) listed limitations associated with a Delphi study:

- The researcher has the discretion in the selection technique to select the sample size, definitions, and selecting participants.
- A Delphi study requires a lot of time from the participants and researchers. This may cause participants to get tired and leave the study.

I also identified the following limitations for this Delphi study:

- The population only included elementary teacher leaders in California districts of Riverside and San Bernardino counties.
- There was a diverse level of knowledge on SEL from the panel of experts.

- The required experience regarding SEL and the CASEL framework of the expert panel limited the number of participants eligible for this study.

- The diversity of the participants was limited to those who agreed to participate.

Summary

Chapter III provided the purpose, description, and justification for the selected methodology. Chapter III also included the study's purpose statement, research questions, and an explanation of the research population, target population, and sample. In addition, Chapter III described the instrumentation used, the validity of the research, its reliability, and the procedure for the field test conducted before the study. Data collection and analysis were also presented in this chapter. Chapter III concluded with the presentation of limitations.

Chapter IV provides a summary and analysis of the data and a presentation of the findings. Chapter V summarizes the study and reports the findings. Chapter IV and Chapter V summarize the study, report findings, implications, conclusion, and recommendations for future research regarding strategies that support SEL in elementary schools.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction. The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically.

—Martin Luther King (Standford University, 1947, paras. 4–5)

Overview

Chapter IV begins with an overview of its contents, a review of the purpose of the study, the research questions and research subquestions, the procedure for data collection and analysis, population, and sample. The goal of this classic Delphi study was to identify the strategies that expert teacher leaders use with other staff members to create and foster a culture that supports social-emotional learning (SEL) at positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) Platinum Award schools in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. In addition, the educational leadership panel's perceptions of these strategies were also identified. This chapter provides detailed information regarding the qualitative and quantitative data collected through survey Rounds 1, 2, and 3 administered via Google Forms. The qualitative data gathered in Round 1 answered Research Question 1, and the quantitative data gathered during Rounds 2 and 3 answered Research Question 2. Both the qualitative data and the quantitative data are discussed in narrative form and displayed in tables, figures, and direct quotes of participants' responses. Chapter IV concludes with a summary of the research findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this Delphi study was to identify the strategies that elementary teacher leaders use with other staff members to create and foster a school culture that

supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies (self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, responsible decision making). An additional purpose was to identify what teacher leaders perceive to be the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture that supports these SEL competencies.

Research Questions

1. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies?

    a. How do teacher leaders create and foster with other staff members a school culture that supports self-awareness?

    b. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports social awareness?

    c. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports relationship skills?

    d. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports self-management?

    e. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports responsible decision making?

2. What do elementary teacher leaders perceive to be the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture with other staff members that supports SEL?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

The researcher elected to use the descriptive classic Delphi technique to gather the perceptions of 15 educational leadership experts located in Riverside and San Bernardino counties in Southern California. The Delphi method provided a mechanism for collecting and organizing data received from 15 experts on the topic of effective strategies that teacher leaders use with other staff members to create and foster a culture that supports SEL. The process of a Delphi study uses iterations or rounds to achieve consensus, allows the participants to modify their responses, and provides anonymity through controlled feedback (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). At the beginning of each round, a communication letter was emailed to each expert teacher leader, which stated that each had 1 week to complete the round. Table 1 presents the allocated completion times and the actual completion time for each round.

Table 1

Rounds 1, 2, and 3 Allocated Completion Time Versus Actual Completion Time

Round	Allocated time period	Actual time period
Round 1	February 8–February 15 (7 days)	February 8–February 19 (11 days)
Round 2	February 21–February 28 (7 days)	February 21–March 6 (14 days)
Round 3	March 10–March 17 (7 days)	March 10–18 (8 days)

The 15 teacher leader experts provided qualitative data in response to survey Study Questions 1 through 5 in Round 1 (Appendix F). The questions were open ended and required less than a 30-min response time. The responses from Round 1 were consolidated, and similar ideas were combined with the focus on strategies used with other staff members. In Round 2, the panelists provided quantitative feedback by using a

4-point Likert scale to rank the strategies identified in Round 1. They were also given the opportunity to provide further qualitative responses by identifying additional strategies based on the original survey questions. In Round 3, the panelists were provided the mean ratings from Round 2 and were requested to rerank the strategies to provide consensus.

Population

The population of this study consisted of elementary school teacher leaders in California. In 2023, the CDE (n.d.-a) reported 5,857 elementary schools in California. Because there are typically between five and 10 teacher leaders per elementary school, the study's population was 29,285 to 58,570 elementary teacher leaders in California.

Target Population

The target population for this study was elementary teacher leaders in Riverside County and San Bernardino County schools that have been recognized with the California PBIS Platinum Implementation Award. The researcher hand counted the elementary schools listed under each district on the California PBIS (2022) website that were given this distinction and identified 68 elementary schools in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Given that there are typically five to 10 teacher leaders per elementary school site, the target population for this study was 340 to 680 teacher leaders.

Sample Population

Nonprobability, purposeful sampling was used for the study. Purposeful sampling occurs when researchers, based on their knowledge of the population, choose specific demographic members to represent or provide information on a particular issue of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Within the literature there was not a set criterion listed

for selecting Delphi panel members (Hsu & Stanford, 2007). The researcher's panel selection was informed by seminal Delphi research (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Hsu & Stanford, 2007; Linstone & Turoff, 2002). Candidates must have met all four criteria: (a) they worked at an elementary school that was designated as a PBIS Platinum Implementation awarded school in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, (b) they worked for 5 or more years as an elementary school teacher in Riverside or San Bernardino county, (c) they served within the last 3 years as an elementary school teacher leader at their site, and (d) they assisted in establishing a school culture that promotes SEL based on a recommendation by another professional in the education field.

The sample size for this study was 15 elementary teacher leaders who worked in a California public school that was identified as a PBIS school awarded platinum implementation recognition. These leaders were recommended by their principals as experts in creating and fostering a culture with other staff members that supports SEL using the five CASEL competencies. They had worked at the same PBIS platinum school for at least 3 years and had taught in public education for at least 5 years. Table 2 shows the results of the 15 selected participants based upon meeting the study's criterion eligibility.

Table 2

Teacher Leaders Expert Panelist's Study Criteria

Status	Expert														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Currently serving as an elementary teacher leader in Riverside County		X	X	X	X	X				X		X	X	X	
Currently serving as an elementary teacher leader in San Bernardino County	X						X	X	X		X				X
0–2 years of experience as elementary teacher leader															
3–5 years of experience as elementary teacher leader												X			
5–10 years of experience as elementary teacher leader				X											
10–15 years of experience as elementary teacher leader		X													
15+ years of experience as elementary teacher leader	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

Demographic Data

The Delphi study's 15 participants represented over 190 years of collective experience in education as teachers and teacher leaders. The majority had worked in education for more than 15 years. Table 3 shows the panel members' demographic data with details of the participants' county of employment and years of service. All participants in this study were female, and 12 identified as White (80%), and three identified as Hispanic (20%).

Table 3

Role and Years of Service of Participants

Role	Number of participants	Years of service			
		3–5	5–10	10–15	> 15
Leader in Riverside County	9	0	1	1	7
Leader in San Bernardino County	6	0	1	0	5

Presentation and Analysis of the Data

Data analysis, from both the quantitative and qualitative data, was intended to summarize the information that was gathered during Rounds 1, 2, and 3 to answer the study's research questions, which provides, according to Creswell (2015), the opportunity to describe the data, communicate the findings through similar ideas or themes, and to interpret the meanings comprehensively. The findings from each round of questioning were reported sequentially. The findings are presented in the following sections and based on data collected through Google Forms surveys assessed by the expert panelists via email and Google Drive.

Delphi Round 1 Data Collection

In Round 1, the expert panelists were asked to respond to five open-ended questions regarding the five CASEL competencies of SEL via email using a Google Forms survey. The participants were given 7 days to respond, but the actual response time for all 15 participants was 11 days. Research Question 1 asked the expert teacher leaders to give their opinion on how they create and foster a school culture with other staff members, and the five subquestions addressed each of the five CASEL competencies:

1. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies?

   a. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports self-awareness?

   b. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports social awareness?

   c. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports relationship skills?

   d. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports self-management?

   e. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports responsible decision making?

The expert panelists were provided the definitions of the CASEL competencies and were asked to provide their perceptions concerning what they believed to be the best strategies to use with staff to create a culture that supports these skills. Once the data were received and the similar ideas identified, the responses were uploaded to a Google document. The principal researcher and a peer researcher independently reviewed the collected data from Round 1 and then collectively reviewed the results to ensure consistency. Fifteen expert teacher leaders responded to the questions in Round 1, and the information was transferred to a Google spreadsheet to analyze for similar ideas and terms. The initial open-ended survey questions produced 74 identified strategies. The researcher examined responses for similar ideas and worked with a peer researcher to combine them under each of the five CASEL competencies.

Delphi Round 1 Presentation of Data and Findings

Analysis of Round 1

  Fifteen of the 16 expert teacher leader panelists completed this first round. One panelist was removed from the remainder of the study because she did not respond after several attempts were made to enlist her responses. The remaining rounds were completed by 15 expert teacher leaders working at PBIS Platinum awarded elementary schools in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Table 4 lists the strategies under each competency identified in Round 1 by the expert panelists.

Delphi Round 2 Presentation of Data and Findings

  In Round 2, the expert panelists were asked to rate the strategies generated in Round 1 for effectiveness using a 4-point Likert scale. They were also given the opportunity to provide further strategies in Round 2. There were no additional or new strategies provided by the panelists in this round. The survey contained the following 4-point Likert scale rating for effectiveness: 4 = *highly effective*, 3 = *effective*, 2 = *somewhat effective*, and 1 = *not effective*. All of the 15 expert panelists completed this round. The goal of this round was to identify the strategies that expert teacher leaders perceive to be most effective with other staff to create and foster a school culture for SEL based on the five CASEL competencies of self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision making.

Table 4

Ideas Generated by Round 1 Participant Responses

Number	Strategy
	Competency 1: Self-awareness
1	Staff members demonstrate empathy by understanding the personal needs and challenges of others.
2	Staff members demonstrate vulnerability by having open and honest discussions with each other.
3	Staff members apologize for their actions when needed.
4	Staff members practice self-reflection.
5	Staff members collaborate and share about best practices to learn from one another.
6	Staff members acknowledge and value the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others.
7	Staff members set goals based on self-identified strengths and weaknesses and monitor progress on those goals.
8	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.
9	Staff members celebrate each other's professional and personal accomplishments.
10	Staff members demonstrate a growth mindset.
	Competency 2: Social-awareness
1	Staff members are willing to learn about themselves and others through open communication.
2	Staff members actively learn about different cultures and backgrounds.
3	Staff members set and review expectations of behavior.
4	Staff members are respectful and assume positive intent.
5	Staff members empower others by identifying strengths and celebrating successes.
6	Staff members communicate and problem solve by planning together.
7	Staff members facilitate or participate in cultural activities in the school or community.
8	Staff members honor and recognize different perspectives.
9	Staff members encourage mindfulness and empathy with others.
10	Staff members are willing to learn and grow by trying new things.

Table 4 (*continued*)

Number	Strategy
	Competency 3: Relationship skills
1	Staff members practice conflict resolution skills with colleagues.
2	Staff members encourage relationship building by expressing interest in others and getting to know them.
3	Staff members collaborate with others to work toward a common goal.
4	Staff members stress communicating and practice active listening.
5	Staff members interact and talk daily.
6	Staff members admit when mistakes are made and apologize.
7	Staff members honor the perspectives of others in the decision-making process.
8	Staff members model good relationships in their interactions with other staff.
9	Staff members value team members by understanding their individual strengths and weaknesses.
10	Staff members demonstrate team unity by wearing school shirts, eating together, and so forth.
	Competency 4: Self-management
1	Staff members model and manage their own stress effectively (e.g., set boundaries, manage feelings. etc.).
2	Staff members accentuate the positives when working with others.
3	Staff members are mindful of their personal health and take time to enjoy personal activities.
4	Staff members set goals based on self-identified strengths and weaknesses and monitor progress on those goals.
5	Staff members create a calm space in which others can share openly.
6	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.
7	Staff members guide themselves and others to reflect on their words and actions and how those choices affect others (e.g., cognitive coaching).
8	Staff members model patience and how to work through daily situations that may cause stress.

Table 4 (*continued*)

Number	Strategy
	Competency 5: Responsible decision making
1	Staff members meet regularly and use established processes to share ideas for various situations (e.g., in professional learning communities).
2	Staff members model how to make good decisions.
3	Staff members provide authentic and specific feedback during discussions.
4	Staff members model professionalism by keeping an open mind.
5	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.
6	Staff members guide themselves and others to reflect on their words and actions and how those choices affect others (e.g., cognitive coaching).

Competency 1: Self-Awareness Involves the Understanding of Emotions, Personal Goals, and Values and Requires the Ability to Identify How Thoughts, Feelings, and Actions Are Interrelated

The 10 self-awareness strategies identified in Round 1 were rated for effectiveness in Round 2. The strategies had mean ratings from 3.60 to 3.07. The most effective strategies were identified as collaborating, demonstrating a growth mindset through valuing the thoughts and feelings of others, and celebrating professional accomplishments. Table 5 shows the results from Round 2 and the strategies for self-awareness listed in order from highest mean rating to lowest mean rating. The number of respondents for each rating is also provided.

Competency 2: Social-Awareness Involves the Understanding of Emotions, Personal Goals, and Values and Requires the Ability to Identify How Thoughts, Feelings, and Actions Are Interrelated

The 10 social awareness strategies identified in Round 1 were rated for effectiveness in Round 2. The strategies were given a mean rating from 3.60 to 3.13. The

mean ratings identified strategies involving communication and problem solving among staff members as rating highest. Table 6 shows the results from Round 2 and the strategies for social awareness listed in order from highest mean rating to lowest mean rating. The number of respondents for each rating is also provided.

Competency 3: Relationship Skills Involve Creating and Sustaining Healthy and Supportive Relationships and Effectively Communicating and Collaborating With Individuals and Groups From Diverse Backgrounds

The strategies for relationship skills were given a mean rating from 3.53 to 2.73. The strategy with the highest rating was staff members model good relationships in their interactions with other staff members. Table 7 shows the results from Round 2 and the strategies for relationship skills listed in order from highest mean rating to lowest mean rating. The number of respondents for each rating is also provided.

Competency 4: Self-Management Skills Is the Ability to Effectively Respond to One's Emotions, Thoughts, and Behaviors in a Variety of Situations and to Create and Achieve Personal and Academic goals Including Handling Delayed Gratification, Managing Stress, and Feeling Motivation to Achieve

The strategies for self-management skills were given a mean rating from 3.53 to 2.93. The strategy with the highest rating was staff members model patience and how to work through daily situations that may cause stress among staff members. Table 8 shows the results from Round 2 and the strategies for self-management listed in order from highest mean rating to lowest mean rating. The number of respondents for each rating is also provided.

Table 5

Competency 1: Self-Awareness Round 2 Effectiveness Ratings

Item	Strategy	Participant responses				*M*ean rating Round 2
		Very effective = 4	Effective = 3	Somewhat effective = 2	Not effective = 1	
5	Staff members collaborate and share about best practices to learn from one another.	11	2	2	0	3.60
6	Staff members acknowledge and value the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others.	10	3	1	1	3.47
10	Staff members demonstrate a growth mindset.	10	3	1	1	3.47
9	Staff members celebrate each other's professional and personal accomplishments.	11	1	1	2	3.40
4	Staff members practice self-reflection.	9	4	1	1	3.40
3	Staff members apologize for their actions when needed.	9	4	1		3.40
1	Staff members demonstrate empathy by understanding the personal needs and challenges of others.	9	3	2	1	3.33
2	Staff members demonstrate vulnerability by having open and honest discussions with each other	7	6	1	1	3.27
8	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior	7	6	0	2	3.20
7	Staff members set goals based on self- identified strengths and weaknesses, and monitor progress on those goals	5	8	0	2	3.07

Table 6

Competency 2: Social-Awareness Round 2 Effectiveness Ratings

Item	Strategy	Participant responses				*M* rating Round 2
		Very effective = 4	Effective = 3	Somewhat effective = 2	Not effective = 1	
6	Staff members communicate and problem solve by planning together.	12	1	1	1	3.60
9	Staff members encourage mindfulness and empathy with others.	11	2	0	2	3.60
2	Staff members actively learn about different cultures and backgrounds.	8	4	2	1	3.53
3	Staff members set and review expectations of behavior.	10	2	2	1	3.40
10	Staff members are willing to learn and grow by trying new things.	11	3	0	1	3.40
4	Staff members are respectful and assume positive intent.	11	2	1	1	3.40
5	Staff members empower others by identifying strengths and celebrating successes.	8	4	2	1	3.27
1	Staff members are willing to learn about themselves and others through open communication.	7	6	1	1	3.27
7	Staff members facilitate or participate in cultural activities in the school or community.	8	3	3	1	3.20
8	Staff members honor and recognize different perspectives.	6	7	0	2	3.13

Table 7

Competency 3: Relationship Skills Round 2 Effectiveness Ratings

Item	Strategy	Participant responses				*M* rating Round 2
		Very effective = 4	Effective = 3	Somewhat effective = 2	Not effective = 1	
8	Staff members model good relationships in their interactions with other staff.	11	2	1	1	3.53
3	Staff members collaborate with others to work toward a common goal.	10	3	2	0	3.53
2	Staff members encourage relationship building by expressing interest in others and getting to know them.	10	3	1	1	3.47
9	Staff members value each team member by understanding their individual strengths and weaknesses.	9	4	1	1	3.40
5	Staff members interact and talk daily.	7	7	1	0	3.40
6	Staff members honor the perspectives of others in the decision-making process.	10	3	0	2	3.40
7	Staff members admit when mistakes are made and apologize.	9	4	0	2	3.33
1	Staff members practice conflict resolution skills with colleagues.	6	4	3	2	2.93
10	Staff members demonstrate team unity by wearing school shirts, eating together, and so forth.	6	3	5	1	2.93
4	Staff members stress communicating and practice active listening.	8	5	0	2	2.73

Table 8

Competency 4: Self-Management Round 2 Effectiveness Ratings

Item	Strategy	Very effective = 4	Effective = 3	Somewhat effective = 2	Not effective = 1	M rating Round 2
		Participant responses				
8	Staff members model patience and how to work through daily situations that may cause stress.	8	5	0	2	3.53
6	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.	9	4	1	1	3.40
3	Staff members are mindful of their personal health and take time to enjoy personal activities.	8	5	2	0	3.40
2	Staff members accentuate the positives when working with others.	7	6	1	1	3.27
5	Staff members create a calm space in which others can share openly.	8	5	1	1	3.33
4	Staff members set goals based on self-identified strengths and weaknesses and monitor progress on those goals.	7	6	0	2	3.20
7	Staff members guide themselves and others to reflect on their words and actions and how those choices affect others (e.g., cognitive coaching).	7	5	1	2	3.13
1	Staff members model and manage their own stress effectively (e.g., set boundaries, manage feelings, etc.).	4	7	3	1	2.93

Competency 5: Responsible Decision Making Is Making Caring and Thoughtful

Choices About One's Own Personal Behavior and Social Interactions in Various

Situations Including the Ability to Consider the Cause and Effect of One's Actions and

How to Be Accountable for Those Decisions

The strategies of responsible decision making were given a mean rating from 3.53 to 3.07. The strategy with the highest rating was staff members meet regularly and use established processes to share ideas for various situations (e.g., in professional learning communities). Table 9 shows the results from Round 2 and the strategies for responsible decision making listed in order from highest mean rating to lowest mean rating. The number of respondents for each rating is also provided.

Delphi Round 3 Presentation of Data and Findings

In Round 3, the expert panelists were asked to review the mean ratings for the strategies from Round 2 and to rerate the strategies for effectiveness. The purpose of rerating was to achieve consensus. The threshold for consensus on the most effective strategies was set at a mean rating of 3.0 or higher in both Round 2 and Round 3.

Competency 1: Self-Awareness

The 10 self-awareness strategies identified in Round 2 were rated again for effectiveness in Round 3. The strategies had Round 3 mean ratings from 3.53 to 3.07. Table 10 shows the results from Round 3 and strategies for self-awareness listed in order from highest mean rating to lowest mean rating in Rounds 2 and 3. The mean effectiveness ratings in Round 3 varied for most of the strategies, which changed the order of strategies listed as highly effective. However, Strategy 5, which listed as the most effective in Round 2, was consistent in Round 3. All of the strategies for self-

awareness had a mean rating of 3.0 or higher in both Round 2 and Round 3, thereby

meeting the criteria for consensus.

Table 9

Competency 5: Responsible Decision Making Round 2 Effectiveness Ratings

Item	Strategy	Participant responses				*M* rating Round 2
		Very effective = 4	Effective = 3	Somewhat effective = 2	Not effective = 1	
1	Staff members meet regularly and use established processes to share ideas for various situations (e.g. in professional learning communities).	10	3	2	0	3.53
4	Staff members model professionalism by keeping an open mind.	11	2	0	2	3.47
3	Staff members provide authentic and specific feedback during discussions.	10	3	0	2	3.40
2	Staff members model how to make good decisions.	8	5	2	0	3.40
5	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.	8	5	1	1	3.33
6	Staff members guide themselves and others to reflect on their words and actions and how those choices affect others (e.g., cognitive coaching).	6	6	1	2	3.07

Table 10

Competency 1: Self-Awareness Effectiveness Mean Ratings From Rounds 2 and 3

Item	Strategy	Round 2 M rating	Round 3 M rating
5	Staff members collaborate and share about best practices to learn from one another.	3.60	3.53
10	Staff members demonstrate a growth mindset.	3.47	3.47
1	Staff members demonstrate empathy by understanding the personal needs and challenges of others.	3.33	3.33
8	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.	3.20	3.33
3	Staff members apologize for their actions when needed.	3.40	3.27
9	Staff members celebrate each other's professional and personal accomplishments.	3.20	3.20
6	Staff members acknowledge and value the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others.	3.33	3.20
2	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.	3.40	3.13
4	Staff members practice self-reflection.	3.47	3.07
7	Staff members set goals based on self-identified strengths and weaknesses and monitor progress on those goals.	3.07	3.07

Competency 2: Social Awareness

The 10 social awareness strategies identified in Round 2 were rated again for effectiveness in Round 3. The strategies had Round 3 mean ratings from 3.60 to 2.93. The strategy with the highest rating was staff members communicate and problem solve by planning together. Table 11 shows the mean rating results from Rounds 2 and 3 and the strategies for social awareness listed in order from highest mean rating to lowest mean rating. Nine of the strategies for social-awareness had a mean rating of 3.0 or higher in both Round 2 and Round 3, thereby meeting the criteria for consensus.

Table 11

Competency 2: Social-Awareness Effectiveness Mean Ratings From Rounds 2 and 3

Item	Strategy	Round 2 *M* rating	Round 3 *M* rating
6	Staff members communicate and problem solve by planning together.	3.60	3.60
5	Staff members empower others by identifying strengths and celebrating successes.	3.27	3.40
4	Staff members are respectful and assume positive intent.	3.40	3.40
10	Staff members are willing to learn and grow by trying new things.	3.40	3.40
9	Staff members encourage mindfulness and empathy with others.	3.60	3.27
2	Staff members actively learn about different cultures and backgrounds.	3.53	3.27
1	Staff members are willing to learn about themselves and others through open communication.	3.27	3.00
7	Staff members facilitate or participate in cultural activities in the school or community.	3.20	3.00
8	Staff members honor and recognize different perspectives.	3.13	2.93

Competency 3: Relationship Skills

The 10 relationship skills strategies identified in Round 2 were rated again for effectiveness in Round 3. The strategies had Round 3 mean ratings from 3.47 to 2.80. The strategy with the highest rating was staff members collaborate with others to work toward a common goal. Table 12 shows the results from Rounds 2 and 3 and the strategies for relationship skills listed in order from highest mean rating to lowest mean rating. Six of the strategies for relationship skills had a mean rating of 3.0 or higher in both Round 2 and Round 3, thereby meeting the criteria for consensus.

Table 12

Competency 3: Relationship Skills Effectiveness Mean Ratings From Rounds 2 and 3

Item	Strategy	Round 2 *M* rating	Round 3 *M* rating
3	Staff members collaborate with others to work toward a common goal.	3.53	3.47
7	Staff members honor the perspectives of others in the decision-making process.	3.33	3.27
8	Staff members model good relationships in their interactions with other staff.	3.53	3.20
9	Staff members value team members by understanding their individual strengths and weaknesses.	3.40	3.20
5	Staff members interact and talk daily.	3.40	3.00
10	Staff members demonstrate team unity by wearing school shirts, eating together, and so forth.	2.93	3.00
6	Staff members admit when mistakes are made and apologize.	3.40	2.93
2	Staff members encourage relationship building by expressing interest in others and getting to know them.	3.47	2.87
4	Staff members stress communicating and practice active listening.	2.73	2.87
1	Staff members practice conflict resolution skills with colleagues.	2.93	2.80

Competency 4: Self-management Skills

The eight self-management strategies identified in Round 2 were rated again for effectiveness in Round 3. The strategies had Round 3 mean ratings from 3.33 to 2.67. The strategy with the highest rating was staff members model patience and how to work through daily situations that may cause stress. Table 13 shows the results from Rounds 2 and 3 and the strategies for self-management listed in order from highest mean rating to

lowest mean rating. Six of the strategies for self-management skills had a mean rating of 3.0 or higher in both Rounds 2 and Round 3, thereby meeting the criteria for consensus.

Table 13

Competency 4: Self-Management Effectiveness Mean Ratings From Rounds 2 and 3

Item	Strategy	Round 2 *M* rating	Round 3 *M* rating
8	Staff members model patience and how to work through daily situations that may cause stress.	3.53	3.33
3	Staff members are mindful of their personal health and take time to enjoy personal activities.	3.40	3.20
6	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.	3.40	3.20
5	Staff members create a calm space in which others can share openly.	3.33	3.07
4	Staff members set goals based on self-identified strengths and weaknesses and monitor progress on those goals.	3.20	3.00
2	Staff members accentuate the positives when working with others.	3.27	3.00
1	Staff members model and manage their own stress effectively (e.g., set boundaries, manage feelings. etc.).	2.93	2.93
7	Staff members guide themselves and others to reflect on their words and actions and how those choices affect others (e.g., cognitive coaching).	3.13	2.67

Competency 5: Responsible Decision Making

The six responsible decision-making strategies identified in Round 2 were rated again for effectiveness in Round 3. The strategies had Round 3 mean ratings from 3.47 to 2.93. The strategy with the highest rating was staff members meet regularly and use established processes to share ideas for various situations (e.g., in professional learning communities). Table 14 shows the results from Rounds 2 and 3 and the strategies for

responsible decision making rated again and listed in order from highest mean rating to lowest mean rating. Five of the strategies for responsible decision making had a mean rating of 3.0 or higher in both Round 2 and Round 3, thereby meeting the criteria for consensus.

Table 15 shows a summary of the results from Round 3 and the strategies that met the threshold for consensus for each of the five competencies listed in order from highest mean rating to lowest mean rating based on the ratings for Round 3. The frequency rating indicating the number of respondents who rated each strategy a 3 or 4 for effectiveness is also provided as well as the percentage of respondents represented by this frequency.

Table 14

Competency 5: Responsible Decision-Making Effectiveness Mean Ratings From Rounds 2 and 3

Item	Strategy	Round 2 *M* rating	Round 3 *M* rating
1	Staff members meet regularly and use established processes to share ideas for various situations (e.g., in professional learning communities).	3.53	3.47
5	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.	3.47	3.33
4	Staff members model professionalism by keeping an open mind.	3.40	3.27
2	Staff members model how to make good decisions.	3.40	3.20
3	Staff members provide authentic and specific feedback during discussions.	3.33	3.13
6	Staff members guide themselves and others to reflect on their words and actions and how those choices affect others (e.g., cognitive coaching).	3.07	2.93

Table 15

Summary of Effective Strategies

Item	Strategies identified	*M* rating	Frequency rating 3 or 4	% rating 3 or 4
	Competency 1: Self awareness			
5	Staff members collaborate and share about best practices to learn from one another.	3.53	13	87
10	Staff members demonstrate a growth mindset.	3.47	13	87
1	Staff members demonstrate empathy by understanding the personal needs and challenges of others.	3.33	13	87
8	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.	3.33	13	87
3	Staff members apologize for their actions when needed.	3.27	13	87
6	Staff members acknowledge and value the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others.	3.20	13	87
9	Staff members celebrate each other's professional and personal accomplishments.	3.20	12	80
2	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.	3.13	12	80
4	Staff members practice self-reflection.	3.07	12	80
7	Staff members set goals based on self-identified strengths and weaknesses and monitor progress on those goals.	3.07	13	87
	Competency 2: Social awareness			
6	Staff members communicate and problem solve by planning together.	3.60	14	93
5	Staff members empower others by identifying strengths and celebrating successes.	3.40	13	87
4	Staff members are respectful and assume positive intent.	3.40	14	93
10	Staff members are willing to learn and grow by trying new things.	3.40	14	93
9	Staff members encourage mindfulness and empathy with others.	3.27	13	87
2	Staff members actively learn about different cultures and backgrounds.	3.27	12	80

Table 15 (*continued*)

Item	Strategies identified	*M* rating	Frequency rating 3 or 4	% rating 3 or 4
Competency 2: Social awareness (continued)				
1	Staff members are willing to learn about themselves and others through open communication.	3.00	12	80
7	Staff members facilitate or participate in cultural activities in the school or community.	3.00	12	80
Competency 3: Self-management				
3	Staff members collaborate with others to work toward a common goal.	3.47	13	87
7	Staff members honor the perspectives of others in the decision-making process.	3.27	12	80
8	Staff members model good relationships in their interactions with other staff.	3.20	12	80
9	Staff members value team members by understanding their individual strengths and weaknesses.	3.20	12	80
5	Staff members interact and talk daily.	3.00	10	67
10	Staff members demonstrate team unity by wearing school shirts, eating together, and so forth.	3.00	11	73
Competency 4: Self-management skills				
8	Staff members model patience and how to work through daily situations that may cause stress.	3.33	13	87
3	Staff members are mindful of their personal health and take time to enjoy personal activities.	3.20	13	87
6	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.	3.20	14	93
5	Staff members create a calm space in which others can share openly.	3.07	12	80
4	Staff members set goals based on self-identified strengths and weaknesses and monitor progress on those goals.	3.00	12	80
2	Staff members accentuate the positives when working with others.	3.00	13	87

Table 15 (continued)

Item	Strategies identified	M rating	Frequency rating 3 or 4	% rating 3 or 4
	Competency 5: Responsible decision making			
1	Staff members meet regularly and use established processes to share ideas for various situations (e.g., in professional learning communities).	3.47	14	93
5	Staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior.	3.33	13	87
4	Staff members model professionalism by keeping an open mind.	3.27	13	87
2	Staff members model how to make good decisions.	3.20	13	87
3	Staff members provide authentic and specific feedback during discussions.	3.13	13	87

In Round 3, all of the strategies identified in Competency 1, self-awareness, received a mean rating of 3.00 or higher for effectiveness. Although the mean ratings changed slightly, all 10 were perceived by the expert panel as effective strategies to create and foster a culture of support for SEL. The strategies identified as most effective were related to collaboration (3.53), a growth mindset (3.47), demonstrating empathy (3.33), and modeling professionalism (3.33). In Competency 2, social awareness, nine of the 10 originally identified strategies received a mean rating of 3.00 or higher in Round 3 for effectiveness. The mean ratings and rankings changed slightly. The top strategies identified were similar to those in Competency 1 and were related to communication (3.60), celebrating successes (3.40), professionalism (3.40), a growth mindset (3.40), and respect (3.27).

<center>**Key Findings**</center>

Based on the results of the effectiveness ratings, six key findings were identified.
These key findings are based on the highest mean effectiveness ratings and combined
similar strategies that were identified for different competencies. An explanation and
justification for each key finding is provided in the following sections.

Also, the competency strategies related to the themes of professionalism emerged
seven times, identifying strengths and weaknesses emerged four times, and a growth
mindset emerged five times as key findings in multiple areas. From all five competencies,
the themes of collaboration and communication were expressed through the strategies of
unity, working together, and sharing ideas openly. Experts identified meeting together
regularly to provide feedback and interacting daily as effective strategies to create and
support a culture of SEL. In the data of the descriptions for Competencies 3, 4, and 5, the
strategies that included the related themes of collaboration, unity, working together,
sharing openly, and respect were identified 10 times.

Key Finding 1: Professionalism

The analysis of the Round 3 survey that was completed by all 15 expert teacher
leaders. The first key finding identified professionalism as a key strategy to create and
foster a culture of support for SEL with other staff members. The experts stated that staff
members demonstrated professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior and
reviewed these norms often as effective strategies.

Key Finding 2: Communication and Conflict Resolution

The second key finding was the importance of communication and conflict
resolution as teacher leaders share information and ideas with other staff members. The

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experts stated that staff must be willing to learn about themselves and others as they recognize and respect differences in perspective through active listening.

Key Finding 3: Collaboration

The third key finding demonstrated the importance of collaboration through the sharing of best practices and providing authentic and specific feedback during discussions. Experts stated the need to reflect on their words and action and how those choices affect others as they collaborate and plan together.

Key Finding 4: Practice and Promote a Growth Mindset

The fourth key finding supported the need for teacher leaders and other staff members to practice a growth mindset by taking time for their personal health, setting boundaries to manage feelings and stress, and displaying empathy. The experts also stated that teacher leaders and staff members must demonstrate vulnerability and be willing to learn and grow by trying new ideas.

Key Finding 5: Recognize Strength and Weaknesses

The fifth key finding supported by the experts was the need for teacher leaders and staff members to create common goals, monitor these goals regularly, and work together to identify individual and group strength and weaknesses. They also stated the need to monitor goals while they support each other toward a culture of SEL.

Key Finding 6: Promote Cultural Awareness

The sixth key finding revealed the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity by actively learning about different cultures and backgrounds. The experts also expressed the need to participate in cultural activities in the schools and in the community.

Table 16 shows how the key findings were analyzed based on the responses to the open-ended questions in Round 1 and the mean ratings in Rounds 2 and 3. It identifies the competency the findings and like ideas were rated under and the strategies provided by the expert teacher leaders.

Table 16

Strategy Item Numbers and Key Findings for the Five CASEL Competencies

Key findings	Self-awareness	Social awareness	Relationship skills	Self-management	Responsible decision making
Professionalism	8, 2, 4	3, 4	7	6, 3	1, 5, 4
Communication		6, 1	8, 5	8	3
Collaboration	5		1, 2, 3, 6	1	
Growth mindset	10, 1, 3	10, 9		5	6, 2
Recognizing Strengths/weaknesses	7		4, 9	4, 2	
Culture	6, 9	5, 2, 6, 7	10		

Unexpected Findings

One surprising key finding was in Competency 4, self-management. The strategy, staff members demonstrate professionalism by following accepted norms for behavior, received the highest frequency score of 93% but a mean rating of 3.20. However, staff members meeting regularly in professional learning communities also received a high frequency score of 14 and a mean rating of 3.47. Although professionalism was a consistent theme throughout the five competencies, it did not always receive the highest mean rating.

The second unexpected finding was the importance to the expert teacher leaders of a growth mindset. Typically, this would be present when discussing teaching students the importance of learning from mistakes, displaying empathy, and acknowledging the

feelings and difference of others. Although this growth mindset platform existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been more prominent since returning to in-person teaching. Since the pandemic, expert teacher leaders are still concerned with the mental health and stress management not only of their students but also of themselves and other staff members and are actively seeking strategies to maintain individual and collective efficacy in education.

Not surprisingly, the theme of culture emerged in the findings in Competency 2, social skills as part of strategies to broaden the culture and cultural acceptance of others as a whole. However, the expert leaders did not give specifics on what events or activities in schools or school districts would increase cultural sensitivity and broaden the knowledge of different cultures in schools.

Summary

Chapter IV included the research design and methods used for data collection and analysis of the research findings for this Delphi study. This study aimed to identify and describe the most effective strategies used by teacher leaders with other staff members to create and foster a culture of support for SEL in PBIS Platinum awarded implementation elementary schools. Fifteen expert panelists participated in this study, and a consensus was reached regarding the strategies that were perceived to be most effective by teacher leaders with other staff members. Chapter V includes the major findings, conclusions, implications for actions, comments, and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.

—Herbert Spencer, *BrainyQuote*

Social-emotional competencies are geared toward increasing student academic outcomes by focusing on a school environment that enhances supportive relationships while creating and maintaining positive relationships. Schools and school districts have begun adopting social-emotional learning (SEL) as an approach to teaching and learning. Chapter V provides a review of this Delphi study's purpose statement, research questions, and methodology and includes the study's population and sample. In addition, Chapter V provides the study's findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research. This chapter concludes with comments and reflections of this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this Delphi study was to identify the strategies that elementary teacher leaders use with other staff members to create and foster a school culture that supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies (self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision making). An additional purpose was to identify what teacher leaders perceive to be the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture that supports these SEL competencies.

Research Questions

1. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies?

a. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports self-awareness?

b. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports social awareness?

c. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports relationship skills?

d. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports self-management?

e. How do teacher leaders create and foster a school culture with other staff members that supports responsible decision making?

2. What do elementary teacher leaders perceive to be the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture with other staff members that supports SEL?

Research Method

This study was part of a thematic dissertation involving two doctoral candidates who studied the same topic with different populations. The study used the classic Delphi study method to gather data from transitional kindergarten (TK) through sixth grade elementary teacher leaders who had worked at a positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) Platinum awarded school for at least 2 years, had taught for a minimum of 5 years, and were recommended by their school principals to identify and describe how elementary teacher leaders create and foster a school culture that supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies (self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision making). An additional purpose was to

identify what teacher leaders perceive to be the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture that supports these SEL competencies.

As the principal researcher for this study, I used surveys created through Google Forms to collect information from a panel of 15 expert teacher leaders in Riverside and San Bernardino counties to gain consensus on effective strategies used with other staff members to create and foster a culture that supports SEL based on their experiences. In this study, qualitative and quantitative data were collected through three rounds of survey, which allowed the expert panelists to reevaluate their opinions and then adjust ratings based on their assessment and evaluations.

In Round 1, the expert panelists were asked to respond to five open-ended questions regarding the five CASEL competencies of SEL via email using a Google Forms survey. Qualitative data were retrieved from this information provided and used to construct the surveys in Rounds 2 and 3. In Round 2 the expert panelists were asked to rate the strategies generated in Round 1 for effectiveness using a 4-point Likert scale. The ratings on the Likert scale were 4 (*highly effective*), 3 (*effective*), 2 (*somewhat effective*), and 1 (*not effective*). The panelists were also given the opportunity to provide further strategies in Round 2. In Round 3 the expert panelists were asked to review the mean ratings for the strategies from Round 2 and to rerate the strategies for effectiveness. The purpose of rerating was to achieve consensus through quantitative data methods. The threshold for consensus on the most effective strategies was set at a mean rating of 3.0 or higher in both Round 2 and Round 3.

Population

The population of this study consisted of elementary school teacher leaders in California. In 2023, the CDE (n.d.-a) reported 5,857 elementary schools in California. Because there are typically between five and 10 teacher leaders per elementary school, the study's population was 29,285 to 58,570 elementary teacher leaders in California.

Target Population

The target population for this study was elementary teacher leaders in Riverside County and San Bernardino County schools that have been recognized with the California PBIS Platinum Implementation Award. I obtained a list of all 68 schools and hand counted the elementary schools listed under each district on the California PBIS (2022) website that have been given this distinction and identified 68 elementary schools in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Given that there are typically five to 10 teacher leaders per elementary school site, the target population for this study was 340 to 680 teacher leaders.

Sample Population

Nonprobability purposeful sampling was used for the study. Candidates must have met all four criteria: (a) they worked at an elementary school that was designated as a PBIS Platinum Implementation awarded school in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, (b) they worked for 5 or more years as an elementary school teacher in Riverside or San Bernardino county, (c) they served within the last 3 years as an elementary school teacher leader at their site, and (d) they assisted in establishing a school culture that promotes SEL based on a recommendation by another professional in the education field.

The sample size for this study was 16 elementary teacher leaders who worked in a California public school that has been identified as a PBIS awarded Platinum implementation recognition. These teacher leaders were recommended by their principals as experts in creating and fostering a culture with other staff members that supports SEL using the five CASEL competencies. Of the original 16 recommended panelists, 15 expert teacher leaders completed all three rounds of the study.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study and the input from the expert teacher leaders, as the leaders of the school, principals and assistant principals share the responsibility of modeling and fostering the school culture (Beatty & Campbell-Evans, 2020) to improve the social-emotional competency of all students and staff. The behavior modeled by administrators is then followed by the teacher leaders, other staff members, and students. Connecting the students social-emotional development with their academic learning can influence a sense of belonging and increase achievement. According to Beatty and Campbell-Evans (2020), "School organizational structures can enhance positive relationships between students and teachers, fostering student social emotional development and a positive school culture"(p. 438).

Conclusion 1: When Teacher Leaders and Staff Members Demonstrate Professionalism by Creating and Following Accepted Norms of Behavior, They Foster a Culture That Supports SEL

Based on the findings and literature review, it is concluded that demonstrating professionalism in the workplace is beneficial to all staff members. According to the panel of experts, staff members who demonstrate professionalism not only create and

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follow the accepted norms of behavior but also take time to review them at staff meetings, grade-level meetings, and professional development trainings. According to Kendziora and Yoder (2016), SEL involves various types of learning that allow individuals to develop and use skills, obtain knowledge, and handle behaviors and attitudes to effectively form positive relationships. Feedback from the expert panelists expressed the need for vulnerability and openness with respect for differences in perspectives and opinions and the ability to create positive relationships whereby each member is valued and respected. In addition, the findings also note that staff members should practice professionalism by participating in professional learning communities that use established processes to share ideas in different situations. Much like clearly defined expectations of behavior provide continuity and consistency in a classroom, having a common agreed upon language is also beneficial to adults while they interact with each other (Carter & Pool, 2012).

Conclusion 2: When Teacher Leaders/Staff Members Model How to Make Good Decisions and Provide Specific Feedback, They Create and Foster a Culture of Support for SEL

Based on the findings and the literature review, it is important that staff members model the process of making good decisions. Strategies that target skills, such as listening to learn, keeping an open mind, and providing authentic feedback during discussions, were identified as crucial to communication. Teacher leaders guide themselves and others to reflect on their words and actions and how those choices affect others (Spillane et al., 2004). Teacher leaders identified the need to create a positive school culture that supports SEL by modeling good decision making through the process of bringing various

perspectives together and productively working through differences. Durlak et al. (2015)

reenforced the need for individuals to manage their emotions and work effectively with

people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives while they resolve conflicts and make

responsible decisions. Responses from the expert panelists also demonstrated the

interconnectedness of professionalism, communication, and collaboration with creating

and fostering a culture that supports SEL. According to Donohoo et al. (2018), common

understanding is built and allows teachers to learn from one another when collaborative

structures are in place that foster empathy and effective interaction in teams. Durlak et al.

(2015) expressed the need for leaders to influence, inspire, and create trust. Also, to

create a culture of empathy is critical and allows an environment in which "feedback can

be given and received, differences honored, and creativity flourishes" (p. 443).

Conclusion 3: When There Is Strong Communication and Collaboration, Staff
Members Plan Together to Resolve Conflicts by Modeling Patience With One
Another Foster a Culture That Supports SEL

Research by Kendziora and Yoder (2016) stressed the importance of SEL

collaboration as a critical component of communication and the development of caring

relationships. The expert panelists noted the need for all staff members to practice

conflict resolution and patience with each other and to encourage building relationships

by getting to know one another. According to Goleman (1995), the capacity to

communicate is the "ability to verbally exchange ideas, feelings, and concepts with

others" (p. 171). Durlak et al. (2015) also noted that "the basis of cultural awareness

(self-awareness and social awareness combined) is the foundation for communication"

(p. 53). Based on the findings and a review of the literature, the expert teacher leaders

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stressed the importance of communicating and active listening as necessary relationship skills to possess by staff members when interacting daily. The panelists further stated the need for staff members to take the time to plan together as they develop their individual and team strengths. Beatty and Campbell-Evans (2020) stated that this works toward a "collaborative culture with common goals and a shared sense of purpose and a cohesive school vision" (p. 438), which allows the team to empower and learn from one another and share best practices, making time to plan events, lessons, or activities. The experts highlighted the significance of open communication and collaboration as a method of modeling effective relationships that support a culture of SEL.

Conclusion 4: When Teacher Leaders/Staff Members Accentuate the Positives, Are Aware of Their Words and Actions, and How Those Actions Affect Others, and Learn About Themselves, They Support a Culture of SEL

A review of the literature emphasized the importance of self-awareness and social awareness in creating a culture that supports SEL. According to Goleman (1995), "Self-awareness is the ability to recognize emotions as they happen and to monitor those feelings from moment to moment" (p. 37). Consistent with the literature, findings from this study support the need for staff members to demonstrate understanding of personal needs and challenges of others and practice self-reflection. The findings also identified the need to have the assumption of positive intent during interactions. The expert panelists noted the need to believe that individuals are performing at their best and are willing to learn from one another as a pathway to encourage collaboration. Accentuating the positives demonstrates the ability to build positive relationships within a trusting environment that supports the growth of these relationships.

Conclusion 5: When Teacher Leaders/Staff Members Create a Calm Space in Which Others Can Share Openly, Are Mindful of Their Personal Health and Take Time to Enjoy Personal Activities, They Support a Culture of SEL Through Modeling Good Relationship Skills

Practicing and promoting a growth mindset by which teacher leaders and staff encourage mindfulness and empathy with others was identified by the expert teacher leaders as an effective strategy that creates and fosters a culture of support for SEL. According to Durlak et al. (2015), teacher stress can create "negative emotions such as frustration, anger, guilt, and sadness" (p. 432) that can negatively affect a teacher's instruction. Mindfulness interventions reduce stress and promote self-awareness and can improve the teaching environment. Goleman (1995) demonstrated the need for self-awareness as having clarity about one's own emotions and the ability to manage them productively. Macias (2020) stated that the "school leaders with highly developed emotional intelligence are better able to deal with stress" (p. 13). Findings from this study were consistent with the literature and identified the need for strategies to effectively manage stress by creating calm, emotional safe spaces in which staff members can communicate openly and honestly. Long (2019) noted the need to support teachers, school leaders, and the community through programs such as Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS). The strategies identified by the panelists further supported the literature by the need to model and manage one's own stress in setting boundaries and taking time to enjoy personal activities. Trujillo (2019) stated that firm and consistent boundaries allow individuals to "trust that they are safe, both emotionally and physically" (p. 91).

Conclusion 6: Teacher Leaders/Staff Members Set Goals Based on Self-Identification and Group Identified Strengths and Weaknesses and Monitor Progress on Those Goals to Create and Foster a Culture of Support for SEL

A review of the literature and this study's findings were consistent with the research on teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy. According to Bandura (1993), how teachers feel about themselves is a major contributor to the school's culture. Several of the conclusions in this study demonstrate an interconnectedness between professionalism, mental health, culture, and the achievement of goals. Teacher efficacy is the connection between how educators feel, what they believe, what their teaching behavior (professionalism) is, and what their ability to reach goals is. A culture of collaboration that supports students and teachers is created and maintained by setting expectations for productive goals and monitoring progress (Donohoo et al., 2018). The findings from this study supported the literature. Expert teacher leaders stated the effectiveness of collaborating with others to work toward a common goal and the value of each team member understanding strengths and weaknesses. Team members must have confidence in the abilities of each member and the impact of the team as a whole on achievement. Team unity, according to the findings, can be manifested by attending school functions, wearing school shirts, and eating lunch together. Long (2019) researched the role of empowering teachers and stated the need for teachers to cultivate and model SEL by having effective leaders to create a positive learning climate. Hattie (2016) emphasized the necessity for teachers to believe that they cause learning and not just teach. This empowerment assists teachers to create a culture that supports SEL for all stakeholders.

Conclusion 7: When Teacher Leaders/Staff Members Actively Learn About Different Cultures and Facilitate the Participation in School Activities, They Create and Foster a Culture That Supports SEL

The culture of an organization is one of the foundational elements of a school that promotes equity and inclusion (Torres, 2022). To understand culture, school leaders must also understand the social behaviors and beliefs of those within the organization. The *Merriam-Webster* (n.d.) dictionary defines culture as characteristics expressed in the diversity of languages, religions, languages, food, beliefs, and customs of a group of people or shared by a group in an organization. Findings from this study demonstrate the support of learning about the culture of a school and the various aspects of cultures within the school. Expert teacher leaders expressed that social awareness involves learning about different cultures and backgrounds as they honor and recognize the difference in perspectives. This is consistent with CASEL's definition of social awareness and the need to appreciate diversity. According to Trujillo (2019), it is crucial to realize that people are different in many ways, which also provides valuable insight into what makes people similar. These similarities have a bases in people's differences, and this "diversity is what makes us stronger" (Trujillo, 2019, p. 8). In addition, the panelist responses also expressed the importance of participating in cultural activities in a school or community as a means of expanding one's social awareness and encouraging SEL.

Implications for Action

The implications for action were developed by reviewing the study data findings, conclusions, expert teacher leader strategies provided, and new learnings from this study.

The following implications are suggested recommendations for state and local teacher preparation programs, district elementary educational leaders, and school-site administrators.

Implication for Action 1: Districts and/or County Offices of Education Must Create and Foster a Network of Expert Teacher Leaders That Supports District Teachers as Leaders

The findings from this study identified the need for school districts and/or county offices of education to establish local programs to support the development of teacher leaders. These partnerships could provide opportunities for teacher leaders and staff members to set self-identified goals with time to monitor progress and adjust these goals as situations change. The use of professional learning communities, based on Conclusion 1, would give teachers and teacher leaders a platform to express their ideas, elicit and provide specific feedback from all stakeholders within an environment with established norms to support a culture that furthers the development of SEL.

Implication for Action 2: The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Should Develop a Supplemental Credential or Certification for Teacher Leaders to Identify Opportunities for Advancement in Teacher Leadership

Institutes of higher education should coordinate with the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to develop a curriculum with extended requirements toward the completion of a supplemental credential in teacher leadership. The creation of leadership pathways that prepare aspiring teachers for leadership and promote a culture of support for SEL would also allow opportunities for mentorship programs for new teachers and support expert teachers as they transition into leadership programs.

Implication for Action 3: Districts and County Offices of Education Should Collaborate With Teacher Training Programs and Institutions of Higher Education to Encourage and Establish Opportunities for Teacher Leaders to Learn and Practice Strategies Identified as Effective to Create and Foster a Culture That Supports SEL

School districts, county offices of education, and institutes of higher education need to create a professional development program with a broader view toward the development and advancement of teacher leaders. The findings from this study indicated that programs that promote efficacy by identifying and instructing staff members with effective strategies in the five CASEL competency skills (self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and relationship) will aid in opportunities for growth and advancement in teacher leadership.

Implication for Action 4: District Administration Must Make It a Priority to Provide Opportunities in Which Teacher Leaders/Staff Members Can Openly Communicate and Effectively Collaborate

District administration must make it a priority to provide opportunities in which teacher leaders and staff members can openly communicate and effectively collaborate by modeling honesty and transparency. Having an atmosphere in which all stakeholders are aware of how the choices made at the district level affect the teacher leaders and staff at the school level will create a more collaborative environment. Communication with district administrators, union representatives (both certified and classified), and teacher leaders can encourage the sharing of different perspectives and ideas that promotes creativity and problem solving.

Engaging workshops that allow staff to work together on their specific site challenges in an atmosphere of openness and honesty. Findings based on Conclusion 4 identified the need for staff members to communicate and collaborate in a respectful environment that encourages empathy for others by understanding personal needs and challenges. The expert teacher leaders presented several strategies for relationship building, daily interactions, unity, and the sharing of best practices to learn from one another.

Implication for Action 5: District and Site Administration Must Make the Personal Health of Their Teacher Leaders and Staff Members a Priority to Ensure Teacher Retention and Efficacy

District administration must make personal health of its teacher leaders and staff members a priority to ensure teacher retention and efficacy through mindfulness activities that encourage staff members to honestly self-access their mental health and reduce stress. District administrators and mental health professionals need to offer different platforms that allow all staff members the opportunity and information on available district resources to access mental health assistance, such as telehealth, in-person counseling, and Google Forms or other digital programs. Providing education on a positive growth mindset and emotional intelligence (EI) can promote self-awareness, self-efficacy, and the ability to recognize one's own emotions and understanding as noted in Conclusion 5.

Implication for Action 6: District and Site Administration Must Facilitate Opportunities for Teacher Leaders/Staff Members to Share Diverse Perspectives and Cultural Experiences

District administration must model honoring the different perspectives of teacher leaders and staff members in the decision-making process and encourage empathy and respect in all interactions by valuing the input of each staff member when creating and implementing new policies and procedures and allow creativity through teacher-to-teacher observations, social opportunities, and individual and small group nonevaluative, coactive coaching. Staff members need to create, participate, and learn about one another through various cultural events and activities that demonstrate team unity by sharing of cultures and ideas. District administration must be aware and respectful of the feelings, thoughts, and actions of its staff members by acknowledging political, religious, and cultural differences.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the research and study findings, several recommendations can expand the knowledge derived from and expand upon this study. The following recommendations are offered to provide additional depth and breadth on the effective strategies that teacher leaders use with other staff members when creating a culture to support SEL.

Recommendation 1 is to replicate this study with different demographics of teacher leaders. This study was conducted with elementary schools in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The results may be different with a larger population, which would increase the reliability of the data.

Recommendation 2 is to replicate this study with all male elementary teacher leaders from different ethnicities. The study participants were all females, and the majority, 12, were Caucasian and three were Hispanic. A study with all male teacher leaders may yield further strategies and recommendations.

Recommendation 3 is to conduct a qualitative study of elementary teacher leaders that would provide additional information from interviews rather than responses to surveys and would allow for additional information and explanation of strategies.

Recommendation 4 is to replicate this study with elementary schools that have not received the Platinum Award for PBIS Implementation. Schools that received a Silver or Gold implementation status may have different results.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

When I first began my doctoral journey, I was not sure what I would find or how I would use the information I was learning. I questioned why I was putting myself in further debt and why I was adding the stress of doctoral classes onto my already busy schedule. Although I could answer these questions at first, I knew in my soul that I had to do it.

After teaching more than 20 years in the classroom, in March 2020, I was suddenly thrown into the world of virtual learning. Teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic was an experience I will never forget. Learning how to provide my students with an education and only seeing their faces on a screen was frustrating to say the least. I realized that although the district had the technology and resources to provide students with Chrome Books and internet access to connect educationally, this was not enough. I missed seeing my students in person, hearing about their day, listening to silly stories,

and watching their creativity bloom. I arranged to meet in front yards, back yards, and at parks to do art projects, sing, and let them just be kids. They needed that socialization, communication, laughter, and the time to bond. My tiny humans needed me to be there. This became my why.

Returning to in-person learning 2 years later revealed this need even more. I watched as students and teachers struggled to communicate effectively, to socialize in the simplest ways, and to deal with the range of emotions that came with the return. I witnessed the lack of connection that permeated the entire school. As part of my doctoral requirements, I was tasked with developing a transitional change project, so I gathered a team of teacher leaders and administrators with the goal of planting a garden. This garden would provide an opportunity for teachers and students to collaborate and communicate in an environment in which test scores did not matter but relationships did. The idea of a garden was to develop a sense of community, promote a shared vision, and provide the staff and students with opportunities to interact and create trusting relationships. My desire was to change the culture of the school by changing the nature of the relationships while reflecting on how we responded to one another.

This study provided me with the opportunity to delve into the roles that teacher leaders hold and how the distribution of leadership without relationships can create challenges, but with positive nurturing relationships, strategies emerge. I explored the need for effective interactions in which decision making was shared, different perspectives were valued, and members problem solve to achieve goals. Leadership is not just about a position; it is about the people in those positions and their impact to create and foster a culture that supports SEL. The future of education lies within the ability to

support teacher leaders at all levels and to provide them with opportunities to advance their knowledge and skills to mentor others and to participate in creating curriculum to promote personal and professional advancement.

Through this research into the study of how students develop cognitively, emotionally, and academically, I began to see the connections between student development and its impact on teachers. The perspectives on SEL, emotional intelligence (EI), and teacher efficacy supported the findings of this study. In school districts there has been an increased focus placed on mental health for students and teachers, the benefits of having a growth mindset, and the importance of managing behavior although the overall focus is still on academic achievement. Therefore, there is still a need to create an environment in which the culture of schools places equal emphasis on achievement and mental health through the learning of social-emotional competencies, such as self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision making. I have dedicated the last 3 years to complete this study and have implemented social-emotional strategies in schools to support a culture of communication, collaboration, and building of supportive relationships. My why continues.

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APPENDICES

Synthesis Matrix

Author(s)	Work Cited	Research Notes & Links	Notes from Research	Academic Achievement	Building relationships/Communi	CASEL Framework	Climate/Culture~Elementary Schoo	Cognitive Development	Cohesive Teams~Distributive Leadersh	Competencies of CASEL Relationship Building / Self-Awareness / Social Awarene	Covid-19	Discipline~Suspension/Expulsion	Ecological Theory	Emotional Competence~Emotional Intelligen	Improving behavior and safet	Leadership	MTSS	PBIS	PBIS~CASEL	Positive Environment	Restorative Circles	Restorative Practices	School Safety	SEL/Social-Emotional Learnin	Zero Tolerance		
Adriansyah, M. A et al. (2023)	Adriansyah, M. A et al. (2023) We are team: Effectiveness of team building training to improve cohesiveness	https://doi.org/10.2666 8/businessreview/2023 .v8i5.1898	According to Adriansyah et al. (2023), cohesiveness within a team can create or improve the sense of attachment between individuals who are members of the same team. The individuals share a common desire to achieve the goals of the group and to express empathy as they interact with one another.						x																		
Aksoy, N. (1998)	Aksoy, N. (1998). An overview of elementary education in the United States: Past, present, and future with its organization, nature of program and teaching strategies.							x																			
Allen, K., Kern, M. L., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hattie, J., & Waters, L. (2018).	What schools need to know about fostering school belonging: A meta-analysis.	https://UMassGlobal.id m.oclc.org/login? url=https://search.ebsc ohost.com/login.aspx? direct=true&db=eft&A N=128112278&site=e ds -live&scope=site				x																		x			
Avant (2016)	Avant (2016) Using response to intervention/multi-tiered systems of supports to promote social justice in schools	https://explore.openair e.eu/search/publication ? articleId=doi_____ _:: 7d67262f0217773d9e5 373724f190ac9															x										
Augustine et al (2018)	Augustine et al (2018) Can restorative practices improve school climate and curb suspensions? An evaluation of the impact of restorative practices in a mid-	https://www.rand. org/pubs/research_repo rts/RR2840.html	Cobb-Clark, Deborah A., Sonja C. Kassenboehmer, Trinh Le, Duncan McVicar, and Rong Zhang, "Is There an Educational Penalty for Being Suspended from School?" Education				x														x	x					

| | | | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | | | x | | | | | x | |

Citation	Reference	Link	Notes/Quote																						
	sized urban school district		Economics, Vol. 23, No. 4, 2015, pp. 376–395. Flannery, Mary Ellen, "The School-to-Prison Pipeline: Time to Shut It Down," neaToday, January 5, 2015. As of August 24, 2018: http://neatoday. org/2015/01/05/school-prisonpipeline-time-shut/																						
Barrett-Newman (2018)	Barrett-Newman (2018) Examining MTSS implementation across systems for SLD identification: A case study	https://www-nasponline-org.umassglobal.idm. oclc.org/publications/p eriodicals/spf/volume1 2/volume-12-issue-1-(spring-2018) /examining-mtss-implementation-acrosssystems-for-sld-identification-a-case-study				x									x					x					
Beaty & Campbell-Evans (2020)	Beaty & Campbell-Evans (2020) School Leaders and a Culture of Support: Fostering Student Social Emotional Development						x																		
Berg (2021)	Berg (2021) Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support: The Positive Effects and Barriers to Sustainability		While SWPBS holds great potential for curbing problem behaviour at school, the barriers to implementation make it difficult to sustain over time.										x		x										
Bomer, R. & Maloch, B. (2013).	Bomer, R. & Maloch, B. (2013). Lunch, teeth, body, and mind: Children's learning and well-being.	https://UMassGlobal.idm.ocl c.org/login? url=https://search.ebscohost. com/login.aspx? direct=true&db=eric&AN=E J1021499&site=ed s-live&scope=site http://www.ncte.org/journals /la/issues/v90-4		x	x							x												
Bond (2021)	Bond (2021) Teacher leadership in a elementary school: A case study of instructional support	https://eds-p-ebscohost-com.umassglobal.idm. oclc.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfvi ewer? vid=14&sid=93dffebc-9733-463e-87c2efefdf4bd953%40redis	file:///C: /Users/gncg/Downloads/Teacher %20Leads.pdf Research Evaluation, 29(3), 2020, 300–315 doi: 10.1093/reseval/rvaa006 Advance Access Publication Date: 29 June 2020 Article											x											
Bradberry & Greaves (2009)	Bradberry, T., & Graves, J. (2009). Emotional Intelligence 2.0.	Book		x						x															
Branson, C.M., Baig, S., & Begum, A. (2015)	Branson, C.M., Baig, S., & Begum, A. (2015) Personal values of principals and their manifestation in student behaviour: A district-level study in Pakistan	https://UMassGlobal.idm.ocl c.org/login? url=https://search.ebscohost. com/login.aspx? direct=true&db=eric&AN=E J1048888&site=ed s-live&scope=site										x	x											

Source	Reference	Link																								
Breaux, Teri	Perceptions of Elementary School Principals on the Social Emotional Learning Needs of Students, Aligned to the CASEL Framework, During the COVID-19 PandemicVirginia Tech Dissertation 2023	https://UMassGlobal.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsndl&AN=edsndl.VTETD.oai.vtechworks.lib.vt.edu.10919.115357&site=eds-live&scope=site										x														
Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994)	Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development.	https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513												x												
Bruner (1990)	Brunner (1990) Acts of meaning. Harvard University Press	https://read.amazon.com/?asin=B08HKZJPZL&ref_=dbs_t_r_kcr					x																			
Bush, T. (2019)	Bush, T. (2019) Conceptions of the leadership and management of schools as organizations. In The Sage Handbook of School Organization; Connolly, M., Eddy-Spicer, D.H., James, C., Kruise, S., Eds.; Sage Publications: London, UK, ; pp. 52–66.													x												
Buckmaster (2016)	Buckmaster (2016) From the Eradication of Tolerance to the Restoration of School Community: Exploring Restorative Practices as a Reform Framework for Ethical School Discipline													x			x	x							
Carter, D. B. & Pool, J. L. (2012)	Carter, D. B. & Pool, J. L. (2012) Appropriate social behavior: Teaching expectations to young children	DOI: 10.1007/s10643-012-0516-y https://UMassGlobal.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eft&AN=79339496&site=edslive&scope=site																							x	
casel.org	Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs: Preschool and Elementary School Edition. CASEL Guide 2013	DOI: 10.1007/s10643-012-0516-yhttps://UMass ...lobal.idm.oclc.org/login?url=ht	x	x	x	x		x			x									x		

Source	Reference	Link																								
Cohen (2006)	Cohen (2006) Social, emotional, ethical, and academic education : Creating a climate for learning, participation in democracy, and well-being	https://UMassGlobal.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edscal&AN=edscal.17989476&site=eds-live&scope=site	x							x													
Connally et al., (2011)	Connolly et al., (2011) Contrasting perspectives				x															x		

Citation	Reference	URL/Source																					
	on organizational culture change in schools																						
Cook (2017)	Cook (2017) Evaluating the impact of increasing general education teachers' ratio of positive-to-negative interactions on students' classroom behavior.			x		x													x		x		
	Commission on Teacher Credentialling (CTE)	https://www.ctc.ca. gov/credentials/leaflets/m ultiple-subjectteaching-credential-(cl-561c)	x																				
Corcoran et al., (2018)	Corcoran, Cheung, Kim, Xie (2018) Effective universal school-based social and emotional learning programs for improving academic achievement: A systemic review and meta-analysis of 50 years of research	https://UMassGlobal.idm.oc lc.org/login?url=https: //search.ebscohost.com/log in.aspx? direct=true&db=edo&AN=1 33187238&site=edslive&sc ope=site	x																		x		
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Edited: Joseph A. Durlak, Celene E. Domitrovich, Roger P. Weissberg, Thomas P. Gullotta **Foreword**: Linda Darling-Hammond **Introduction**: Timothy P. Shriver and Jennifer Buffett Afterwords by James P. Comer and Daniel Goleman	Durlak et al. (2016) Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning Research and Practice	Book https://www.edutopia.org/blog/why-sel-essential-for-studentsweissberg-durlak-domitrovich-gullotta	
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Lenertz (2018)	Lenertz (2018) The Impact of Proactive Community Circles on Student Academic Achievement and Student Behavior in an Elementary Setting		x														x							
Long (2019)	Long (2019) School leaders' role in empowering teachers through SEL.	https://files-eric-ed-gov.umassglobal.idm.oclc.org/fulltext/ED605894.pdf																				x		
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National Center on Safe, Supportive Learning Environments		https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/disciplinecompendium?state=california&sub_category=Limitations%20or%20Conditions%20on%20Exclusionary%20Discipline#:~:text=(a)%20Except%20as%20provided%20in,another%20regular%20school%2C%20an%20opportunity	https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/																					
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				Academic Achievement	Building relationships/Communi	CASEL Framework	Climate Culture Elementary Schools	Cohesive Teams-Distributive Leadersh	Competencies of CASEL	Covid-19	Discipline	Ecological Theory	Emotional Competence	Improving behavior and safet	Leadership	MTSS	PBIS	PBIS+CASEL	Positive Environment	Restorative Circles	Restorative Practices	School Safety	SEL (Social-Emotional Learning)	Zero Tolerance	
	given, and how students fare	oclc. org/login?url=https://searc h.ebscohost. com/login.aspx? direct=true&db=psyh&A N=2022- 33491002&site=eds- live&scope=site																							
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APPENDIX B

Invitation to Participate

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: A Delphi Study of Strategies that create and foster culture that supports social-emotional learning in elementary schools.

Date:

Dear Prospective Study Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study to identify the strategies elementary school teacher leaders implement to create and foster a school culture supporting social-emotional learning. In addition, you will be asked to rate the strategies using a 4-point Likert scale. The researcher of this study is Nicole Lindemuth, a Doctoral Candidate in the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program at the University of Massachusetts Global. You were recommended to participate in this study because of your knowledge and experience with teacher leadership in elementary education and social-emotional learning.

PURPOSE: This Delphi study aims to identify strategies that elementary teacher leaders implement to create and foster a school culture that supports social-emotional learning and to identify the most effective strategies.

PROCEDURES: If you choose to participate in the study, you will be sent three rounds of electronic questionnaires through Google Forms, each of which will take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. There will be an open-ended question in the Round 1 survey. In the second phase of the survey, participants will rate the effectiveness of the strategies from the first round using a 4-point Likert scale. In round 3, survey participants will select the

strategies they agree are the most effective in creating and fostering a school culture that supports social-emotional learning.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: This study has minimal risks or costs to participate in the study, and you will not be compensated. All three surveys will be completely anonymous. No email or identifying information will be collected.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: You will not directly benefit from participating in this study. On the other hand, examination of the data gathered from your involvement in this project aims to offer up-to-date knowledge on practical strategies that create and foster a school culture that supports social-emotional learning which will be of benefit to elementary teacher leaders.

ANONYMITY: Every survey and piece of information gathered in this study will be safely and securely kept on a password-protected computer. No connection will be made between the records of information you provide for the research study and any personal information. No specific information that you submitted for the study will be able to be linked to you. Your name or any other identifying information in reports or publications will not be used in reports because you will fill out each survey anonymously. To ensure the security and well-being of participants, study records may only be accessed by the researcher. Furthermore, all data will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

If you have any questions, or concerns regarding this study, you can contact me by email at [redacted] or by calling me at [redacted]. You may also contact the chairperson of this study, Dr. Carol Anderson-Woo at caanders@umassglobal.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact UMass

Global's Office of Institutional Research, UMass Global, 1635 Laguna Canyon Road,

Irvine, CA 92618. BUIRB@umassglobal.edu.

Respectfully,

Nicole Lindemuth

Doctoral Candidate, UMass Global

University of Massachusetts Global

Dr. Carol Anderson-Woo, Chair

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form

INFORMATION ABOUT: The focus of this study is:

• To identify effective strategies, you use to create and foster a school culture that

supports social-emotional learning at your sites.

INVESTIGATOR: Nicole Lindemuth, Doctoral Candidate

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Nicole Lindemuth, a

doctoral

candidate from the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts Global

("UMass

Global"). The purpose of this study is to identify effective strategies you use to create and

foster a school culture that supports social-emotional learning at your sites.

The study will consist of three rounds.

• In Round 1, you will list strategies you use or have used to create and foster a culture

that supports social-emotional learning using the five competencies of the CASEL

Framework: social awareness, self-awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and

responsible decision-making.

• In Round 2, you will rate those strategies on their effectiveness using a 4-point Likert

scale. You will also have the opportunity to add strategies for each competency.

• Lastly, in Round 3 you will rate the strategies with a mean rating in Round 2

As an experienced expert, your perception of the effectiveness of these strategies will

give credibility to this study. In all three rounds, you and 14 other elementary teacher

leaders will identify and rate the strategies' effectiveness in creating and fostering a

school culture that creates and fosters social-emotional learning at your sites.

Round 1 will begin with acknowledging your participation in the study and a short

demographic survey. After the demographic section, you will answer five short

questions, one for each competency, where you will list the strategies, you use. You will

have one week to complete this round. After all participants have completed this round,

you will receive a second communication with the link to complete Round 2.

I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that

the researcher will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and

research materials in a password-protected digital file that is available only to the

researcher. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

b) You will be sent three rounds of electronic questionnaires through Google Forms, each

of which will take 10 to 20 minutes to complete. There will be an open-ended question in

the Round 1 survey. In the second phase of the survey, participants will rate the

effectiveness of the strategies from the first round using a 4-point Likert scale. In round 3,

survey participants will select the strategies they agree are the most effective in creating

and fostering a school culture that supports social-emotional learning.

c) Every survey and piece of information gathered in this study will be safely and

securely kept on a password-protected computer. No connection will be made between

the records of information you provide for the research study and any personal

information. No specific information that you submitted for the study will be able to be

linked to you. Your name or any other identifying information in reports or publications

will not be used in reports because you will fill out each survey anonymously. To ensure

the security and well-being of participants, study records may only be accessed by the

researcher. Furthermore, all data will be destroyed three years after the completion of the

study.

d) You will not directly benefit from participating in this study. On the other hand,

examination of the data gathered from your involvement in this project aims to offer up-

to-date knowledge on practical strategies that create and foster a school culture that

supports social-emotional learning which will be of benefit to elementary teacher leaders.

d) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact

Nicole Lindemuth (researcher) at [redacted] or Dr. Anderson-Woo (advisor)at:

caanders@umassglobal.edu

e) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in

the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular

questions during the interview if I choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate

or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also,

the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that

all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study

design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be informed, and my consent

reobtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the

study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice

Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road,

Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received an electronic

copy of this form and the "Research Participant's Bill of Rights."

I have read the above and understand it and hereby voluntarily consent to the

procedure(s)

set forth.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant or Responsible Date

_____   _____

Signature of Witness (if appropriate) Date

_____   _____

Research Participants Bill of Rights

UMASS GLOBAL

A nonprofit affiliate of the University of Massachusetts

UMASS GLOBAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD Research

Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.

2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.

3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.

4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.

5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.

6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.

7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.

8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the UMASS GLOBAL Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The UMass Global Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Communication for Round 1 and link to survey

Dear Elementary Teacher Leader,

First, I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in my Delphi study. Thank you for making the commitment and taking time out of your schedule to participate.

The focus of this study is:
The purpose of this mixed methods DELPHI study is to identify the strategies that expert elementary teacher leaders use to create and foster a culture that support SEL through the use of the 5 CASEL competencies: (self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision making). An additional purpose was to identify what teacher leaders perceive to be the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture that supports these SEL competencies.

The study will consist of three rounds.
In Round 1, you will list strategies you use or have used to create and foster a culture that supports social-emotional learning using the five competencies of the CASEL Framework: social awareness, self-awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision-making.
In Round 2, you will rate those strategies on their effectiveness using a 4-point Likert scale. You will also have the opportunity to add strategies for each competency.
In Round 3 you will rate the strategies again with a mean rating in Round 2 along with any strategies that have been provided.

As an experienced expert, your perception of the effectiveness of these strategies will give credibility to this study. In all three rounds, you and 14 other elementary teacher leaders will identify and rate the strategies for their effectiveness in creating and fostering a school culture that creates and fosters social-emotional learning at your sites.

Round 1 will begin with acknowledging your participation in the study and a short demographic survey. After the demographic section, you will answer five short questions, one for each competency, where you will be asked to list the strategies, you use. You will have up to one week to complete this round. After all participants have completed this round, you will receive a second communication with the link to complete Round 2.

Attached to this email are the Participants' Bill of Rights and the Informed Consent.

To access the Round 1 survey, click the link below which will direct you to the Google Form survey to begin Round I. Before you begin Round 1, you will be asked to confirm that you have received and understand these documents.
Round 1 Survey Link

You will have one week to complete this round. Please contact me if you need more time or if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Nicole Lindemuth

Nicole Lindemuth, Doctoral Candidate
University of Massachusetts Global
Dr. Carol Anderson-Woo, Chair

Round 1 Survey

Section 1 of 5

Delphi Study: Round 1 Survey

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: A Delphi Study of Strategies that expert teacher leaders use to create and foster a culture that supports social-emotional learning in PBIS Platinum Award Implementation Elementary schools.

Researcher: Nicole Lindemuth

Nicole Lindemuth a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts (UMASS) Global, is requesting your participation in her research study. A Delphi Study of Strategies that Expert Teacher Leaders use to Create and Foster a Culture that Supports Social-Emotional Learning in Elementary Schools that have received the PBIS Platinum Award for implementation.

The purpose of this Delphi study is to identify the strategies that expert elementary school leaders use with other staff members to create and foster a school culture that supports the five CASEL social-emotional competencies (self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision-making). Another purpose is to identify what teacher leaders perceive as the most effective strategies for creating and fostering a school culture that supports these SEL competencies.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decline to take part and have the option to withdraw your consent to participate in this survey at any time. All information provided will be kept confidential and anonymous and each round should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

This form is automatically collecting emails from all respondents. Change settings

Consent to Participate

Description (optional)

In order to participate in this study informed consent must be obtained by participants. If you *
do not agree to participate your survey will end after responding to this question.

◯ AGREE: I agree to participate in this study.

◯ DISAGREE: I do not agree to participate in this study

After section 2   Continue to next section ▼

Demographics

Description (optional)

Demographics and Expert Criteria *
*Please check all that apply

☐ Currently serving as an elementary teacher leader in Riverside County

☐ Currently serving as an elementary teacher leader in San Bernardino County

☐ 0-2 Years of experience as elementary school teacher leader

☐ 3-5 Years of experience as elementary school teacher leader

☐ 5-10 Years of experience as elementary school teacher leader

☐ 10-15 Years of experience as elementary school teacher leader

☐ More than 15 years of experience as elementary school teacher leader

:::

Race/Ethnicity (please check the one you identify with or all that apply) *

☐ White

☐ Hispanic/Latino

☐ African American

☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

☐ American Indian

☐ Asian American

☐ Decline to state

☐ Other

Gender *

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Prefer not to state

After section 3   Continue to next section   ▼

Study Questions

The following questions ask you to identify the strategies you use with other staff members to create and foster a school culture that supports each of the five social-emotional competencies. Please list at least three strategies for each competency.

1. **Self Awareness** involves the understanding of emotions, personal goals, and values and requires the ability to identify how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interrelated.

As an expert teacher leader, what strategies do you use with other staff members to create and foster a school culture that supports **self-awareness**?

Short answer text

2. **Social Awareness** involves the ability to understand the perspectives of others and to empathize with others, including those from various backgrounds and cultures. It also requires the ability to identify and recognize the strengths in yourself and others

As an expert teacher leader, what strategies do you use with other staff members to create and foster a school culture that supports **social-awareness**?

Short answer text

3. **Relationship Skills** involve creating and sustaining healthy and supportive relationships and effectively communicating and collaborating with individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds.

As an expert teacher leader, what strategies do you use with other staff members to create and foster a school culture that supports **relationship skills**?

Short answer text

4. **Self-Management** is the ability to effectively respond to one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in a variety of situations and to create and achieve personal and academic goals. This includes handling delayed gratification, managing stress, and feel motivation to achieve.

As an expert teacher leader, what strategies do you use with other staff members to create and foster a school culture that supports **self-management**?

Short answer text

5. **Responsible Decision- Making** is making caring and thoughtful choices about your own personal behavior and social interactions in various situations. This includes the ability to consider the cause and effect of our actions and how to be accountable for those decisions.

As an expert teacher leader, what strategies do you use with other staff members to create and foster a school culture that supports **responsible decision-making**?

Short answer text

Thank you for your participation

Description (optional)

Communication for Round 2 and Survey Link

Dear Elementary Teacher Leader,

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete Round 1 of my study, I appreciate your participation.

Welcome to Round 2!

The data collected from Round 1 has been analyzed with a focus on strategies used with other staff members to develop a school culture that supports SEL. A list of the strategies is presented. In Round 2, you will rate the strategies on effectiveness using the 4-point Likert scale provided. You will also have the opportunity to add strategies or strategies that may not have been mentioned in Round 1.

Click on the following link to access the Round 2 survey.

Round 2 Survey Link

You will rate the strategies with a mean rating on their effectiveness. You will also have the opportunity to add additional strategies or strategies for each competency.

Once again, you will have one week to complete this survey.

Thank you in advance for your participation and commitment to completing all three rounds of this study.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Nicole Lindemuth

Nicole Lindemuth, Doctoral Candidate

University of Massachusetts Global

Dr. Carol Anderson-Woo, Chair

Round 2 Survey

Delphi Study: Round 2 Survey

B *I* <u>U</u> 🔗 ✕

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: A Delphi Study of Strategies that expert teacher leaders use with other staff members to create and foster a culture that supports social-emotional learning in PBIS Platinum Award Implementation Elementary schools.

The responses from Round 1 were consolidated and like ideas were combined with the focus on strategies used with staff members. Those strategies are presented below for you to rate for effectiveness. How effective have you found each strategy to create and foster a culture with other staff members that supports the social-emotional competency with which it is associated?
Please rate the following strategies using the 4 point Likert Scale.
4 Very Effective, 3 Effective, 2 Somewhat Effective, and 1 Not Very Effective

This form is automatically collecting emails from all respondents. Change settings

Competency Number 1: Self-Awareness

Self Awareness involves the understanding of emotions, personal goals, and values and requires the ability to identify how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interrelated.

Self- Awareness *

	4 Very Effective	3 Effective	2 Somewhat Eff…	1 Not Very Effec…
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members c…	○	○	○	○

Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members s…	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members c…	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○

Are there any other strategies you use with staff members to create and foster a culture that supports **self-awareness**? If so, please list below.

Short answer text

After section 2   Continue to next section   ▾

Section 3 of 7

Competency Number 2: Social-Awareness   ⌄   ⋮

Social Awareness involves the ability to understand the perspectives of others and to empathize with others, including those from various backgrounds and cultures. It also requires the ability to identify and recognize the strengths in yourself and others

Social Awareness *

	4 Very Effective	3 Effective	2 Somewhat Eff…	1 Not Very Effec…
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members s…	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members c…	○	○	○	○
Staff members f…	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○

Are there any other strategies you use with staff members to create and foster a culture that supports **social awareness**? If so, please list below.

Short answer text

Competency Number 3: Relationship Skills   ⌄   ⋮

Relationship Skills involve creating and sustaining healthy and supportive relationships and effectively communicating and collaborating with individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds.

Relationship Skills *

	4 Very Effective	3 Effective	2 Somewhat Eff…	1 Not Very Effec…
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members c…	○	○	○	○
Staff members s…	○	○	○	○
Staff members i…	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members v…	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○

Are there any other strategies you use with staff members to create and foster a culture that supports **relationship skills**? If so, please list below.

Short answer text

Competency Number 4: Self-Management

Self-Management is the ability to effectively respond to one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in a variety of situations and to create and achieve personal and academic goals. This includes handling delayed gratification, managing stress, and feel motivation to achieve.

Self-Management *

	4 Very Effective	3 Effective	2 Somewhat	1 Not Very Effec…
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members s…	○	○	○	○
Staff members c…	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○

Are there any other strategies you use with staff members to create and foster a culture that supports **self-management**? If so, please list below.

Short answer text

After section 5   Continue to next section

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Competency Number 5: Responsible Decision-Making

Responsible Decision- Making is making caring and thoughtful choices about your own personal behavior and social interactions in various situations. This includes the ability to consider the cause and effect of our actions and how to be accountable for those decisions.

Responsible Decision-Making *

|	4 Very Effective	3 Effective	2 Somewhat Eff…	1 Not Very Effec…
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○
Staff members …	○	○	○	○

Are there any other strategies you use with staff members to create and foster a culture that supports **responsible decision making**? If so, please list below.

Short answer text

After section 6   Continue to next section   ▼

Thank you again for your participation in Round 2 of this study. You will receive information on Round 3 once all participants have responded.
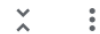
Description (optional)

APPENDIX I

Communication for Round 3 and Survey Link

Dear Elementary Teacher Leader,

Once again, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete Round 2 of my study, I appreciate your participation.

Welcome to Round 3! One last round.

Just a friendly reminder regarding the focus of the study. It is to identify effective strategies you use with other staff members to create and foster a school culture that supports social-emotional learning at your sites.

The data collected from Round 2 has been analyzed and the mean has been calculated. In Round 3, you will rate the strategies again on effectiveness using the same 4-point Likert scale provided in Round 2. Also, strategies identified in round 2 have been added for you to rate as well.

Click on the following link to access Round 3 survey.

Once again, you will have one week to complete this survey.

Round 3 Survey Link

Thank you in advance for your participation and commitment to completing all three rounds of this study.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Nicole Lindemuth

Nicole Lindemuth, Doctoral Candidate

University of Massachusetts Global

Dr. Carol Anderson-Woo, Chair

APPENDIX J

CITI Certification

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 10-May-2022
Expiration Date N/A
Record ID 48823225

This is to certify that:

Nicole Lindemuth

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Human Subjects Research
(Curriculum Group)
Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of Massachusetts Global

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w66c21613-d65d-41cc-9a9b-c713da044d6d-48823225

APPENDIX K

UMASS Global Institutional Review Board

IRB Application Approved As Submitted: Nicole Lindemuth   Inbox ×

Institutional Review Board <my@umassglobal.edu>   Fri, Jan 19, 8:11AM
to me, caanders, irb ▼

Dear Nicole Lindemuth,

Congratulations, your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the UMass Global Institutional Review Board. This approval grants permission for you to proceed with data collection for your research. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If any issues should arise that are pertinent to your IRB approval, please contact the IRB immediately at IRB@umassglobal.edu. If you need to modify your IRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at the following link: https://irb.umassglobal.edu/Applications/Modification.pdf.

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank you,

David Long, Ed.D.
Professor
Organizational Leadership
IRB Chair
dlong@umassglobal.edu
www.umassglobal.edu