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Perceptions Regarding the Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning

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by

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Date 2/19/2021

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Date 2/19/2021

Dr. Tina Spencer, Committee Member

Date 2/19/2021

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

Full Legal Name: Tina L. Morse

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Abstract

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2018) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) (2018), only eight states have kindergarten through 12th-grade learning goals to articulate what students should know and be able to do socially and emotionally. Another 16 states have standards for social and emotional development for early elementary students (CASEL, 2018; NCSL, 2018). Researchers have suggested teaching social and emotional learning skills early in life to foster successful and productive citizens beneficial to their communities (CASEL, 2018). Jones and Doolittle (2017) recommended incorporating social and emotional learning into state educational standards to address the integration of thinking, emotions, and behavior in ways that lead to positive school and life outcomes. Zinsser (2015) claimed state standards indicate the importance and value of social and emotional competencies. This study was designed to identify competencies of social and emotional learning, describe the benefits of teaching social and emotional skills in school, analyze the perceptions regarding the impact of social and emotional learning skills on academic achievement, investigate the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade teachers and counselors, and inform future policy. The study revealed social and emotional learning skills are perceived to yield positive benefits to students and teachers. The data indicated the whole-child approach to education is a vital component of academic achievement. Social and emotional learning skills were found to foster a positive school culture, establish healthy relationships, improve academic achievement, and provide long-term success.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2020) revealed employers including Google, Allstate, and the *Wall Street Journal* value social and emotional learning and believe communication and problem-solving skills are just as important as technical skills. Jones and Doolittle (2017) described social and emotional learning skills, also known as 21st-century skills, as the ability to self-regulate emotions and social interactions in a healthy manner in order to be successful in all aspects of life. The CASEL (2020), "a trusted source for knowledge about high-quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning," has spent over two decades researching the importance of social and emotional learning (About CASEL section). The CASEL's (2020) research revealed "implementing evidence-based social and emotional learning programs led to an 11% gain in student achievement, an 11:1 return on economic investment," reduced dropout rates, fewer behavior issues, and decreases in the areas of drug usage, teen pregnancy, mental health issues, and criminal behavior (SEL Impact section).

This chapter includes background information on social and emotional learning and the progress made following over two decades of research. In addition, the conceptual framework of social and emotional learning is identified, compared, and contrasted in a quest to find commonalities to provide schools with a unified framework for consistent implementation of school-based social and emotional learning interventions. The statement of the problem section describes why educators and policymakers recognize a growing need to be more assertive in the development of social and emotional learning skills. The purpose of the study was to analyze the perceptions of

kindergarten through third-grade teachers and counselors regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning associated with current social and emotional learning practices and academic achievement. The research questions were designed to address the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade teachers with an emphasis on social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset.

Qualitative research through interviews established the views of counselors regarding the definition of social and emotional learning, the development and improvement of social and emotional learning practices, and the importance of state actions in defining and creating social and emotional learning standards. The significance of this study is based upon the collection of perceptions that may contribute to increased awareness of the benefits of social and emotional learning. Defined in Chapter One are key terms related to social and emotional learning. Chapter One also includes a description of the delimitations, limitations, and assumptions of the research process.

Background of the Study

According to Jones and Doolittle (2017), social and emotional learning skills are necessary for academic, college, and career success. Jones and Doolittle (2017) also claimed social and emotional skills can be learned and developed in schools. During the last decade, school-based social and emotional learning has sparked an international interest resulting in several countries launching national initiatives to incorporate social and emotional learning programs into educational environments to enhance well-being, develop positive behavior skills, and promote mental health (CASEL, 2010). The theories surrounding social and emotional learning have existed for over 20 years, but educators and policymakers have recently become more interested in the benefits of social and

emotional learning (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). The need to incorporate social and emotional learning skills into daily classroom instruction and practices has become a priority over the last 10 years (Oberle et al., 2016).

For many years, public schools have relied on the federal government to support the nation's educational needs by providing money for educating disadvantaged students and supplying a framework for public education plans (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The federal efforts included laws, such as the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the No Child Left Behind Act established in 2002, and the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Larocca and Krachman (2017) suggested expanding the definition of student success in the Every Student Succeeds Act to include social and emotional mindsets, skills, and habits. The integration of social and emotional programs into educational environments and core curriculum strongly relied on the legislative focus and financial support of the federal government (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Student success includes "a wide variety of educational programs, learning experiences, instructional approaches, and academic-support strategies" (*Glossary of Education Reform*, 2014, para. 1). The *Glossary of Education Reform* (2014) noted all of these educational components address specific learning needs, goals, interests, or cultural backgrounds of students. The University of Washington (2019) reported student-engaged learning increased attention, fosters critical thinking skills, and provides meaningful learning experiences. Oberle et al. (2016) determined even though educators and other stakeholders recognize the significance of social and emotional learning skills in developing well-rounded, prepared students, there was still a lack of support to provide

time and resources necessary to effectively implement and sustain social and emotional learning programs. According to Bandy (2019), a student-engaged learning environment requires time and money to ensure students have the necessary skills to successfully complete projects.

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) (2018) suggested social and emotional learning pertains to a variety of competencies, viewpoints, and behaviors that influence students' academic success, employability, self-esteem, relationships, and community involvement. The five social and emotional learning competencies identified by the CASEL (2020) include "self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making" (CASEL Framework section). Greenberg et al. (2017) described self-awareness as recognizing and identifying one's own emotions. Johnson and Wiener (2017) defined self-management as the ability to deal with emotion on one's own. According to Transforming Education (2019), students who possess social awareness skills are capable of appreciating others' points of view and of expressing empathy. The CASEL (2020) described relationship competency as the ability to develop and maintain positive connections with others. Finally, the CASEL (2020) explained responsible decision-making allows students to make good behavioral and social choices.

Conceptual Framework

Jones and Doolittle (2017) delineated many variations of social and emotional learning frameworks including different terminology for the same skills, the same term for conceptually different competencies, and varying types of constructs used to describe discrete concepts. The CASEL, an international organization, was founded in 1994 with

the goal of establishing evidence-based social and emotional learning as a foundational component of education in preschool through high school (Oberle et al., 2016). In 1997, a group of scholars at the CASEL developed and published social and emotional learning guidelines to assist educators in implementing social and emotional skills within educational settings (Oberle et al., 2016). Based on research by the NCSL (2018) and Jones and Doolittle (2017), this first framework organized social and emotional learning competencies into five essential categories including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Jones established a social and emotional learning framework with only three competencies: "cognitive regulation, emotional processes, and social and interpersonal skills" (Jones & Doolittle, 2017, pp. 5-6). Yet another organization, the Partnership for 21st Century Learning, referred to social and emotional learning skills as the Learning and Innovation Skills – 4Cs: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (Battelle for Kids, 2019; Kamenetz, 2017). The Partnership for 21st Century Learners proposed learning and innovation skills were what distinguish students prepared for demanding social and work environments from those who lack these skills (Battelle for Kids, 2019). According to Battelle for Kids (2019), focusing on the 4Cs is critical when preparing students for the future.

Oberle et al. (2016) identified a more recent conceptual framework that indicated system-wide strategies are just as significant as classroom-based programs when establishing and maintaining successful social and emotional programs. Using a whole-school approach to implement social and emotional learning competencies in day-to-day practices requires collaboration and support from all stakeholders within the community

(Oberle et al., 2016). Oberle et al. (2016) insisted this comprehensive method of integrating social and emotional learning programs avoids a fragmented approach and allows building-level administrators to provide support to promote effective social and emotional learning practices. The systematic framework created by the CASEL (2018) includes four focus areas: a) the original five domains of cognitive and behavioral competencies, b) short- and long-term outcomes, c) coordinated strategies that involve all stakeholders and focus on enhancing students' social and emotional learning skills, and d) quality social and emotional learning implementation based on district, state, and federal support and policies.

Jones and Doolittle (2017) emphasized conceptual frameworks originating from different disciplines might vary in terminology, organization of skill hierarchy, and strategies for implementation. For example, the CASEL's framework classifies self-control in the self-management domain, while Jones's framework categorizes self-control as part of the cognitive regulation and emotional processes domains (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). Blyth et al. (2018) determined each of the social and emotional learning frameworks share common goals, including summarizing and advancing social and emotional learning theories and research, supporting social and emotional learning programs and practices, monitoring development of standards, defining key social and emotional learning competencies, developing useful social and emotional learning assessment instruments, and measuring collected data.

Statement of the Problem

Grimes (2018) reported cognitive development and language skills are no longer the only two components that determine school readiness. Mehta (2020) claimed the one-

size-fits-all mentality is no longer effective in achieving academic success for all students. According to Grimes (2018), educators realize many students come to school without the social and emotional skills necessary to self-regulate, persevere through challenges, and empathize with others, resulting in a decline in the potential for academic achievement.

Mehta (2020) added that in order to cultivate a positive, productive learning climate, social and emotional skills "must be part of the fabric of how all adults and children relate to one another in a school" (p. 1). Greenberg et al. (2017) argued, "Social and emotional learning programs can enhance children's confidence in themselves, increase their engagement in school, improve test scores and grades, and reduce conduct problems while promoting desirable behaviors" (p. 13). According to Haymovitz et al. (2018), educators are transitioning from a primarily academic focus to an academic and personal growth approach to instruction.

State officials determine their own definitions of social and emotional learning and the extent to which social and emotional skills are implemented in schools (NCSL, 2018). According to the CASEL (2013), this creates inconsistencies in the development of social and emotional competencies and necessary life skills. Leaving this issue up to individual states has resulted in just 32% of states implementing standards for social and emotional learning development in the primary grades (NCSL, 2018, Education section).

According to the CASEL (2018), the need for social and emotional learning skills is rapidly growing, and the number of states with established social and emotional learning competencies or standards has only increased to 18 out of 50. In 2015, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act, providing states with an opportunity to broaden

their definitions of student success (Learning Policy Institute, 2018). The Learning Policy Institute (2018) reported most states responded by developing Every Student Succeeds Act plans that encouraged, but did not mandate, schools to assist students in developing social and emotional skills and promoting a positive school climate. Even with the CASEL's (2020) decades of determination to implement social and emotional learning in schools, progress has been moderate, resulting in an increased gap and inconsistency among states. The delayed progress of the social and emotional learning initiative has prompted a need for further research and awareness (CASEL, 2020).

The NCSL (2018) asserted one reason for reluctance might be that policymakers were undecided about whether the responsibility of teaching social and emotional skills belongs to schools or families. Haymovitz et al. (2018) suggested academic growth and success are dependent upon a strong foundation of social and emotional skills in conjunction with effective instructional practices and curriculum implementation. However, Grimes (2018) emphasized administrators and teachers are discovering schools are ill-equipped to handle the daily obstacles that arise from students with a low emotional quotient. McGraw-Hill Education's survey revealed only 22% of teachers feel "very prepared" to implement social and emotional learning into classrooms, and 51% find social and emotional learning professional development to be deficient (PR Newswire, 2018, para. 5).

According to Jones and Kahn (2018), employers have also recognized social and emotional development, in addition to content knowledge, is a key component in preparing the future workforce. Johnson and Wiener (2017) discovered students were often mislabeled with disabilities or disorders when, in reality, they lacked social and

emotional learning skills required for academic success. According to the CASEL (2018), educational leaders must increase awareness of the growing need for social and emotional learning professional development and implementation to accurately identify students' needs and equip today's students with the 21st-century skills required for success. Haymovitz et al. (2018) added school-based social and emotional programs should be considered fundamental and necessary to the learning process rather than supplemental.

According to the CASEL (2018), educators should address insufficient social and emotional learning skills and increase academic achievement by transitioning pedagogical strategies to those that focus on the whole child rather than solely academics. Educators, researchers, and policymakers have asked how to support the overall development of students, enhance engagement, and provide skills that promote cognitive and emotional growth from childhood to adulthood (O'Conner et al., 2017a). To prepare students for promising futures, policymakers, administrators, and educators must integrate social and emotional development into state and district missions and start viewing social and emotional learning as critical to education (Johnson & Wiener, 2017; Stringer, 2017). Further research is necessary in order to demonstrate the need for educational stakeholders to be proactive in resolving and promoting the development of social and emotional learning state standards for implementation consistency and adequate professional development for educators.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers and counselors regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning associated with current social and emotional learning practices and

academic achievement. In this study, a comprehensive analysis of how kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers and counselors perceive current social and emotional learning practices in elementary schools in one Missouri district was conducted with an emphasis on social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset. For the purpose of this study, kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers included all Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE)-certified kindergarten through third-grade teachers (including any teachers providing direct instruction to kindergarten through third-grade students) in one Missouri school district.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of certified teachers for kindergarten through third-grade students regarding the effect of social and emotional skills in the areas of social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset on academic achievement?

2. How do counselors of kindergarten through third-grade students define social and emotional learning?

3. According to counselors of kindergarten through third-grade students, what is required to establish and improve social and emotional development within the curriculum based on current social and emotional learning practices?

4. How do counselors of kindergarten through third-grade students perceive the importance of state actions in defining and creating social and emotional learning standards as part of the required curriculum?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant, because it provides valuable insight regarding the growing need for social and emotional learning skills to be taught in schools to ensure students are available to learn (Tate, 2019). According to Tate (2019), being available to learn means students have the social and emotional skills necessary to be positive contributors to their academic success. This study is important, because it includes data regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning based on perceptions of teachers and counselors. Pajares (1992) suggested teachers are the primary influence on effective implementation of social and emotional learning programs; therefore, their perceptions regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning are key to a successful social and emotional learning program and best practices for a whole-child approach to education. Brotto (2018) reported a transition in pedagogy to whole-child development rather than solely academics can lead to an increase in academic achievement, improved attitudes and behaviors, successful peer relationships, positive connections with school, and reduced emotional stress for students and teachers.

New knowledge generated by this study may encourage educational leaders to emphasize social and emotional skills in their quest to provide a whole-child approach to education. Brotto (2018) claimed school-based social and emotional learning interventions enhance school environments by transforming classrooms into safe places where self-regulated students foster a symbiotic relationship among social, emotional, and academic skills for "long-term academic benefits" (para. 6). Yoder (2014) claimed students with adequate social and emotional learning skills are more capable of asking for help, self-regulating their emotions, and persevering through challenging situations.

According to the CASEL (2013), social and emotional development is critical to successful student performance. Students who come to school lacking fundamental social and emotional learning skills can negatively impact the classroom environment (Grimes, 2018). Many negative effects result from deficient social and emotional learning skills including stagnant or decreased student achievement and an increase in teacher turnover due to elevated stress levels (McCormick et al., 2015; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Waajid et al. (2013) reported emotionally competent students were more inquisitive, excited, and eager to learn. Jones and Kahn (2018) concluded classroom instruction connected with rigorous cognitive challenges and associated with social interaction promotes deeper, long-term learning. According to Fang (1996) and Kagan (1992), the perceptions of educators affect learning environments, academic success, and students' cognizance of their abilities. This study may inform future policy and help stakeholders determine if there is a need to define and establish state standards to require school-based social and emotional interventions.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Cognitive Development

Cognitive development is defined as the construction of executive function thought processes including working memory, problem-solving, attention control, inhibition, and decision-making, from childhood through adolescence to adulthood (Jones & Kahn, 2018).

Emotional Quotient

Emotional quotient is the emotional ability necessary to understand, use, and regulate one's own emotions to relieve stress, cooperate with others, communicate effectively, empathize with others, persevere, and diffuse conflict (Grimes, 2018).

Growth Mindset

Growth mindset is the belief one can change by exerting effort and perseverance (Transforming Education, 2019).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is believing one can successfully achieve an outcome or goal (Transforming Education, 2019).

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation, or self-management, describes an emotional ability that allows an individual or group to maintain control without help from outside influence (Johnson & Wiener, 2017).

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning is "the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (CASEL, 2020, What is SEL section).

Social Awareness

Social awareness is the ability to see others' points of view and empathize with their feelings (Transforming Education, 2019).

State Standards

State standards are guidelines for the knowledge and skills students should learn at each grade level (National Education Association [NEA], 2018). Each state sets its standards, or benchmarks, for core curriculum areas (NEA, 2018).

Whole-Child Approach

The whole-child approach is a pedagogical method that inspires creativity, promotes imagination, instills compassion, awakens self-knowledge, enhances social skills, and improves emotional health in addition to focusing on academic progress (Yoder, 2014).

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

The scope of the study was bounded by the following delimitations:

Time Frame

Data collection took place during the COVID-19 pandemic in the fall of 2020.

Location of the Study

The location of the study was one school district in south-central Missouri.

Sample

The participants included kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers and counselors from one school district in Missouri. The participants were not limited by gender or race.

Criteria

Participants in this study were employed at one of the selected district's three elementary buildings as certified teachers or counselors.

The following limitations were identified in this study:

Sample Demographics

The sample was a limitation due to only one school district being the focus of the study. Limitations of research may have included a lack of participation, since participation was voluntary. The differentiated levels of teaching experience and classroom management skills may also have influenced the data.

Instrument

The survey and interview questions were considered limitations in this study, because the instruments were created by the primary investigator.

The following assumptions were accepted:

1. The responses of the participants were offered honestly and willingly.

2. The sample was representative of the general population of educators who held teaching certificates from the MODESE.

Summary

According to Grimes (2018), educators are recognizing an increase in students who attend school with the inability to self-regulate emotions and show empathy for others. Jones and Doolittle (2017) indicated more than academic achievement and content knowledge influence student success. According to Grimes (2018), the absence of social and emotional skills decreases the potential for academic success.

The first chapter of this study included the background of the study and the conceptual framework of social and emotional learning. Chapter One also included a description of social and emotional learning skills and identification of influential elements of social and emotional learning programs as part of the purpose of the study. The research questions were presented, and the significance of the study was provided. In

addition, the definition of key terms, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions were detailed in Chapter One.

In Chapter Two, a review of literature is presented. According to Fraenkel et al. (2019), the literature review is used to "shed light on what is already known about the problem and should indicate logically why the proposed study would result in an extension of this prior knowledge" (p. 20). The main headings in Chapter Two include the conceptual framework; the benefits of social and emotional learning; the definition of social and emotional learning; the long-lasting effects of social and emotional learning skills; social awareness, self-efficacy, growth mindset, and academic achievement; social and emotional learning and teachers; effective social and emotional learning programs; and legislative support for social and emotional learning programs.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Research and conceptual models, established by the CASEL and independent researchers, such as Jones, Dusenbury, Oberle, Weissberg, and Doolittle, guided this study in search of an initiative to provide 21st-century learners with academic and social skills necessary to be successful in all aspects of their lives. Over two decades of research conducted by the CASEL (2020) indicated social and emotional learning promotes improved behaviors and increased academic achievement. Jones and Doolittle (2017) reported the theories surrounding social and emotional learning have existed for decades, but the benefits of such skills have recently gained awareness in both business and educational environments.

The literature reviewed for this study included the following topics: the conceptual framework; the benefits of social and emotional learning; long-lasting effects of social and emotional learning skills; social awareness, self-efficacy, growth mindset, and academic achievement; social and emotional learning and teachers; and legislative support for effective social and emotional learning programs with successful implementation. The decline in social and emotional learning skills among students and irregularities in social and emotional learning program implementation in schools revealed a need for this study (Grimes, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

According to Jones and Doolittle (2017), many variations of social and emotional learning frameworks include inconsistent terminology for identical competencies, identical terms for conceptually different competencies, and varying types of models used to illustrate individual theories. Based on research by the NCSL (2018) and Jones and

Doolittle (2017), the first framework, created by the CASEL in 1997, organized social

and emotional learning competencies into the following five components (see Figure 1):

- Self-awareness: "the abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts,

   and values and how they influence behavior across context" (CASEL, 2020,

   What Is SEL section).

- Self-management: "the abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and

   behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and

   aspirations" (CASEL, 2020, What Is SEL section).

- Social awareness: "the abilities to understand the perspectives of and

   empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures,

   and context" (CASEL, 2020, What Is SEL section).

- Relationship skills: "the abilities to establish and maintain healthy

   relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and

   groups" (CASEL, 2020, What Is SEL section).

- Responsible decision-making: "the abilities to make caring and constructive

   choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse

   situations" (CASEL, 2020, What Is SEL section).

Figure 1

The CASEL's Conceptual Wheel of Five Competencies

Note. This conceptual model illustrates the CASEL's (2020) five social and emotional learning competencies. From "Home Page," by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2020 (https://casel.org/). Copyright 2020 by the CASEL.

Jones and Doolittle (2017) described Jones's social and emotional learning framework with only three competencies: "cognitive regulation, emotional processes, and social and interpersonal skills" (pp. 5-6). A third framework established by the Partnership for 21st Century Learning referred to social and emotional learning skills as Learning and Innovation Skills, or the 4Cs: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (Battelle for Kids, 2019; Kamenetz, 2017; Stauffer, 2020). Learning and innovation skills distinguish students who are prepared for demanding

social and work environments from those who lack such skills (Battelle for Kids, 2019).

According to Stauffer (2020), the 4Cs of 21st-century skills are as follows (see Figure 2):

- Critical thinking: the method of solving problems that empowers students to make discoveries by asking questions and engaging in their surroundings (Stauffer, 2020).

- Creativity: the method of using multiple perspectives to assess a problem and think outside the box to find an innovative solution that inspires others (Stauffer, 2020).

- Collaboration: the practice of teamwork to achieve a common goal and find the best solution to a problem (Stauffer, 2020).

- Communication: the practice of clearly and effectively conveying one's thoughts and ideas to others and being able to read an audience (Stauffer, 2020).

According to Battelle for Kids (2019), focusing on the 4Cs is critical in preparing students for the future.

Figure 2

The Partnership for 21st Century Learning Framework – The 4Cs

Note. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning Framework's conceptual model illustrates the 4Cs of learning and innovation skills in educational environments. From "Framework for 21st Century Learning," by Battelle for Kids, 2019 (http://static.battelleforkids.org/documents/p21/P21_Framework_Brief.pdf). Copyright 2019 by Batelle for Kids.

Oberle et al. (2016) claimed system-wide strategies and classroom-based programs are equally significant when establishing and maintaining a successful social and emotional learning program. Using a whole-school approach to implement social and emotional learning competencies into day-to-day education practices requires collaboration and support from all stakeholders within the school community (Oberle et al., 2016). Borowski (2019) supported this comprehensive method of implementing social and emotional learning programs while developing a school, family, and community symbiotic relationship. Oberle et al. (2016) added that the schoolwide

framework avoids a fragmented approach and allows building-level administrators to support effective social and emotional learning practices. The CASEL's systemic framework contains the following (see Figure 3):

- Five domains of behavior and cognitive skills that allow students to be successful in all aspects of life (Oberle et al., 2016).

- Short- and long-term outcomes based on the results of the social and emotional learning program (Borowski, 2019; Oberle et al., 2016).

- Coordinated strategies that involve community, school, and families (Oberle et al., 2016).

- District, state, and federal support for quality social and emotional learning program implementation and improved student outcomes (Oberle et al., 2016).

Figure 3

A System-Wide Conceptual Model of Social and Emotional Learning Skills
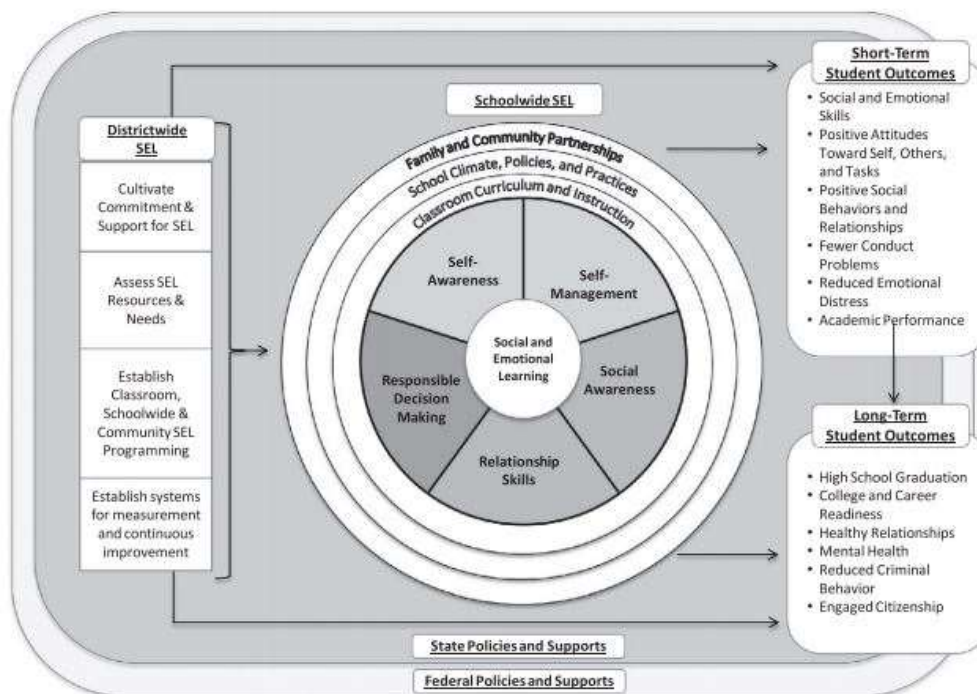
Note. This conceptual model of social and emotional learning skills illustrates a system-wide educational setting (Oberle et al., 2016). From "Establishing Systemic Social and Emotional Learning Approaches in Schools: A Framework for Schoolwide Implemnetation," by E. Oberle, C. Domitrovich, D. Meyers, & R. Weissburg, 2016, *Cambridge Journal of Education, 46*(3), 277–297. (https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2015.1125450). Copyright 2016 by Routledge.

Jones and Doolittle (2017) asserted conceptual frameworks originating from different disciplines might vary in terminology, organization of skill hierarchy, and implementation strategies. For example, the CASEL's framework classified self-control in the self-management domain and Jones's framework categorized self-control as part of

the cognitive regulation and emotional processes domains (Jones & Doolittle, 2017).

According to Blyth et al. (2018), each social and emotional learning framework shares

common goals including summarizing and advancing social and emotional learning

theories and research, supporting social and emotional learning programs and practices,

monitoring the development of standards, defining critical social and emotional learning

competencies, developing useful social and emotional learning assessment instruments,

and measuring collected data.

The Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning

The CASEL (2013) spotlighted the growing awareness among educators and

policymakers for social and emotional learning skills to be taught in classrooms (see

Figure 4). As reported by the CASEL (2013), school-based social and emotional learning

programs promote connection to school, academic achievement, and healthy

relationships. Selimovic et al. (2018) claimed in order to achieve social development, one

must recognize social norms, rules, and values to achieve effective interaction within the

community. Social and emotional learning programs provide immediate and long-term

benefits (Mahoney et al., 2018). Weissberg (2016) claimed students are more successful

"when they know and can manage themselves, understand the perspectives of others and

can relate effectively with them, and make sound choices about personal and social

decisions" (para. 9). According to the CASEL (2013), social and emotional development

is critical to successful student performance.

Figure 4

Adoption of Social and Emotional Learning State Standards for Primary Grades
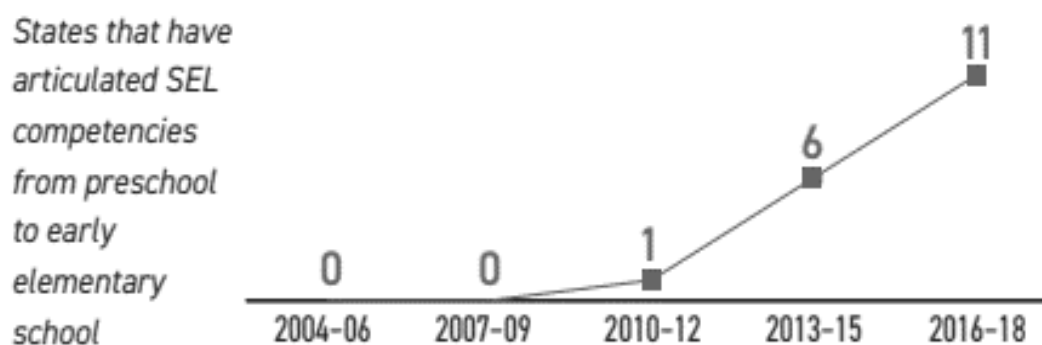
Note. This figure depicts the adoption of social and emotional learning state standards for primary grades over time (CASEL, 2020). From "Home Page," by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2020 (https://casel.org/). Copyright 2020 by the CASEL.

Waajid et al. (2013) reported emotionally competent students are more inquisitive, excited, and eager-to-learn. Similarly, Jones and Kahn (2018) proved classroom instruction connected with rigorous cognitive challenges and associated with social interaction promotes deeper, long-term learning. According to Edwards (2017), curriculum decisions should be based on preparing students for college and career success, educating the whole child, and tailoring to individual needs. Kwon et al. (2014) declared the purpose of their study was "to examine the manner in which children's beliefs about the importance of social skills contribute to children's positive school attitudes" (p. 456). Yoder (2014) claimed students with adequate social and emotional learning skills are more capable of asking for help, self-regulating emotions, and rationalizing during challenges.

Foundational social and emotional learning skills are necessary for students to reach their full academic and social potential (Elias et al., 1997). O'Conner et al. (2017c) suggested students from all subgroups benefit from social and emotional learning development through "increased academic motivation, self-efficacy, emotion recognition, and empathy" (p. 7). According to the Landmark Outreach (2020), students need to have respect for others and appreciate differences before they can exhibit empathy and develop positive peer relationships. Jones et al. (2017) claimed students with effective social skills are more likely to experience positive friendships, establish connections with teachers, increase participation in school activities, and have a favorable outlook on learning.

Kwon et al. (2014) identified essential precursors to school attitudes as social relationships and behavioral characteristics. Social skills involve several prosocial behaviors essential to social and interpersonal contexts, such as helping, sharing, and caring (Kwon et al., 2014). According to Gulbrandson (2018), school districts have been teaching social skills through character education programs for many years. However, Gulbrandson (2018) reported social and emotional learning is not only about skills but learning how to use those skills to manage and understand one's own attitudes and how they affect behavior and responsible decision-making.

Elementary students' social behavior and school attitudes are significantly influenced by their beliefs about the importance of social skills (Kwon et al., 2014). Blazar and Kraft (2017) suggested teachers play a vital role in the development of attitudes and behaviors among their students. According to Kwon et al. (2014), students with skillful behaviors and consistent peer group expectations develop and maintain important social and interpersonal contexts.

The CASEL (2013) determined effective social and emotional learning programs enable educators and family members to work together to establish positive relationships and an atmosphere where every student feels secure. The NEA (2018) added academic success is best achieved when "learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful" (p. 1). Ongoing social and emotional learning-related activities promote the development of critical life skills, such as decision-making, problem-solving, and lifelong learning (CASEL, 2013).

Defining Social and Emotional Learning

According to the CASEL (2013), "Social and emotional learning involves the processes of developing social and emotional competencies in children" (p. 9). O'Conner et al. (2017a) defined social and emotional learning as "the process by which children and adults learn to understand and manage emotions, maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (p. 1). Social and interpersonal skills help students accurately interpret the behavior of others, successfully navigate social situations, and interact beneficially with classmates (Jones et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Jones et al. (2017) defined the four key elements of social and emotional learning intervention programs as setting, targets, components, and outcomes. According to Jones et al. (2017) and Gulbrandson (2018), these key elements are vital to the development of social and emotional learning skills for all students, in addition to developing positive character traits. The CASEL (2013) identified five correlated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies necessary for an effective social and emotional learning program.

These five competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020; NEA, 2018). In contrast, Johnson and Wiener (2017) categorized the five domains as "emotional, social, cognitive, character, and mindset" (p. 5). Melnick et al. (2017) suggested schools help children succeed in developing social, emotional, and academic competencies by providing an inclusive climate that supports physical and psychological safety.

Jones et al. (2017) recognized three intervention approaches that focus on emotional process, cognitive regulation, and social and interpersonal skills. Emotional process includes the skills necessary to help students identify, demonstrate, regulate emotions, and understand the emotions of others (Jones et al., 2017). Melnick et al. (2017) argued that safe and engaging classrooms with supportive and rewarding learning experiences make elementary students feel connected and successful.

According to McKown et al. (2016), "Social and emotional comprehension involves encoding, interpreting, and reasoning about social and emotional information, and self-regulating" (p. 119). Gulbrandson (2018) noted interventions, such as character education focus on developing morally responsible youth. Social and emotional learning provides students with the knowledge to apply morals cultivated through character education programs to decision-making and social interactions (Gulbrandson, 2018). Elias et al. (1997) asserted character education and social and emotional learning programs have similar goals; however, character education is derived from values and approaches that promote responsible behavior, and social and emotional learning has a broader focus that emphasizes social skills used in a variety of situations.

Long-Lasting Effects of Social and Emotional Learning Skills

Greenberg et al. (2017) suggested evidence-based social and emotional learning programs provide long-lasting improvements in many aspects of students' lives. Johnson and Wiener (2017) identified trends that reveal significant growth in occupations requiring social skills. Abilities, such as diligence, regulating emotions, and empathy can determine future employment more than cognitive intelligence (Brotto, 2018). Hinton (2018) claimed investing in social and emotional learning results in higher graduation rates and future gains to the economy.

Jones et al. (2017) declared children who develop competent social and emotional learning skills get along better with peers, get better grades, have more successful careers, and maintain improved mental and physical health into adulthood. According to Kasler et al. (2013), initiative, self-management, interpersonal communication, and teamwork are top employee traits listed by employers. To acquire these marketable skills, Kasler et al. (2013) suggested educators focus on the emotional intelligence of students, which is the ability to process emotional information that relates to perceptions, assimilation, expression, regulation, and management of emotion. Marchesi and Cook (2012) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize and comprehend emotions in one's self and others and the ability to use this awareness to manage behaviors and relationships.

Social and emotional learning is fostered through various "educational approaches that promote students' capacity to integrate thinking, emotion, and behavior to deal effectively with everyday personal and social challenges" (Greenberg et al., 2017, p. 14). The CASEL (2013) declared social and emotional skills critical to being a successful student, community member, and employee. Johnson and Wiener (2017) concurred and

insisted success in college and the workplace is not solely based on cognitive abilities but also requires social and emotional learning skills, such as persistence, relationship skills, and self-regulation.

Marchesi and Cook (2012) discovered that social and emotional learning provides students with the skills to become good communicators, cooperative team members, effective leaders, and productive citizens. According to West et al. (2018), social and emotional learning skills, such as regulating behavior and collaborating with others, are key attributes to cognitive ability that determine success throughout school, post-secondary education, and career. Meeting educational and workplace ambitious expectations requires social and emotional competencies, in addition to subject knowledge and technical skills (Johnson & Wiener, 2017). Emotional intelligence is twice as critical for success as analytical and technical skills (Frameworks, 2020).

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the National Association of Colleges and Employers all identified social and emotional skills as critical for preparing youth to succeed in college and the workplace (Battelle for Kids, 2019; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2019). Johnson and Wiener (2017) claimed that to be successful in career opportunities, individuals must possess the ability to guide their own learning, manage interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, engage in productive debates, welcome feedback, and accept disappointment. According to Brotto (2018), interlacing social and emotional learning and academic skills creates high-quality educational experiences that empower students to become productive in classrooms and successful in careers and communities.

Social and emotional learning programs can enhance students' confidence, increase their engagement in academic settings, improve assessment scores and grades, and decrease discipline referrals while promoting desirable actions (Greenberg et al., 2017). Students with developed social and emotional skills are more likely to be prepared for college, have successful careers, develop positive relationships, have better mental health, and become engaged community members (Greenberg et al., 2017; Weissberg, 2016). Johnson and Wiener (2017) discovered instruction that promotes social and emotional learning results in improved student outcomes on college-career readiness standards. According to Greenberg et al. (2017), the benefits of social and emotional skills make social and emotional learning programs the perfect foundation for a public health approach to pedagogy.

Greenberg et al. (2017) established a universal public health approach to teaching benefits students already affected by other factors and promotes prevention strategies that can be advantageous to students. Social and emotional learning can support a public health approach to education due to schools being ideal sites for interventions with children to improve competence, enhance academic achievement, and hinder behavioral and emotional problems (Greenberg et al., 2017). The CASEL (2020) found students with strong social and emotional learning skills are significantly "less likely to live in public housing, receive public assistance, or be involved" with the police (Benefits of SEL section).

Greenberg et al. (2017) concluded that to further the practice of school-based prevention, stakeholders must collaborate to establish evidence-based social and emotional learning plans that promote public health. According to Johnson and Wiener

(2017), students' future success depends on educators embracing new ways of conceptualizing education and shifting to a holistic, integrated instructional approach with a long-term vision and commitment to focusing on the whole child.

Social Awareness, Self-Efficacy, Growth Mindset, and Academic Achievement

Waterford (2019) claimed there are two categories for how students view their ability to learn – fixed mindset and growth mindset. Educators can transition students' fixed mindsets to growth mindsets by motivating them to learn from their mistakes and embrace challenges (Waterford, 2019). McCormick et al. (2015) suggested the development and implementation of social and emotional learning programs and declared, "Behavioral regulation, attentional skills, and the ability to problem-solve are critical to children's academic outcomes" (p. 1). Greenberg et al. (2017) described social awareness as the ability to recognize the views of others from various backgrounds and cultures and to act with compassion and empathy. Students become more socially aware as they mature due to peer groups becoming more central (West et al., 2018).

According to Greenberg et al. (2017), a person reaches self-awareness by assessing his or her own strengths and weaknesses, possessing self-efficacy skills, persevering through difficult tasks, and recognizing how one's own thoughts, feelings, and actions are connected. Melnick et al. (2017) described self-awareness as the ability to recognize and identify emotions, make accurate self-perceptions, recognize individual strengths, and demonstrate self-confidence and efficacy. Based on recent research in brain science and education, Johnson and Wiener (2017) directly linked academic learning to emotions and mindset.

Guido (2016) stressed the positive benefits of a growth mindset versus a fixed mindset in developing self-motivation. Specifically, Waterford (2019) defined a fixed mindset as "the beliefs that talents, intelligence, and abilities are determined at birth and cannot be changed" (para. 9). In contrast, "a growth mindset is believing talents, intelligence, and abilities are fluid and can be developed or strengthened with practice" (Waterford, 2019, para. 10). Glennie et al. (2017) indicated a growth mindset can be increased when students are challenged to think more rigorously. According to Waajid et al. (2013), the development of social and emotional skills is a robust predictor of academic success.

Social and emotional learning programs improve academic achievement, enhance social interactions, and reduce conduct issues and emotional distress (CASEL, 2013). According to Jones et al. (2017), students who efficiently manage their thinking, behavior, and attention reach higher academic success and increase their standardized test scores. McKown et al. (2016) stated, "Well-developed social-emotional factors increase student availability to learn and engage with their peers, in turn promoting academic outcomes" (p. 120). Many academic state standards already contain social and emotional learning skills, confirming that instructional activities can simultaneously meet social and emotional learning and academic standards (O'Conner et al., 2017b). Gayl (2017) claimed 21st-century learners need to apply knowledge, manage emotions, establish goals, develop worthwhile relationships, and make responsible choices. According to Jones et al. (2017), classrooms are more effective and student engagement increases when students are equipped with proficient social and emotional learning skills to focus on tasks, manage emotions, navigate friendships, and persevere in difficult times.

The CASEL (2013) reported social and emotional learning competencies play a significant role in how well students adapt to classroom demands and determine their ability to fully engage in learning. Johnson and Wiener (2017) reported emotion and learning are interdependent and symbiotic in academic success. According to McKown et al. (2016), children's success in social relationships and academic engagements critically influence the development of social and emotional learning skills.

Developing social and emotional skills allows students to view challenges as opportunities of growth (Guido, 2016). McKown et al. (2016) discovered a profound relationship between social and emotional comprehension and academic outcomes. To promote deeper learning, Johnson and Wiener (2017) suggested educators view social and emotional learning as an incorporated component of academic instruction rather than an add-on. Edwards (2017) suggested teachers may be less apt to consider social and emotional learning skills as an add-on and more receptive to integrating social and emotional learning skills if the curricula is incorporated into current academic content. Edwards (2017) added:

> When academic, social, and emotional components are effectively woven into the fabric of a school, students develop skills to manage and take care of themselves; to get along and work well within their learning communities; to successfully engage in academic learning; and to serve as responsible and participating members of their communities. (p. 4)

Johnson and Wiener (2017) declared this holistic approach to improving student learning is critical to college and career preparation.

The CASEL (2013) established a strong connection among the quality of teacher-student interactions, instructional practices, academic outcomes, and social adjustment. Jones et al. (2017) recognized students "use cognitive regulation skills whenever they face tasks that require concentration, planning, problem-solving, coordination, conscious choices among alternatives, or inhibiting impulses" (p. 51). Some students come to school with emotional trauma from homelife experiences that inhibit their ability to engage cognitively; therefore, there is a need for daily emotional assessments and interventions (Zalaznick, 2016).

Emotions are critical to making connections to academic concepts (NEA, 2018). Johnson and Wiener (2017) noted integrating social and emotional learning skills into pedagogical approaches increases engagement in learning and reduces behaviors that hinder the learning process. Haymovitz et al. (2018) claimed improving social and emotional learning skills can increase test scores by 11 to 17 points.

The CASEL (2013) suggested providing students with a foundation for better acclimatization and educational success based on positive social interactions and friendships reduces behavior issues, lowers emotional distress, and improves homework and assessment scores. According to Oberle et al. (2016), socially and emotionally competent students have greater focus on academic tasks and are better acclimated to the school culture. McKown et al. (2016) recommended educators invest in children's social and emotional development, incorporate evidence-based social and emotional instruction, and use performance assessment strategies to determine students' social and emotional comprehension levels. In addition, the CASEL (2013) proposed school districts make a

high-quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning program an essential element of academic advancement efforts.

Johnson and Wiener (2017) recommended integrating social and emotional learning into current instructional programs as one-way educators and leaders can ease into social and emotional learning implementation. Weissberg (2016) recommended embedding social and emotional learning skills into content areas, and Allensworth et al. (2018) added that focusing solely on academics is insufficient in achieving educational outcomes and equity. For example, English language arts standards require students to engage in collaborative conversations, which "demands a deeper, more meaningful ability to integrate the perspective of another individual into one's own critical thinking" (Johnson & Wiener, 2017, p. 8). Johnson and Wiener (2017) also found students need social skills to sufficiently take the perspective of characters, relate to the motivations and emotions of characters, and write for different purposes and to specific audiences. McKown et al. (2016) concluded children's social and emotional comprehension correlates with academic outcomes and plays a role in both social and academic success.

Both Mahoney et al. (2018) and Allensworth et al. (2018) argued that to prepare students for today's world, schools must include social and emotional instruction within the academic curriculum to encourage long-term success. Johnson and Wiener (2017) recognized math standards require students to monitor and evaluate their progress, regulate their emotions when frustrated, give and receive feedback, and understand social cues. Similarly, Johnson and Wiener (2017) found social and emotional learning skills, such as curiosity, grit, and ethics are important for learning science standards. Glennie et

al. (2017) defined grit as the ability to maintain interest in, passion for, and effort toward long-term goals.

Yoder and Dusenbury (2017) compared social and emotional learning skills and academic standards by claiming both provide learning goals across grade bands and milestones, but social and emotional learning competencies are recursive because they require constant relearning throughout life. According to Jones and Kahn (2018), "Social, emotional, and cognitive development are deeply intertwined and together are integral to academic learning and success" (p. 18). Gayl (2017) identified social and emotional learning as the missing piece to America's education system that fosters long-term academic and career success.

Social and Emotional Learning and Teachers

According to Schonert-Reichl (2017), school environments with positive "teacher-child relationships support deep learning and positive social and emotional development among students" (p. 137). Schonert-Reichl (2017) added that teachers' social and emotional competence and well-being strongly influence the learning environment and integrate social and emotional learning into classrooms and schools. Positive interaction with school personnel and peers makes students feel emotionally and physically safe (Yoder, 2014). The CASEL (2013) reported educators can aid children in developing social and emotional skills through direct instruction, engaging materials, and specific teaching and facilitation practices.

According to Haymovitz et al. (2018), educators should model appropriate behaviors and provide frequent opportunities for students to practice social and emotional learning skills while developing positive relationships. O'Conner et al. (2017d) reported

that teachers capable of regulating personal emotions are better at creating a safe, positive environment. Teachers with high-level social and emotional learning competencies are less likely to experience burnout due to being able to effectively handle challenging students (CASEL, 2020). Moreover, Waajid et al. (2013) added that students' social and emotional skills are directly influenced by their teachers' emotional and instructional skills. Jones and Doolittle (2017) concluded educators' abilities to support students' emotional needs may be severely compromised if teachers lack social and emotional learning skills, suffer from physical and mental exhaustion, or frequently experience stress.

According to O'Conner et al. (2017b), providing trained mentors or instructional coaches to conduct observations and provide teachers with feedback enhances the value of social and emotional learning programs. The CASEL (2013) proposed teacher-focused social and emotional learning programs prepare teachers to be emotionally sympathetic and to concentrate on positive discipline practices, which helps teachers be preventive rather than reactive. Johnson and Wiener (2017) stated, "Schools that effectively support students are led by educators who possess and can model healthy social and emotional learning skills" (p. 16). The Kids Helpline (2020) recommended teachers help students identify feelings by given them a name, which allows children to develop a vocabulary that assists them when discussing their feelings.

In addition, Colvin (2017) acknowledged in order for teachers to effectively support students they need to manage their own emotions and stress levels, collaborate with others, and establish positive interpersonal relationships with students. Teachers are the most important component to implementing social and emotional learning curricula in

schools, and their own well-being is a strong influence on students (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Schonert-Reichl (2017) suggested influences on social and emotional learning, such as school climate and teachers' pedagogical skills, can determine academic achievement and social and emotional competency.

A classroom climate where students feel comfortable and confident taking risks, feel in control of their learning process, and are able to collaborate with peers develops students' social skills and attitudes (Edwards, 2017). O'Conner et al. (2017d) settled on "three strategies for a positive classroom climate including modifying physical space and materials, applying classroom management strategies and routines, and fostering a supportive and emotionally positive environment" (p. 4). Schonert-Reichl (2017) acknowledged that social and emotional learning development and interventions should take place in a secure, caring, encouraging, and well-managed environment. Emotionally supportive classrooms have teachers who respond quickly to students' needs and curiosity (McCormick et al., 2015). The CASEL (2013) revealed varied instructional tasks matched to students' needs and curiosities are derived from educators using student-centered teaching and learning strategies.

According to Schonert-Reichl (2017), students' social and emotional learning can be classified as follows:

> The processes by which students acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to understand and manage their emotions, to feel and show empathy for others, to establish and achieve positive goals, to develop and maintain positive relationships, and to make responsible decisions. (p. 139)

Johnson and Wiener (2017) confirmed educators working with extremely challenging students need stress-reduction strategies to provide effective instruction and a classroom environment conducive to learning. Teachers' social and emotional learning strongly influences the infusion of social and emotional learning into classrooms (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Colvin (2017) asserted supporting the whole teacher is just as important as supporting the whole child.

According to Colvin (2017) and O'Conner et al. (2017d), administrators can improve teacher well-being and reduce stress and burnout by providing high-quality professional development, frequent collaboration among leaders and teachers, stress-reduction opportunities, and a psychologically safe school climate. The Committee for Children (2019) identified principals as key contributors to the success of social and emotional learning programs. Will (2020) recommended training principals alongside teachers to enhance the synergy in program development and implementation.

The social and emotional learning competencies of teachers shape the nature and quality of their connection with students, affect classroom structure, and reflect the implementation of social and emotional learning programs (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Yoder and Dusenbury (2017) recommended providing teachers with sample activities that promote social and emotional learning integration. The CASEL (2013) defined the teacher's job as providing precise social and emotional learning instruction in conjunction with core curriculum and aligning social and emotional learning standards with academic instruction and peer interactions.

Teachers agree a greater emphasis on social and emotional learning would better prepare students for the workplace and college, develop good citizenship skills, increase

graduation rates, and improve academic performance (Johnson & Wiener, 2017). Johnson

and Wiener (2017) revealed educators should encourage the integration of strong social

and emotional competencies for students to actively engage and persevere in intellectual

risk-taking. Teachers who taught social and emotional learning skills in Marchesi and

Cook's 2012 study reported teachers who integrate social and emotional learning skills

lose less instructional time because students are able to solve their own conflicts. Johnson

and Wiener (2017) also recognized teachers who do not use pedagogies that effectively

incorporate social and emotional learning skills might have lower expectations and use

more teacher-directed, as opposed to student-centered, instruction, which could result in

deprivation of opportunities to develop social and emotional learning skills.

Effective teachers create demanding learning environments that incorporate social

and emotional learning abilities like self-regulation, social awareness, and cognitive

flexibility (Johnson & Wiener, 2017; Martinez, 2016). Gayl (2017) added that

successfully integrating social and emotional learning into everyday teaching practices in

conjunction with modeling appropriate behavior allows students to learn and apply social

and emotional learning skills. Johnson and Wiener (2017) concluded teachers with a deep

understanding of social and emotional competencies are better equipped to successfully

integrate social and emotional learning skills into instruction. Administrators should

provide support through coaching and follow-up training (CASEL, 2013; Will, 2020).

Schonert-Reichl (2017) examined several interventions for improving teachers'

social and emotional competencies and stress management in schools and found

"boosting teachers' mindfulness increases their job satisfaction, compassion, and

empathy for students, and efficacy in regulating emotions, while reducing stress and

burnout" (p. 143). Mindfulness practices train teachers to be preventative instead of reactive, to be more flexible, and to have better classroom management (Oberle et al., 2016; O'Conner 2017d). McCormick et al. (2015) emphasized classroom management with high levels of organization can maximize learning time and improve student engagement.

Schonert-Reichl (2017) analyzed teacher education programs and the process to prepare future teachers to foster social and emotional competence for themselves and their students. Colvin (2017) recommended teachers receive preservice and ongoing training to successfully integrate social and emotional learning competencies into their instruction. Teacher candidates need to enhance their relationship skills; identify their feelings, strengths, and weaknesses; appropriately express emotions; and manage stress (Colvin, 2017). Colvin (2017) argued teacher preparation programs should incorporate social and emotional learning skills to prepare future educators for the cognitive demands of teaching and to give them the ability to create optimal conditions for learning.

According to Waajid et al. (2013), instruction in teaching the whole child, including social and emotional development, is not emphasized in undergraduate educational programs. Schonert-Reichl (2017) suggested an increase in promoting social and emotional learning in preservice teacher education, recognizing social and emotional learning as a necessary part of teacher training, and providing tools and strategies to assist teachers with implementation of social and emotional learning programs to promote students' social and emotional competence. Waajid et al. (2013) implied successful infusion of social and emotional learning concepts into an undergraduate course on curriculum and instruction is a simple task, while at the same time emphasizing

the connection between social and emotional learning and academic progress and the shift to student-centered pedagogy.

Yoder (2014) recommended teachers use an appropriate balance of active and direction instruction and individual and collaborative learning. The CASEL (2013) reasoned providing teachers with initial and ongoing training to support the social and emotional learning program encourages teachers to use the program methods more effectively. During the first year of implementation, teacher training and development of their own social and emotional competencies is the priority (Colvin, 2017). Once teachers have been properly trained, they can use the second year to start teaching students what they themselves have learned (Colvin, 2017).

Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs

O'Conner et al. (2017a) discovered a recent influx in social and emotional learning research that has led to increased focus on successful components of effective social and emotional learning programs. According to the CASEL (2013), effective social and emotional learning programs must be well-designed and evidence-based while delivering productive, effective professional development and integration supports. Stringer (2017) declared implementation of social and emotional learning programs can vary based on student and school needs, such as parent involvement and curriculum integration.

Jones and Doolittle (2017) advised schools to implement social and emotional learning through direct instruction, modified classroom climate, improved student-teacher relationships, and revised school expectations to promote a growth mindset. As the CASEL (2013) noted, high-quality, evidence-based programs are critical in promoting

social and emotional development in children. Jones et al. (2017) recommended a greater

focus on achieving individualized goals, making sure social and emotional learning skills

are age and grade-level appropriate, and developing measures of social and emotional

learning skills growing "narrower in focus but broader in context and depth" (p. 49).

Additionally, the CASEL (2013) claimed social and emotional learning programs

significantly improve school climate, student behaviors, and academic achievement when

implemented with fidelity.

Johnson and Wiener (2017) identified the ultimate goal as fully integrating social

and emotional learning into a preexisting high-quality academic program. Many poor

behaviors can be prevented or reduced if a multi-year, effective social and emotional

learning program is properly implemented (CASEL, 2013). The effectiveness of

evidence-based social and emotional learning programs is dependent upon

implementation fidelity and ongoing support (CASEL, 2013). O'Conner et al. (2017a)

concluded many successful social and emotional learning programs consist of a hybrid

approach of implementation including both stand-alone, evidence-based social and

emotional learning programs and programs that target executive functioning.

Hamilton et al. (2019) recommended teachers view the time devoted to

implementing social and emotional learning programs as instrumental in achieving

academic success rather than detracting from instructional time. According to O'Conner

et al. (2017b), closely monitoring implementation fidelity with a quantitative rating scale

reduces variances in expected outcomes. O'Conner et al. (2017b) also encouraged the use

of qualitative measures for assessment, such as interviews, focus groups, and

observations, while ensuring assessments are culturally equivalent, ecologically valid,

and linguistically accessible across subgroups. The CASEL (2013) identified another

necessary component of successful social and emotional learning programs as

administrative support to endorse social and emotional learning practices, model the

social and emotional learning language and behaviors, and provide professional

development.

O'Conner et al. (2017a) identified three common characteristics of effective

social and emotional learning programs including the use of instructional techniques

focused on skills and environment, using practices that are "sequenced, active, focused,

and explicit," and providing teachers with necessary training and technical assistance (p.

4). Successful social and emotional learning programs also provide repeat opportunities

to practice learned skills and behaviors throughout multi-year instruction (CASEL, 2013).

Will (2020) reported teachers are often expected to implement social and emotional

learning programs without adequate, continuous support, which results in a failed

program. McCormick et al. (2015) found the most-effective social and emotional learning

programs are the ones that include extensive professional development and training for

teachers.

Successful social and emotional learning programs require accurate information

about the student body and its subgroups (CASEL, 2013). The readiness of a district or

school is also essential to productive social and emotional learning programs including

sufficient funds, human resource needs, sequential planning and goals, and ongoing

progress monitoring (CASEL, 2013). O'Conner et al. (2017a) urged districts to use

vertical alignment with common terminology and goals and continuous benchmarks from

preschool through high school. In addition, O'Conner et al. (2017a) suggested horizontal

alignment across students' multiple environments, such as classrooms, playgrounds, lunchrooms, and even their homes.

According to the CASEL (2013), selecting an effective social and emotional learning program involves the following:

- deciding on grade range coverage

- number of sessions per year

- classroom approaches

- contexts that promote and reinforce social and emotional learning

- assessment tools for monitoring implementation and student behavior

- program costs

- training and support for implementation

- useful evaluation of the program

- review of materials

- background information from others who have experience with the program.

(pp. 33-36)

O'Conner et al. (2017b) suggested districts implement programs in phases, gradually expand the programs, and continue teacher training in order to be successful. The CASEL (2013) identified three key principles for effective implementation of social and emotional learning programs including building and district learning communities; engaging stakeholders in the adoption process; selecting an evidence-based social and emotional learning program with ongoing planning, programming, and evaluation; and consideration of local contextual factors. According to Yoder (2014), adopting social and emotional learning standards, developing a social and emotional learning curriculum

including accountability measures, ensuring authentic delivery, and providing sufficient teacher training are critical elements to a successful social and emotional learning program. According to the CASEL (2013), social and emotional learning programs include established curricula and instruction to promote safe, loving, engaging classroom climates that build positive student connections to school and motivate students to learn.

Legislative Support for Social and Emotional Learning Programs

For decades, educators, researchers, and policymakers have asked how to support overall student growth, enhance engagement, and provide skills that foster cognitive and emotional growth from childhood to adulthood (O'Conner et al., 2017a). O'Conner et al. (2017a) stated, "To thrive in a social world, students must learn social and emotional skills, such as controlling their impulses, interpreting and understanding emotions, motivating themselves, and developing positive attitudes toward school and community" (p. 1). Johnson and Wiener (2017) suggested increased rigor in new standards, such as the Common Core State Standards, raised expectations of independence and collaboration, which require foundational social and emotional learning skills.

According to Johnson and Wiener (2017), social and emotional learning standards create a foundation for schools to provide students with the necessary skills to engage challenges with more confidence and success. Dusenbury and Weissberg (2017) asserted additional guidance from the state can assist schools in creating environments conducive to teaching social and emotional learning, supporting social and emotional learning implementation in teaching practices and instruction, and adapting social and emotional learning skills appropriately based on cultural and linguistic differences. More and more

states are adopting social and emotional learning programs, but these programs need sustainable funding (Hinton, 2018).

Hinton (2018) identified the first implementation step to ensure schools have the funds, tools, ideas, and resources to launch and sustain a successful social and emotional learning program is to map out a budget to support the school's goal. The CASEL (2013) reported support includes resources, such as standardized instructional guides, organized activities, technical assistance, teacher training, ongoing consultation, and productive feedback. To prepare students for promising futures, policymakers, administrators, and educators must integrate social and emotional development into state and district missions and start viewing social and emotional learning as critical to education (Johnson & Wiener, 2017; Stringer, 2017).

O'Conner et al. (2017b) reported federal legislative efforts have yet to be enacted, but will include mandates, such as requiring and providing teacher training, making social and emotional learning eligible for professional development funds, preparing teacher candidates for social and emotional learning, and supporting ongoing research about social and emotional learning. Gayl (2017) stated, "Being able to articulate a comprehensive vision for student success in the state's consolidated plan enables policymakers to develop programs and systems that address multidimensional aspect of children's development" (p. 2). According to O'Conner et al. (2017b), establishing social and emotional learning state standards provides guidance for districts as they determine what social and emotional learning skills are important, how to align social and emotional learning skills to academic achievement, and how to make social and emotional learning skills specific with consistency across the state.

Yoder and Dusenbury (2017) explained many states prefer to introduce learning goals for social and emotional learning as voluntary without formal school-wide testing or assessments. However, Haymovitz et al. (2018) argued school-based social and emotional learning programs should be considered fundamental and necessary to the learning process rather than supplemental. Dusenbury and Weissberg (2018) insisted establishing consistent social and emotional learning standards across the state requires integrating social and emotional learning into state programs and policies. Some states are using terms, such as *goals* or *competencies* rather *standards* due to the stigma associated with the word *standards* in the aftermath of the Common Core State Standards (Yoder & Dusenbury, 2017).

The Every Student Succeeds Act, signed into law in December 2015, allows education agencies to reevaluate the objectives and policies currently established for public education (Gayl, 2017). West et al. (2018) acknowledged the Every Student Succeeds Act requires states to incorporate a non-tested indicator of student success into their accountability systems. This act grants policymakers the opportunity to restructure strategies to be more comprehensive and to consider all aspects of learning including social and emotional learning skills (Gayl, 2017). According to Melnick et al. (2017), under the new law, schools are allowed to expand their definition of student success to include social and emotional skills. The Every Student Succeeds Act provides states with more authority, and its main goal is to improve the quality of education offered to students with an emphasis on special education, minorities, English Language Learners, and students in poverty (Lee, 2019).

Gayl (2017) indicated including social and emotional learning interventions as part of the state's school improvement strategy is a compelling way to ensure social and emotional learning integration in everyday school culture. Hinton (2018) declared providing funding to schools for implementation of effective social and emotional programs, such as Conscious Discipline, PATHS, and Caring School Community allow schools to use a whole-child approach to education. Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, states have discretion in how they award school improvement funds, providing a possible funding source for social and emotional learning implementation (Gayl, 2017).

Another potential social and emotional learning funding source is available under the new Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants program in Title IV, Part A, which "ensures all students have access to a well-rounded education" (Gayl, 2017, p. 5). According to Dusenbury and Weissberg (2018), states are also being encouraged to support social and emotional learning due to the most recent federal spending bill that tripled Title IV funds. Dusenbury and Weissberg (2017) listed a variety of policy initiatives at the state level that support social and emotional learning including initiatives related to 21st-century learning, health education, student mental health, whole-child initiatives, safe schools, school climate, positive behavior support, character development, bullying, and more.

O'Conner et al. (2017b) stated, "Implementation of a social and emotional learning program is more likely to succeed if it is supported by administrators and policymakers at the federal, state, and district levels" (p. 7). However, according to the CASEL (2013), allowing state officials to determine their own definitions of social and emotional learning and the degree to which social and emotional learning skills are

implemented has created inconsistencies in student development of social and emotional learning competencies and necessary life skills. Leaving this difficult conundrum up to individual states has resulted in just 32% of states including standards for social and emotional learning development in the primary grades (see Figure 5) (NCSL, 2018, Education section). The CASEL (2020) indicated the percentage is rapidly growing and increased to 36% by the end of 2018, with 18 out of 50 states requiring kindergarten through 12th-grade social and emotional learning standards (Collaborating States Initiative section).

Figure 5

States with Primary Social and Emotional Learning Standards

Note. The National Conference of State Legislatures map illustrates an overview of states with social and emotional learning standards as of April 2018 (NCSL, 2018). From "Social and Emotional Learning," by the National Conference of State Legislatures, 2018 (http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/social-emotional-learning.aspx). Copyright 2018 by the NCSL.

Jones and Kahn (2018) claimed developing students with effective social and emotional learning skills is "likely to decrease the need for government services and [result in] less expenditure of public money" (Focusing on Social and Emotional Learning is Worth It section). Gayl (2017) concluded states and local education agencies can develop systems, programs, and policies to provide students with social and emotional learning abilities necessary for success in school, work, and life. When states decide to move forward with social and emotional learning standards, the CASEL

encourages the development of a writing team and partnerships with researchers and external organizations to find content for standards and benchmarks based upon evidence-based research (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2016).

According to Dusenbury and Weissberg (2016), the CASEL is in the process of developing national model standards to assist states in the conception of high-quality, evidence-based standards. Dusenbury and Yoder (2017) identified the following 14 basic steps most states follow when writing social and emotional learning policies and guidelines:

- identifying the need

- forming a team of educators

- identifying roles

- identifying key stakeholders

- developing a shared vision

- drafting social and emotional learning policies and guidelines

- reviewing and editing

- sharing the draft with stakeholders

- engaging in the state review process

- finalizing adoption plans

- piloting new policies and guidelines

- revising policies and guidelines

- finalizing the adoption and disseminating

- reviewing documents regularly. (p. 2)

Dusenbury and Weissberg (2018) identified the key objective of the Collaborating States Initiative as assisting state education agencies in creating goals to engage educators in evidence-based social and emotional learning approaches. In May of 2019, the House Appropriations Committee voted to designate $260 million for social and emotional learning under the 2020 education-funding bill to provide schools with social and emotional learning assessment tools, professional development opportunities, and additional mental health professionals (CASEL, 2020, Federal Policy section). Such legislative support indicates a transition from implementing social and emotional learning programs to viewing social and emotional learning competencies as critical to education (CASEL, 2020; Stringer, 2017).

Summary

Brotto (2018) agreed with the aforementioned researchers and concluded social and emotional abilities indicate how well an individual adapts to the environment, transitions with change, and succeeds in life. According to Brotto (2018), the development of core life abilities is critical to a child's whole-person development and self-actualization. Schonert-Reichl (2017) conducted a meta-analysis and discovered students exposed to high-quality social and emotional instruction earn higher assessment scores than individuals not exposed to social and emotional learning instruction. Development of social and emotional learning skills leads to universal positive results, such as higher academic achievement and more positive attitudes, conduct, and friendships (Johnson & Wiener, 2017). Brotto (2018) concluded combining social and emotional learning with academic curriculum produces high-quality educational experiences that inspire, engage, and empower students to become problem-solvers,

creative and critical thinkers, effective communicators and collaborators, and determined learners.

Chapter Two began with the history of social and emotional learning conceptual frameworks based on research conducted by the CASEL, Jones, and the Partnership for 21st Century Learners. Beliefs about the importance of social and emotional learning skills and the growing need for these skills to be taught in schools were shared. Chapter Two included an examination of social and emotional skills in relation to positive influences on public health, academic outcomes, and teacher efficacy. The chapter concluded with an overview of current legislative support and effective social and emotional learning programs.

Chapter Three includes a discussion of problems prompting the increase of social and emotional learning awareness and the purpose of research to recommend future action to address increased social and emotional learning needs. The third chapter also includes a description of the aspects of research design including population, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, and safeguards in place to protect participants.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The CASEL (2018) launched the Collaborating States Initiative to increase social and emotional learning within school districts in 2016. Originally, only five states were involved in the initiative (CASEL, 2018). However, within two years, 25 states joined the CASEL's (2018) commitment to ensure all preschool through high school students develop academic, social, and emotional skills to be successful in work, school, and homelife.

Dusenbury and Weissberg (2017) recognized growing momentum "across the country to support statewide implementation of social and emotional learning in preschool through high school" (p. 1). According to Jones et al. (2017), social and emotional skills are beneficial to academic, social, and mental health outcomes, particularly when introduced during the primary school years. Grimes (2018) revealed many students come to school without the social and emotional skills required to reach their maximum academic potential. In this chapter, an overview of the study is reiterated, the research design is presented, and elements of the study are outlined including population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Finally, ethical considerations are discussed.

Problem and Purpose Overview

According to Grimes (2018), educators have noticed an increase in students who come to school lacking the social and emotional skills needed for academic success. In the past, the focus has been on cognitive and language development to determine school readiness (Grimes, 2018). In 2018, the CASEL recommended school districts address insufficient social and emotional learning skills and increase academic achievement by

transitioning pedagogical strategies to those that focus on the whole child rather than solely academics. Students who come to school with deficiencies in fundamental social and emotional learning skills face a challenge to academic success and can negatively impact the classroom environment (Grimes, 2018). Brotto (2018) claimed educational settings are the most effective place to address deficiencies in social and emotional skills before children become active community constituents. According to Johnson and Wiener (2017), viewing social and emotional and academic skills as a symbiotic relationship can lead to an increase in academic achievement, improved attitudes and behaviors, successful peer relationships, positive connections with school, and reduced emotional stress for students and teachers. The goal of this study was to illuminate the need for social and emotional learning state standards to promote academic achievement in positive learning environments where students are taught to self-regulate emotions and manage stress.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of certified teachers for kindergarten through third-grade students regarding the effect of social and emotional skills in the areas of social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset on academic achievement?

2. How do counselors of kindergarten through third-grade students define social and emotional learning?

3. According to counselors of kindergarten through third-grade students, what is required to establish and improve social and emotional development within the curriculum based on current social and emotional learning practices?

4. How do counselors of kindergarten through third-grade students perceive the importance of state actions in defining and creating social and emotional learning standards as part of the required curriculum?

Research Design

During the fall of 2020, research was conducted using a mixed-methods research design, including both quantitative and qualitative elements of data collection to "provide a more complete understanding of research problems" (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 503). According to Fraenkel et al. (2019), "Researchers are better able to gather and analyze considerably more and different kinds of data" when using a mixed-methods approach (p. 11). Burkholder et al. (2020) stated, "Mixed methods research, stated simply, is the integration of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to answer specific research questions; it can be viewed as the center of the quantitative-qualitative continuum" (p. 114).

In this study, quantitative research consisted of teachers participating in a survey. Quantitative researchers view the world as a single reality and attempt to create relationships between variables (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Interviews conducted with counselors represented the qualitative segment of the study. Qualitative researchers seek to understand "situations and events from the viewpoint of the participants" and view the world as consisting of multiple realities (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 10).

Population and Sample

The population for this study included 95 kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers and counselors from one school district in Missouri. The quantitative portion of this study consisted of census sampling of all kindergarten through third-grade

certified teachers. All kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers were invited to participate in the survey in an attempt to collect data from the entire kindergarten through third-grade teacher population (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

The qualitative sample consisted of a purposive sample. A purposive sample occurs when researchers use personal judgment and prior information to select a sample to provide necessary data representative of the population (Fraenkel et al., 2019; Mertens, 2020). The type of purposive sample for this study was a total population sampling comprised of all three kindergarten through third-grade counselors. When the researcher examines an "entire population that has one or more shared characteristics," total population sampling occurs (Crossman, 2020, para. 7).

Instrumentation

The survey was created to gather the quantitative perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning with an emphasis on social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset. According to Fang (1996) and Kagan (1992), the perceptions of educators affect learning environments, academic success, and students' cognizance of their abilities. O'Conner et al. (2017b) suggested students from all subgroups benefit from social and emotional learning development through increased academic motivation, self-efficacy, social cognizance, and growth mindset. Survey statements were based on the research questions, informed by Transforming Education (2019; see Appendix A) and adapted from Brackett et al. (2012; see Appendix B).

The interview questions were designed to garner kindergarten through third-grade counselors' experiences, opinions, and feelings about social and emotional learning skills

(Fraenkel et al., 2019). Focal points for the interview questions consisted of defining

social and emotional learning, identifying effective social and emotional learning

programs, associating social and emotional learning and academic achievement, and

deliberating legislative support. The CASEL (2013) deemed high-quality, evidence-based

programs as critical in promoting students' social and emotional development. In

addition, the CASEL (2013) stated when implemented well, social and emotional

learning programs significantly improve school climate, student behaviors, and academic

achievement. The interview questions were based on the research questions, and in order

to "improve the quality of the data received," contingency questions were also included

(Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 368; see Appendix C).

Reliability and Validity

The survey was developed using a five-point Likert-type scale (see Appendix D).

The Likert-type scale, an attitude scale frequently used in educational research, included

the response options Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither, Agree, and Strongly Agree

(Burkholder et al., 2020; Fraenkel et al., 2019). Fraenkel et al. (2019) described the test-

retest method of estimating reliability as "administering the same instrument twice to the

same group of individuals after a certain time interval has elapsed" (p. 157). A field test,

using the test-retest method, was conducted to ensure the survey would allow the

researcher to draw warranted conclusions while safeguarding validity, reliability, and

objectivity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2019; Mertens, 2020). According

to Fraenkel et al. (2019), validity refers to the usefulness, correctness, appropriateness,

and meaningfulness of specific inferences made by the researcher based on the data

collected. In this particular study, the field test served as assurance that the information

gathered would enable the researcher to draw correct conclusions about teacher

perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2019; Mertens, 2020).

Interview questions were designed to collect data to answer research questions

two through four. Fraenkel et al. (2019) encouraged researchers to validate instruments to

ensure the data gathered result in warranted conclusions about interviewee perceptions

and opinions. Three non-participants were selected to complete the Validation Rubric for

Expert Panel created by White and Simon (2014) to measure the validity of interview

questions prior to conducting interviews. Utilizing the Validation Rubric for Expert Panel

allows the researcher to establish content-related evidence of validity and reliability of

the instrument by making useful inferences related to the social and emotional learning

perceptions of counselors preceding interviews (Fraenkel et al., 2019). As defined by

Fraenkel et al. (2019), "Content-related evidence of validity refers to the content and

format of the instrument" (p. 144). Both the survey and interview questions were created

based on the conceptual framework of social and emotional learning and the review of

literature exploring social and emotional learning competencies.

Data Collection

Following approval from the school district (see Appendix E) and the

Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix F), an email was sent

to kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers. The email contained a letter of

participation (see Appendix G) and a link to the survey created using the Qualtrics

platform. The Lindenwood Institutional Review Board Survey Information Sheet Non-

Identifiable (see Appendix H) was included in the initial email and used as the first page

of the instrument. Participants who completed the survey granted consent. Two weeks were allowed for completion of the survey.

Part two of the mixed-methods research design consisted of interviewing three kindergarten through third-grade counselors and using "the qualitative analysis to expand upon the results of the quantitative study" (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 507). An email was sent to three counselors requesting their participation in voluntary interviews via video conference. A letter of participation (see Appendix I) and an informed consent form (see Appendix J) were included in the email with suggested times and dates of individual interviews. Once interview times and dates were confirmed, the consent form was reviewed, and any questions were answered. After the review and signing of the consent forms, interviews were conducted.

Data Analysis

After all surveys and interviews were completed, data were analyzed, interpreted, and organized into tables and charts to summarize responses and draw conclusions from results (Fraenkel et al., 2019). The percentage of responses in each category of the five-point Likert-type scale was analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure attitudes, beliefs, and reactions of participants (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Counselors were referenced by numeric codes in the interviews. For example, the first counselor interviewed was referred to as Counselor 1, the second as Counselor 2, and the third as Counselor 3. The interview narratives were organized by question while seeking trends and themes. Fraenkel et al. (2019) explained using the mixed-methods approach helps clarify and interpret relationships among variables, also known as correlation data. Teacher survey responses and counselor interview feedback were used to identify trends, to determine

negative and positive relationships, and to confirm or cross-validate relationships

regarding perceptions of social and emotional learning benefits (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical research requires the primary investigator to analyze and interpret data

while being nonbiased, honest, and accurate (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Following

approval by the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board, data were collected

and electronically retained and will securely deleted after three years (Fraenkel et al.,

2019; Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). As recommended by Roberts and Hyatt (2019),

"Electronic and paper files that contain confidential data [will] be locked and stored in a

place away from public access" (p. 38). The instruments were not used to collect

personally identifiable information. The school district was not identified. Participation in

the study was strictly voluntary and anonymous.

Further protection of participants was provided by obtaining their informed

consent (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Data codes or pseudonyms were used to lessen the

possibility of identifying interview participants. Interview responses were paraphrased to

ensure anonymity. To avoid potential violation of privacy and to ensure confidentiality,

participant names were disassociated from data acquired by obtaining information

anonymously throughout the quantitative and qualitative data collection process

(Fraenkel et al., 2019).

Summary

Jones and Kahn (2018) emphasized the link between academic success and social

and emotional development. Students who feel accepted cooperate with others, plan and

set goals, persevere through challenges, and are more likely to reach their maximum

potential (Jones & Kahn, 2018). Glennie et al. (2017) referred to a sense of belonging as feeling accepted, respected, and valued. In addition, Glennie et al. (2017) revealed students who feel a greater sense of belonging perform better academically. Moreover, the CASEL (2013) recognized social and emotional learning as "a valuable component of education that facilitates children's cognitive abilities and prepares them to meet the challenges they will inevitably face in today's world" (p. 41). Jones and Kahn (2018) identified social, emotional, and academic development as essential parts of preschool through 12th-grade education needed for the success of 21st-century learners.

Social and emotional learning improves social, emotional, and academic skill development (CASEL, 2013). For the education system to achieve success, Jones and Kahn (2018) recommended transitioning to a holistic approach that focuses on the whole child. According to Jones and Kahn (2018), "All children deserve the opportunity to learn the skills needed to succeed as individuals and as contributing, engaged citizens" (p. 21). Johnson and Wiener (2017) added that to prepare students for promising futures, social and emotional development should be integrated into educational missions and instructional programs. Social and emotional learning skills deserve a prominent role in the learning process and need to become part of state-required curriculum to promote consistent social and emotional learning standards and to enhance the welfare of all students (CASEL, 2013).

In Chapter Three, the methodology used in this mixed-methods study and the purpose of the study were described. The problem and purpose of the study were discussed and emphasized in the research questions. This chapter also included a description of the population and sample of the study. The instrumentation included a

teacher survey and counselor interviews. Validity and reliability were ensured by field-testing the survey using the test-retest method and utilizing the Validation Rubric for Expert Panel with non-participants for the counselor interview questions. Chapter Three also included descriptions of the data collection and analysis processes and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers and counselors regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning. Allensworth et al. (2018) spotlighted the increased awareness of the vital role social and emotional learning skills play in academic and long-term success. To achieve educational equity, research suggests a shift in pedagogical theories and best practices from academics alone to a holistic approach that includes social and emotional learning skills (Allensworth et al., 2018; Johnson & Weiner, 2017; Jones & Kahn, 2018). The presentation of the data will be included in Chapter Four.

Quantitative Results

The survey completed by kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers in a Missouri school district consisted of four sections: social and emotional learning scale for teachers, social awareness scale, self-efficacy scale, and growth mindset scale. Of the 95 teachers who received the survey, 49% completed the survey.

Research Question One

What are the perceptions of certified teachers for kindergarten through third-grade students regarding the effect of social and emotional skills in the areas of social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset on academic achievement?

Survey Section One: Social and Emotional Learning Scale for Teachers

S1Q1. My School Expects Teachers to Address Children's Social and Emotional Needs. Of the 43 responses, 35 teachers strongly agreed their school expects teachers to address the social and emotional needs of students (see Figure 6). Two

teachers strongly disagreed, and only one somewhat disagreed. Five teachers somewhat agreed with the survey question.

Figure 6

S1Q1. My School Expects Teachers to Address Children's Social and Emotional Needs
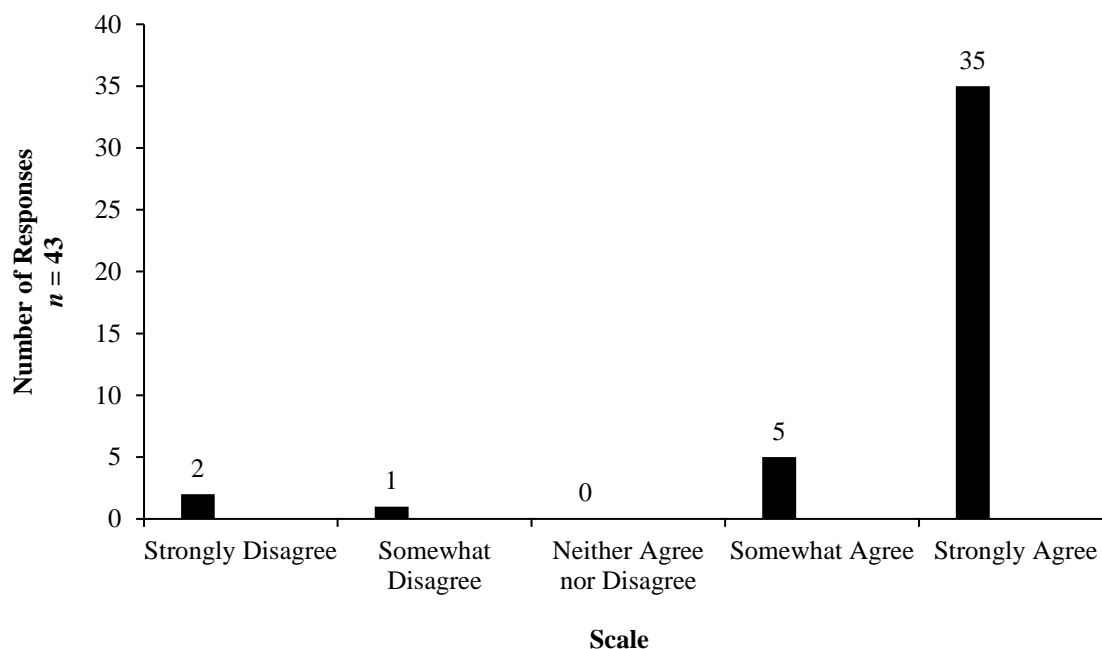
S1Q2. The Culture in My School Supports the Development of Children's Social and Emotional Skills. Of the teachers surveyed, 19 strongly agreed and 17 somewhat agreed, resulting in 84% of participants agreeing school cultures support social and emotional development in students (see Figure 7). Two participants were neutral or unsure whether their school culture supports social and emotional development. Three teachers somewhat disagreed, and two strongly disagreed.

Figure 7

S1Q2. The Culture in My School Supports the Development of Children's Social and
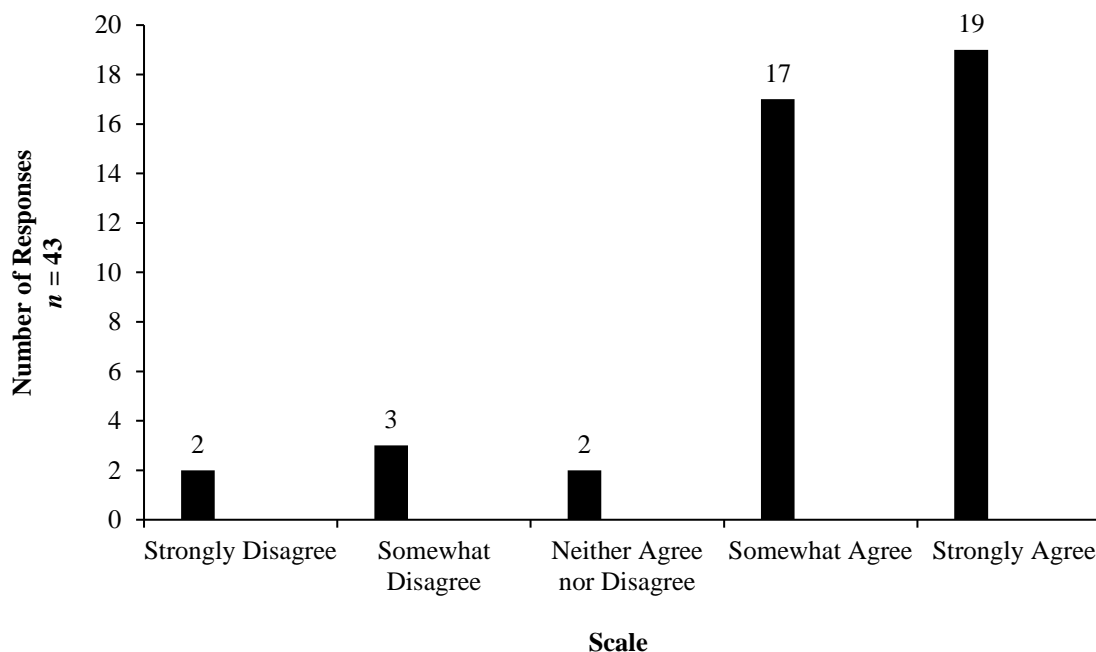
Emotional Skills

S1Q3. All Teachers Should Receive Training on How to Teach Social and

Emotional Skills to Students. The participants overwhelmingly agreed all teachers

should receive training on teaching social and emotional learning skills to students.

Ninety-three percent, or 40 out of 43 participants, expressed support for providing

teachers with training to implement social and emotional learning programs (see Figure

8). Only two teachers strongly disagreed.

Figure 8

S1Q3. All Teachers Should Receive Training on How to Teach Social and Emotional

Skills to Students
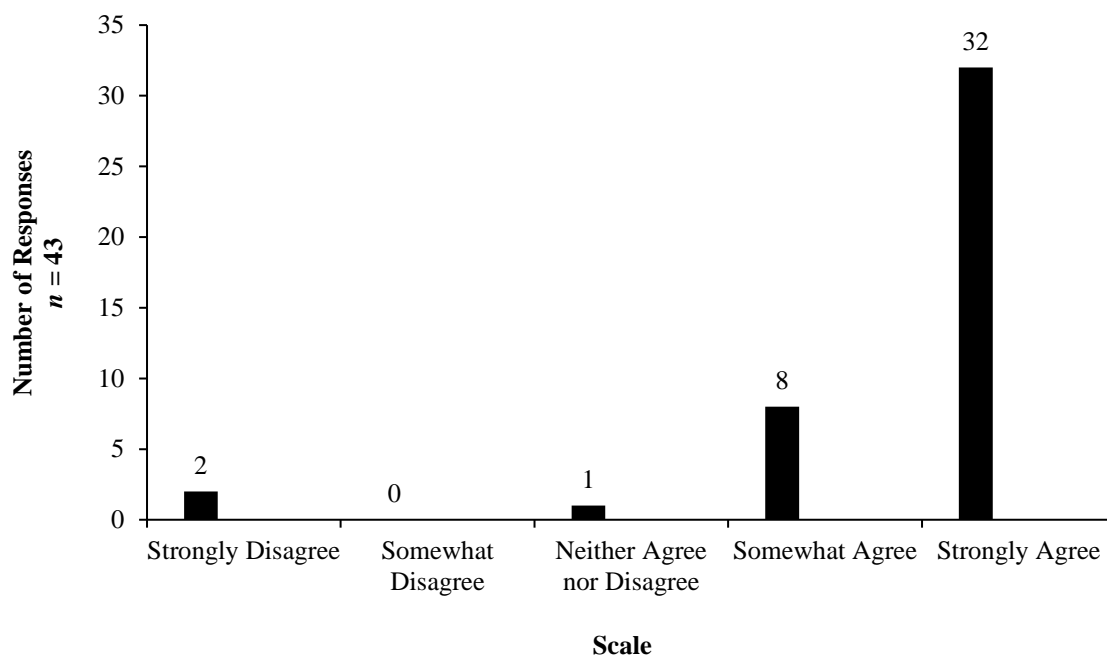
S1Q4. Taking Care of My Students' Social and Emotional Needs Comes

Naturally to Me. According to the survey results, 38 out of 43 respondents felt taking

care of their students' social and emotional needs comes naturally to them (see Figure 9).

Out of those 38 responses, 15 strongly agreed. Two teachers strongly disagreed with the

survey question, and three were neutral.

Figure 9

S1Q4. Taking Care of My Students' Social and Emotional Needs Comes Naturally to Me
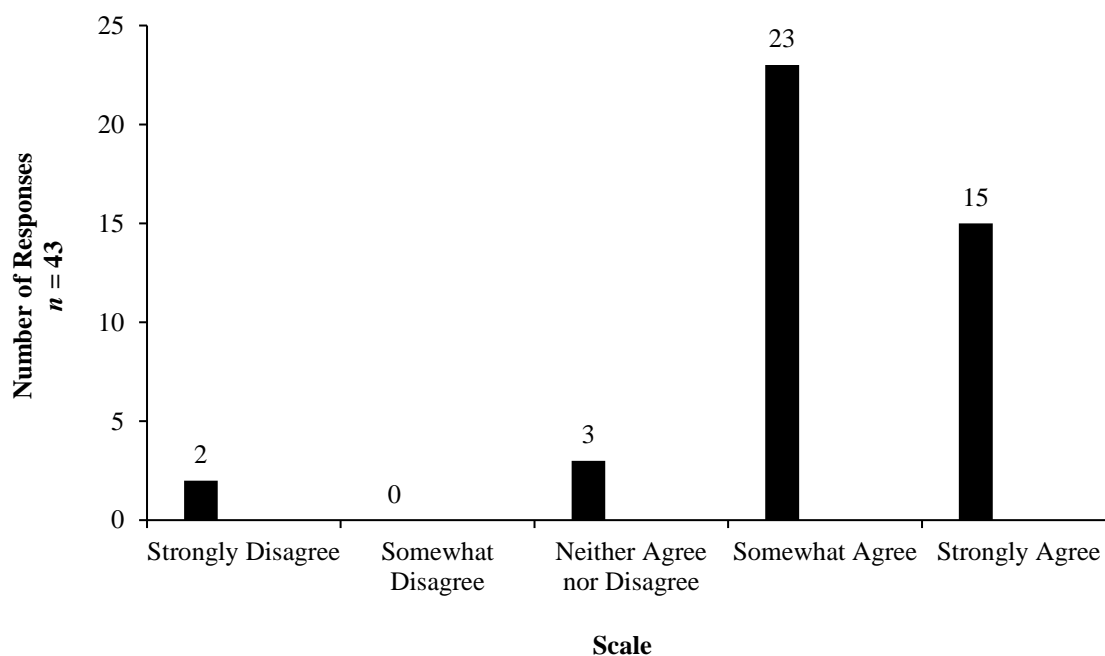
S1Q5. My Principal Creates an Environment That Promotes Social and Emotional Learning for Our Students. Eighty-one percent of teachers, 35 out of 43, felt their principals created an environment that promotes social and emotional learning (see Figure 10). Three participants were unsure and responded as neutral. Only five teachers thought their principals did not create an environment that promotes social and emotional learning.

Figure 10

S1Q5. My Principal Creates an Environment that Promotes Social and Emotional

Learning for Our Students
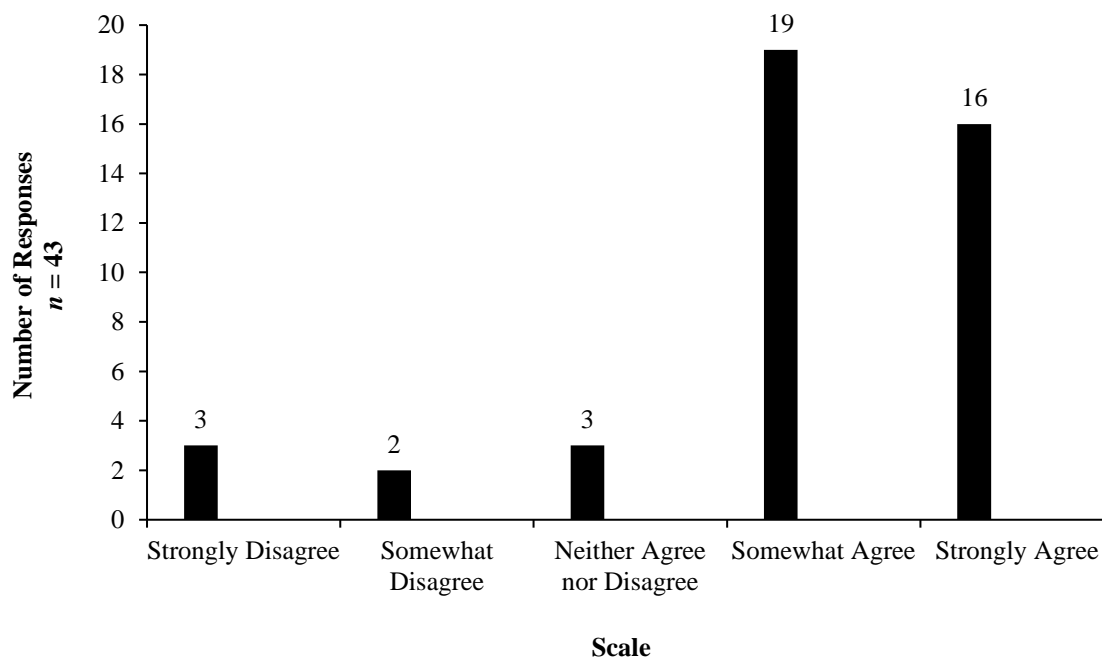
S1Q6. Informal Lessons in Social and Emotional Learning Are Part of My

Regular Teaching Practice. Thirty out of 43 respondents either strongly agreed or

somewhat agreed that informal social and emotional learning lessons are part of their

regular practices. Eleven teachers were neutral regarding teaching informal lessons. Two

strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

S1Q6. Informal Lessons in Social and Emotional Learning Are Part of My Regular

Teaching Practice
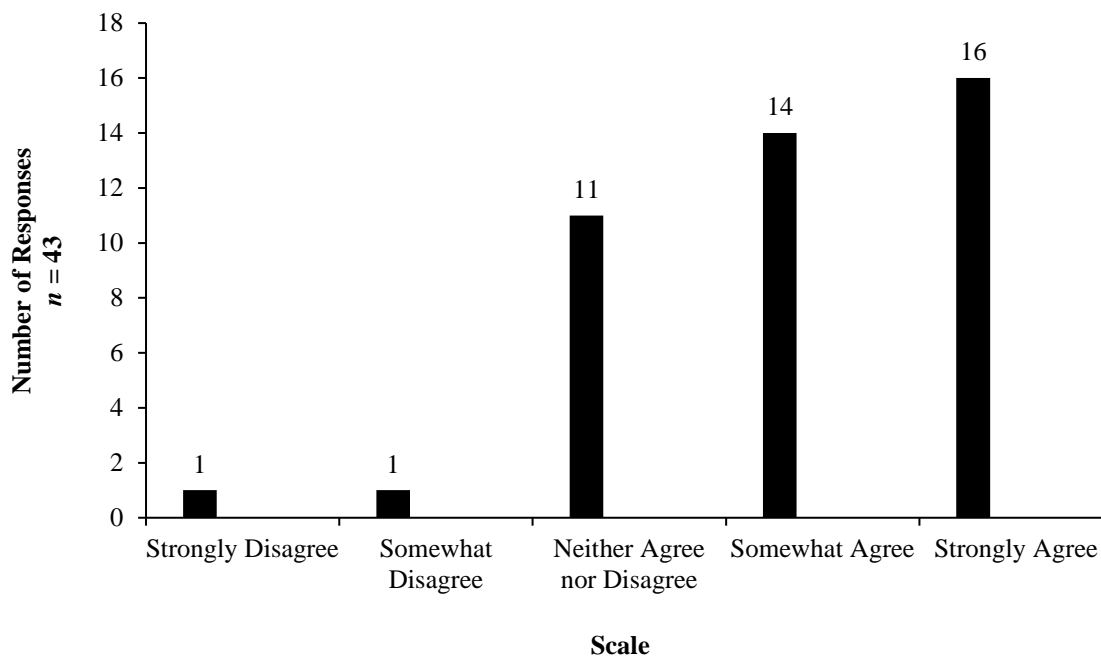
S1Q7. I Feel Confident in My Ability to Provide Instruction on Social and

Emotional Learning. Similarly, 30 out of 43 teachers felt confident in their ability to

provide social and emotional instruction (see Figure 12). Nine participants neither agreed

nor disagreed. Four teachers were not confident in their ability to provide social and

emotional learning instruction.

Figure 12

S1Q7. I Feel Confident in My Ability to Provide Instruction on Social and Emotional
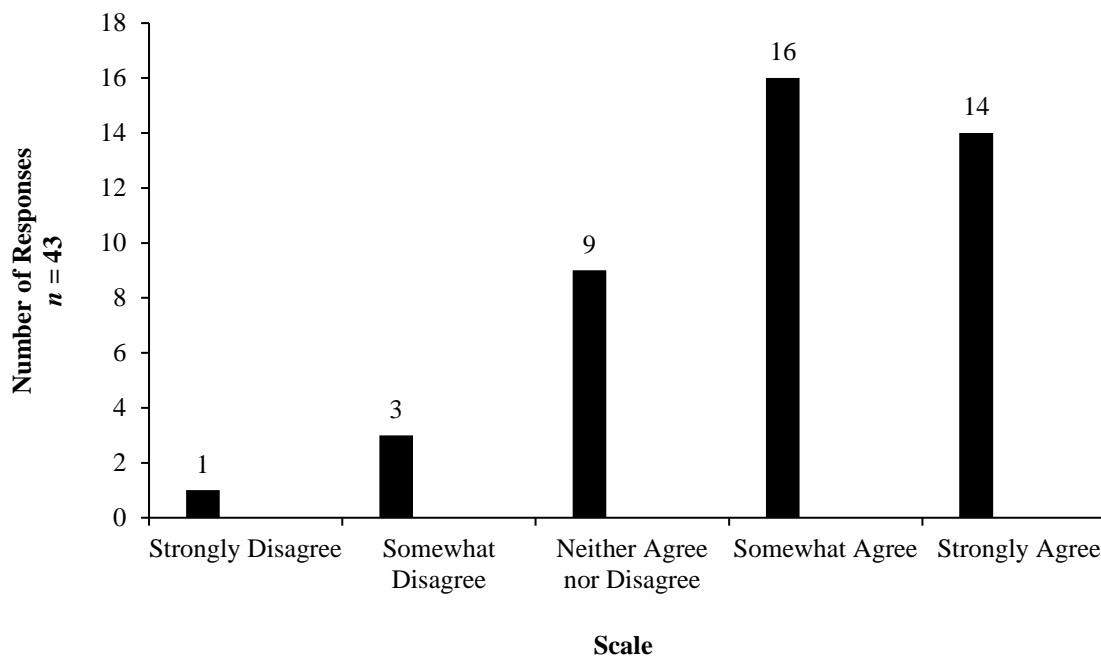
Learning

S1Q8. My Principal Encourages the Teaching of Social and Emotional Skills to

Students. Four out of 43 teachers disagreed their principals encouraged the teaching of

social and emotional learning skills (see Figure 13). Three teachers were neutral. Thirty-

six out of 43 felt encouraged by their principals to develop social and emotional

competencies in students.

Figure 13

S1Q8. My Principal Encourages the Teaching of Social and Emotional Skills to Students
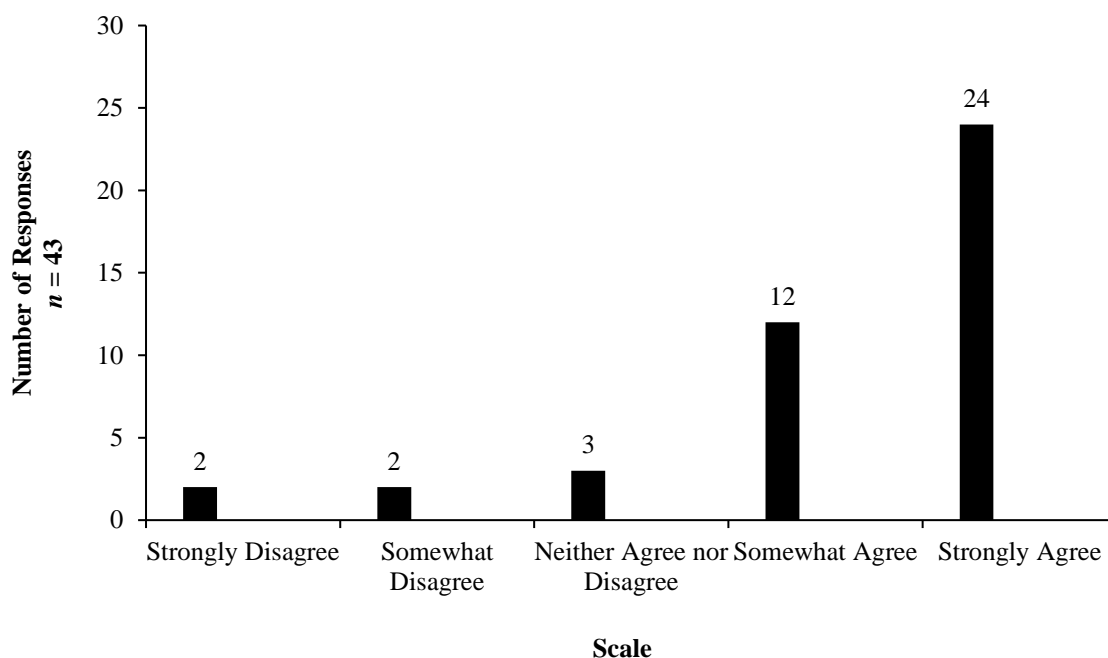
S1Q9. I Want to Improve My Ability to Teach Social and Emotional Skills to Students. Eighty-three percent, 35 out of 42 teachers, wanted to improve their ability to teach social and emotional skills to students (see Figure 14). Four teachers were neutral about improving their ability. Three participants did not want to improve their ability to teach social and emotional skills.

Figure 14

S1Q9. I Want to Improve My Ability to Teach Social and Emotional Skills to Students
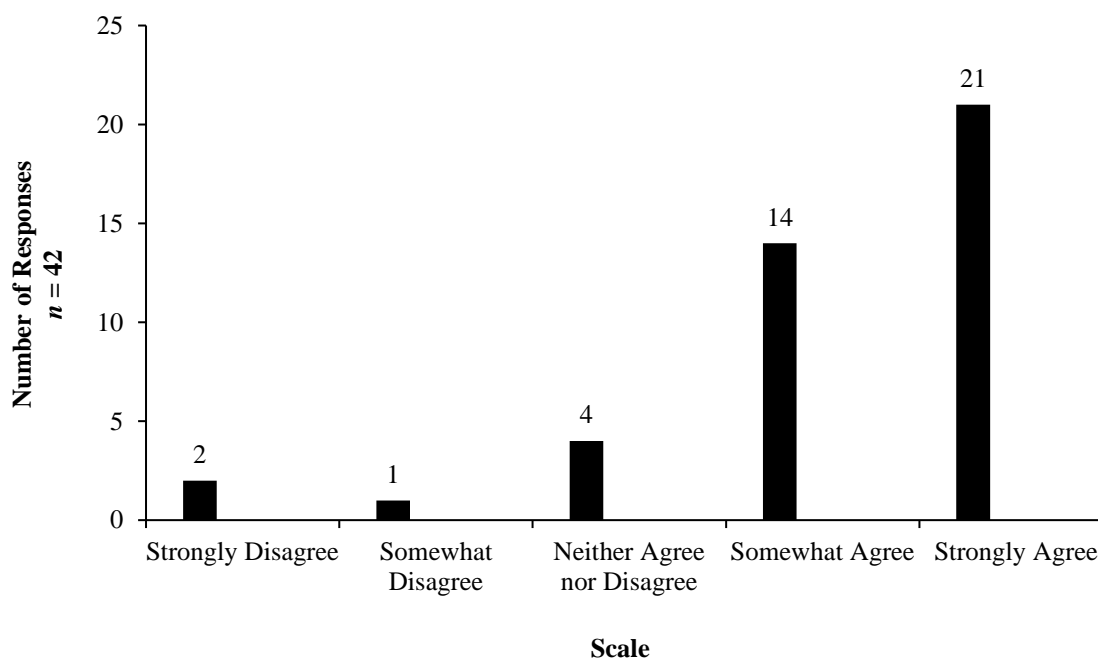
S1Q10. I Would Like to Attend a Workshop to Learn How to Develop My

Students' Social and Emotional Skills. Only 65% of teachers surveyed, 28 out of 43,

showed an interest in attending workshops to learn how to develop their students' social

and emotional learning skills (see Figure 15). Eleven teachers neither agreed nor

disagreed regarding attending workshops. Four teachers were not interested in attending

workshops.

Figure 15

S1Q10. I Would Like to Attend a Workshop to Learn How to Develop My Students' Social and Emotional Skills
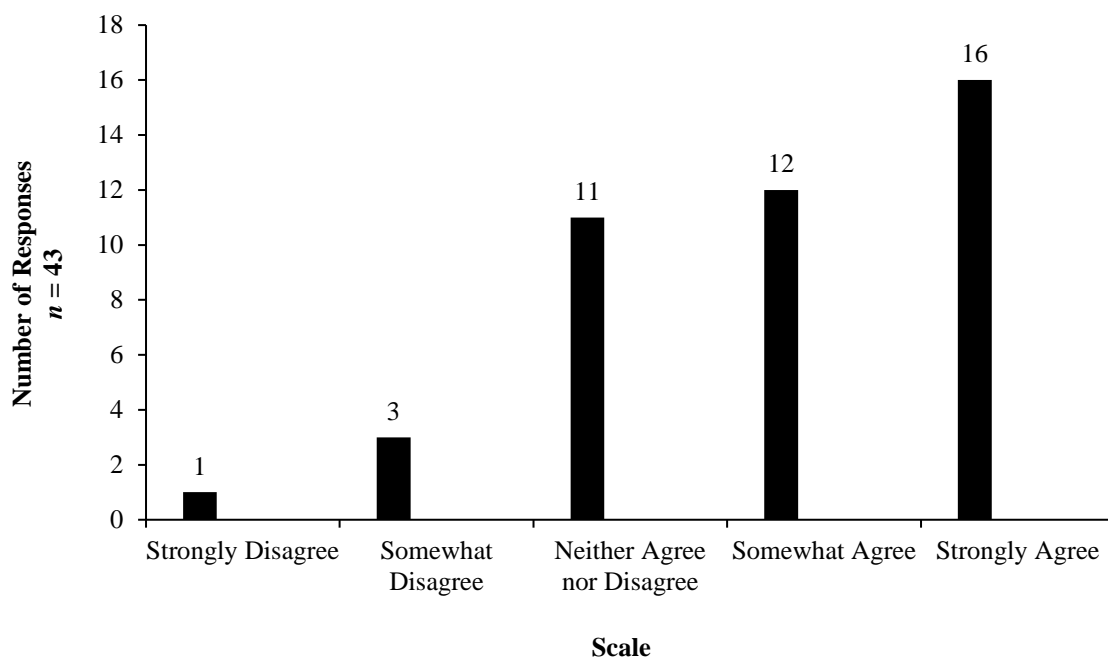
Survey Section Two: Social Awareness Scale

  S2Q1. My Students Listen to Other People's Opinions and Points of View. Out of the 41 participants, 31 teachers reported their students listen to the opinions of others (see Figure 16). Five teachers were unsure if their students are capable of listening to others. Five teachers did not feel their students were capable of listening to others' opinions.

Figure 16

S2Q1. My Students Listen to Other People's Opinions and Points of View
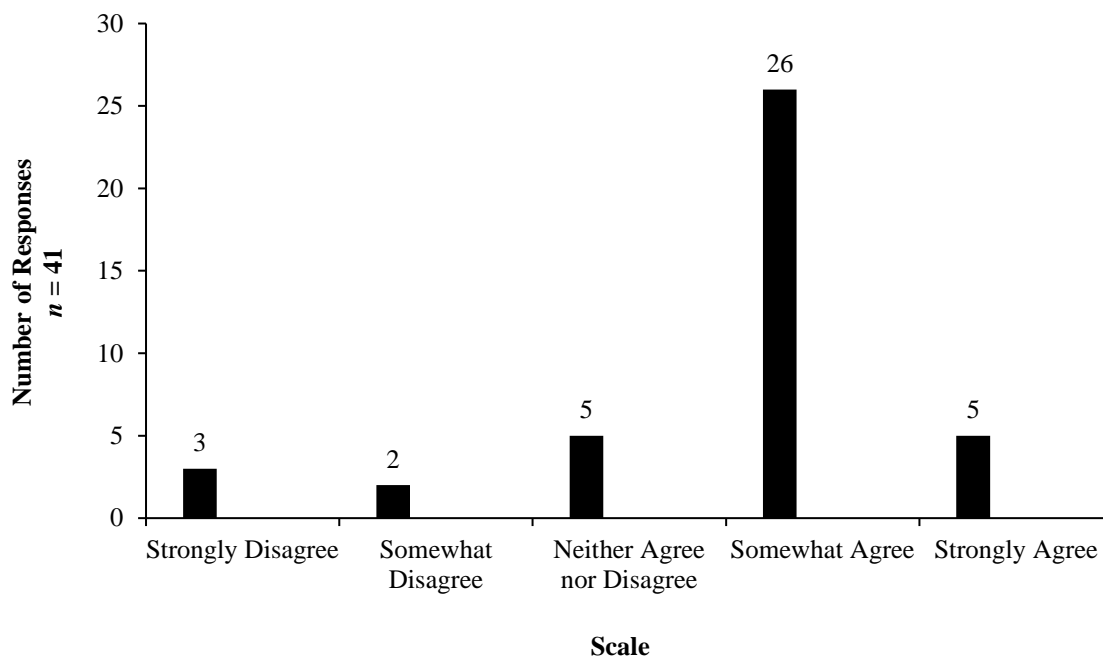
S2Q2. My Students Care About Other People's Feelings. The survey results revealed 35 out of 41 teachers felt their students care about other people's feelings (see Figure 17). Only 10% of teachers surveyed showed concern about their students' ability to empathize with others. Two participants were uncertain of their students' abilities to care about other people's feelings.

Figure 17

S2Q2. My Students Care About Other People's Feelings
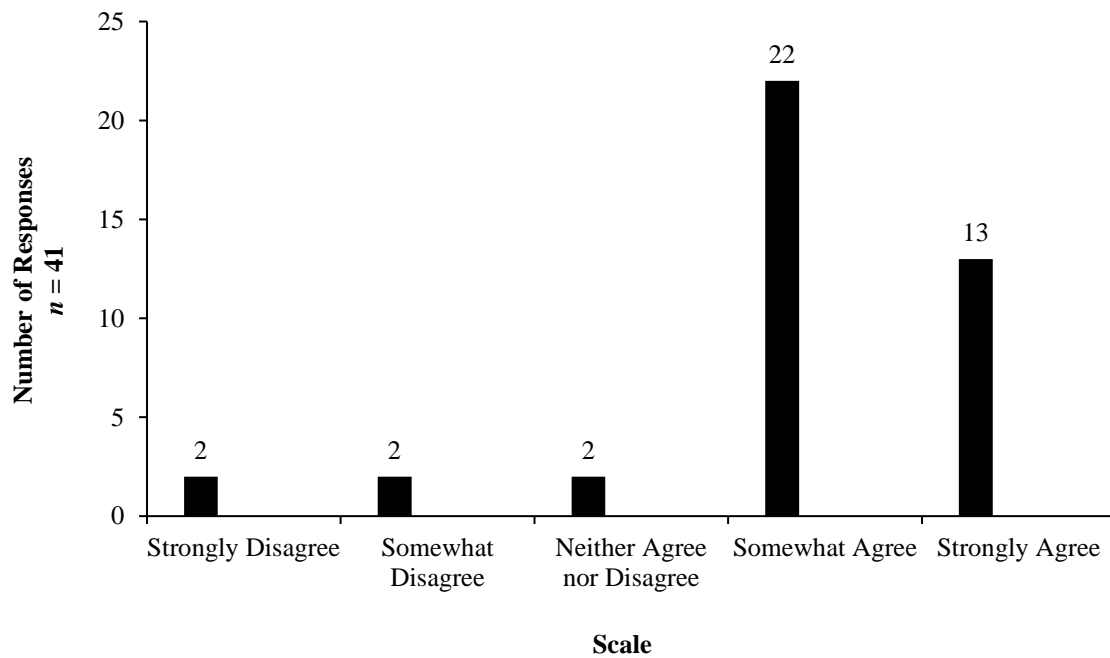
S2Q3. My Students Compliment Others' Accomplishments. Eighty-eight

percent, 36 out of 41 participants, maintained their students are complimentary of others'

accomplishments (see Figure 18). Only three teachers disagreed with this survey

question. Two participants were neutral.

Figure 18

S2Q3. My Students Compliment Others' Accomplishments
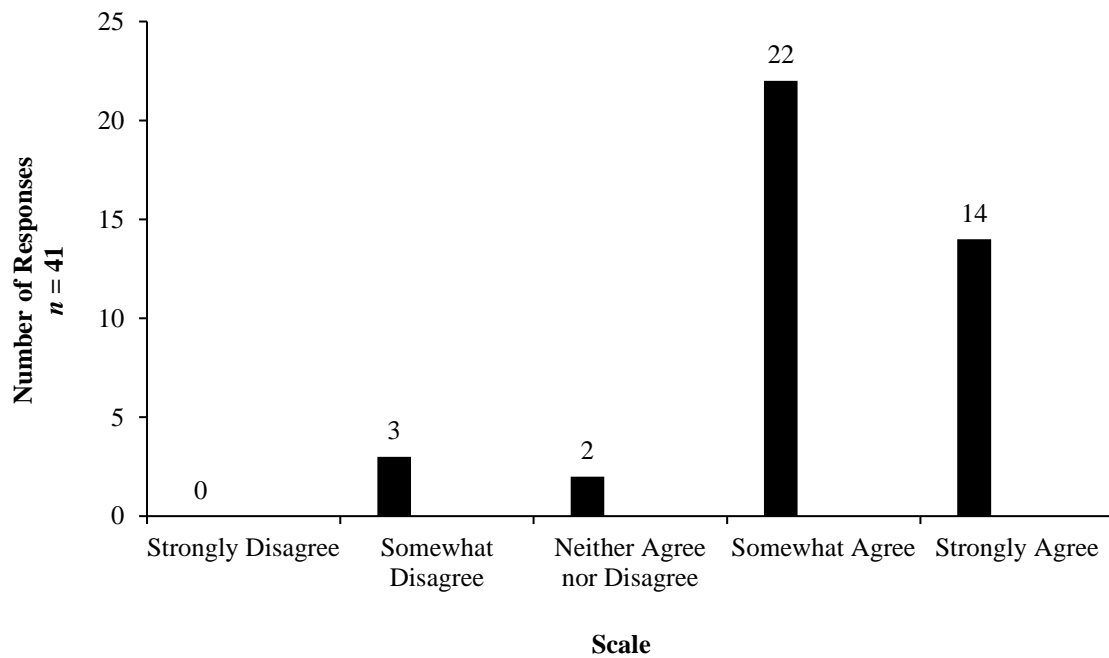
S2Q4. My Students Get Along with Students Who Are Different from Them.

Most teachers, 36 out of 41, felt their students appreciate diversity (see Figure 19). Two

participants responded with neutral. Three teachers felt their students could not get along

with others different from them.

Figure 19

S2Q4. My Students Get Along with Students Who Are Different from Them
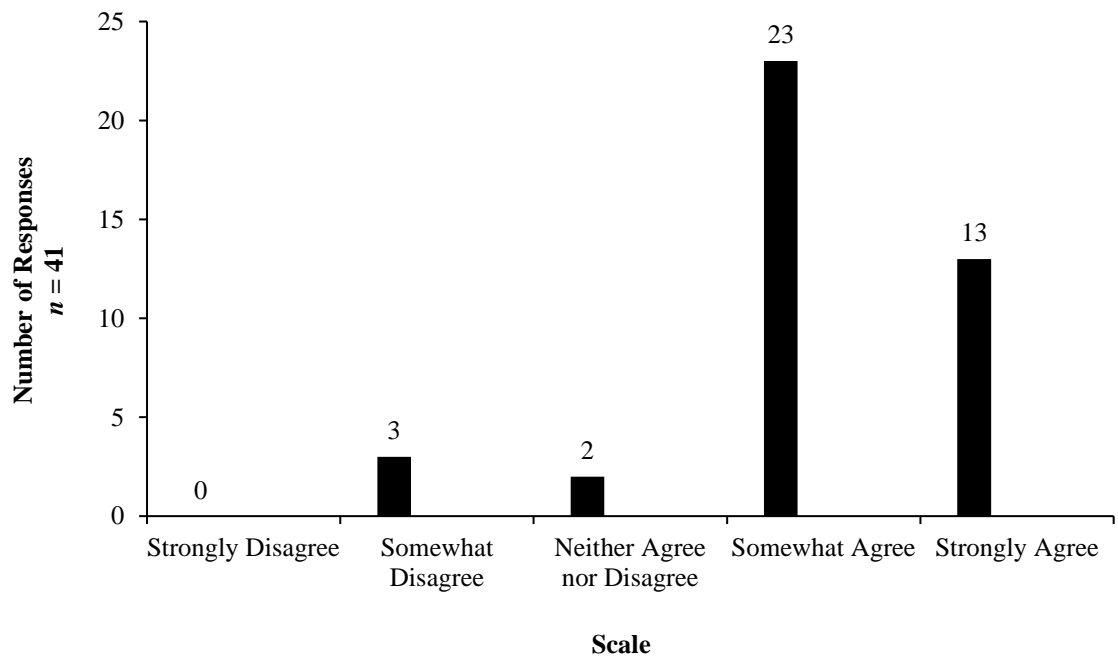
S2Q5. My Students Are Good at Describing Their Feelings. Only 68%, 28 out of

41, of the teachers surveyed acknowledged their students could sufficiently describe their

feelings (see Figure 20). Six teachers were neutral or uncertain regarding their students'

abilities to describe their feelings. Seven teachers somewhat disagreed.

Figure 20

S2Q5. My Students Are Good at Describing Their Feelings
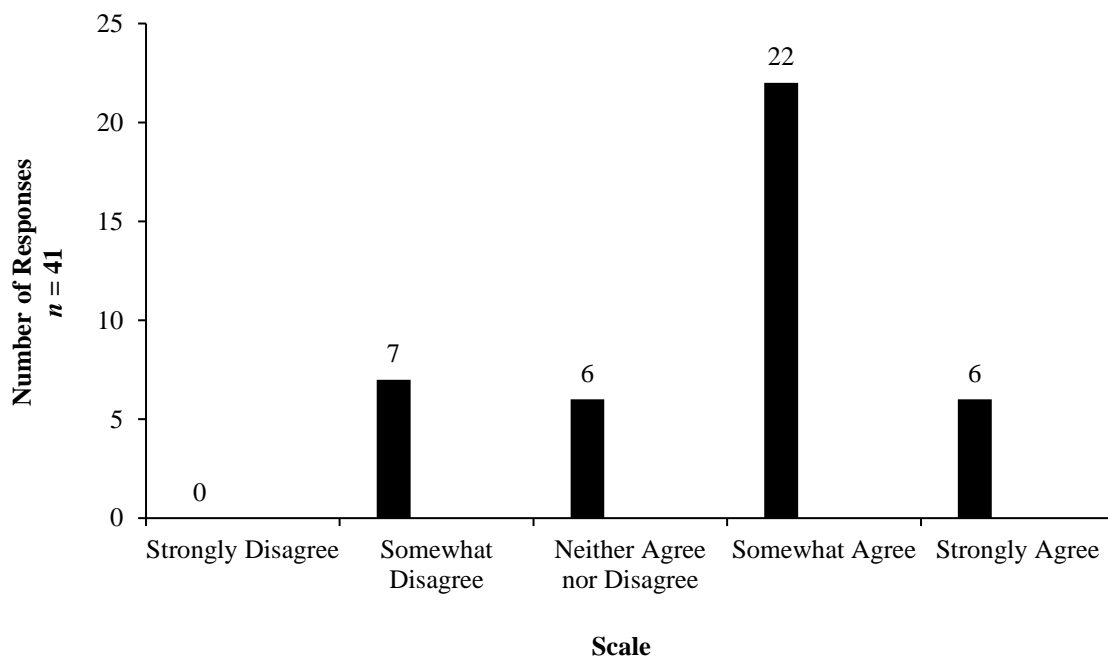
S2Q6. My Students Are Able to Stand Up for Themselves Without Putting Others Down. The data collected for this question were inconclusive. Out of 41 participants, 21 of the teachers were either neutral or somewhat disagreed their students are able to stand up for themselves without hurting others' feelings. Twenty teachers either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed (see Figure 21).

Figure 21

S2Q6. My Students Are Able to Stand Up for Themselves Without Putting Others Down
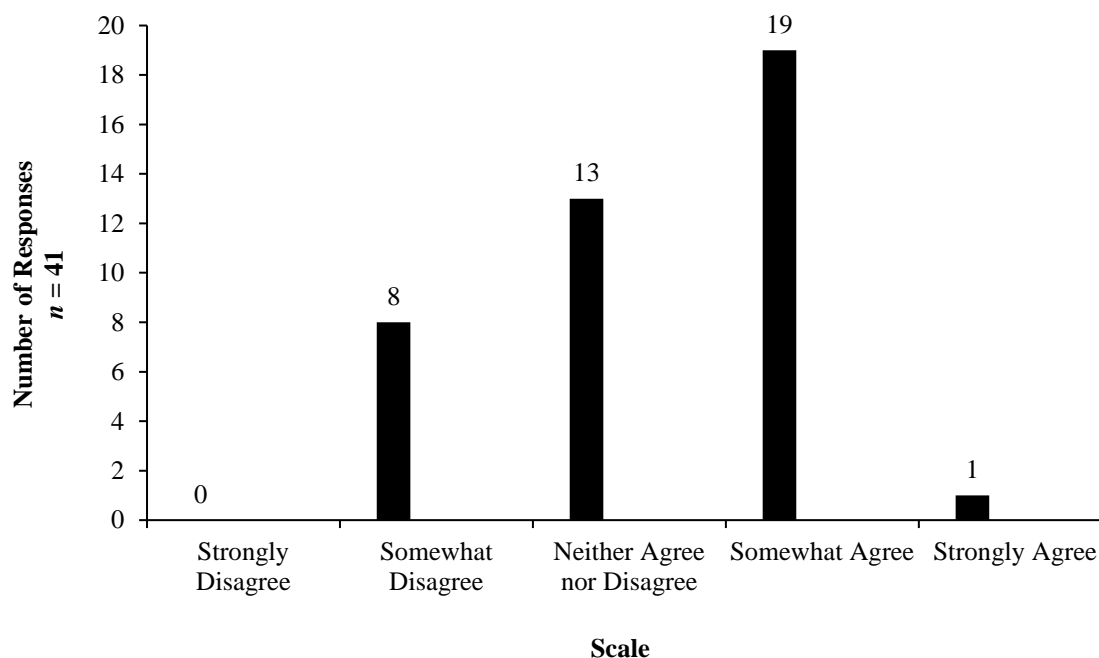
S2Q7. My Students Are Able to Disagree with Others Without Starting an Argument. Similarly, almost half of the participants, 11 out of 41, did not feel their students could disagree with others without starting an argument (see Figure 22). Twenty-two teachers believed their students possess these skills. Eight teachers were neutral. Based on the data, approximately 50% of teachers see a need for teaching social awareness in order for students to develop positive relationships with peers.

Figure 22

S2Q7. My Students Are Able to Disagree with Others Without Starting an Argument
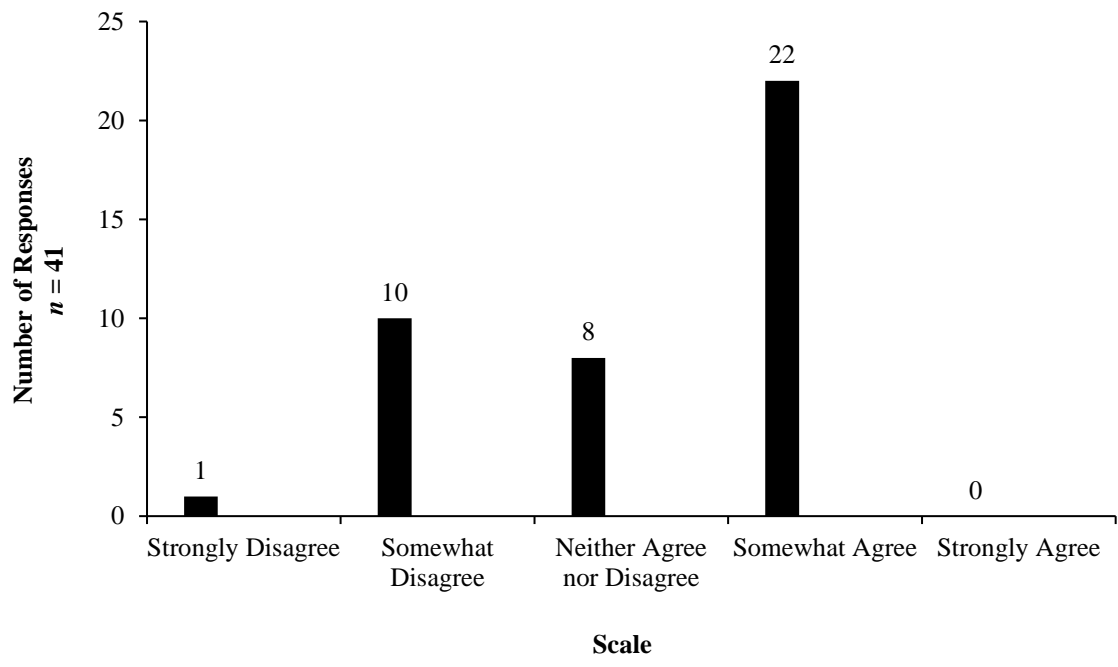
Survey Section Three: Self-Efficacy Scale

S3Q1. What Percentage of Your Students Can Earn an A or Master Skills in Your Class? Forty teachers responded to this survey question. As shown in Table 1, the teachers reported on average that 76% of their students are capable of mastering grade-level skills and achieving an A. The standard deviation, or dispersion of the data set relative to the mean, was 20.30.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Percentage of Students Capable of Earning an A or

Mastering Skills in Class

Question	n	M	SD
S3Q1. What percentage of your students can earn an A or master skills in your class?	40	75.98	20.30

S3Q2. What Percentage of Your Students Can Do Well on Tests, Even When

They Are Difficult? Thirty-nine teachers responded to question two of section three of

the survey. In Table 2, the mean indicates 72% of students are capable of doing well on

tests, even if the tests are rigorous. The standard deviation, or the measure of variability,

was 17.04.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Percentage of Students Capable of Doing Well on Tests,

Even When They Are Difficult

Question	n	M	SD
S3Q2. What percentage of your students can do well on tests, even when they are difficult?	39	71.79	17.04

S3Q3. What Percentage of Your Students Can Learn the Hardest Topics in

Class? As shown in Table 3, 39 teachers provided feedback regarding their students'

capability to learn the hardest topics in class. The mean indicated 65% of students have

the ability to learn the most difficult grade-level standards. The standard deviation

(22.59) indicated most participants shared the same perception.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of the Percentage of Students Capable of Learning the Hardest

Topics in Class

Question	*n*	*M*	*SD*
S3Q3. What percentage of your students can learn the hardest topics in class?	39	65.23	22.59

S3Q4. What Percentage of Your Students Can Meet All the Learning Goals You

Set for Them? Thirty-nine teachers responded to this question. Although 65% of

participants concluded their students could not learn difficult topics, the respondents felt

on average 77% of their students were capable of meeting goals set for them by the

teacher (see Table 4). With a standard deviation of 21.47, most teachers rated their

students' capability of meeting goals close to the mean (77%).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of the Percentage of Students Capable of Meeting All Goals Set

for Them

Question	*n*	*M*	*SD*
S3Q4. What percentage of your students can meet all the learning goals you set for them?	39	76.67	21.47

Survey Section Four: Growth Mindset Scale

S4Q1. My Students View Their Intelligence as Something They Cannot Change Very Much. Of the 38 teachers who responded, 14 somewhat disagreed and three strongly disagreed. Only seven somewhat agreed students view their cognitive abilities as something they cannot change (see Figure 23). Fourteen out of 38 teachers were neutral, which indicates 37% of teachers were unsure about their students' growth mindset.

Figure 23

S4Q1. My Students View Their Intelligence as Something They Cannot Change Very Much
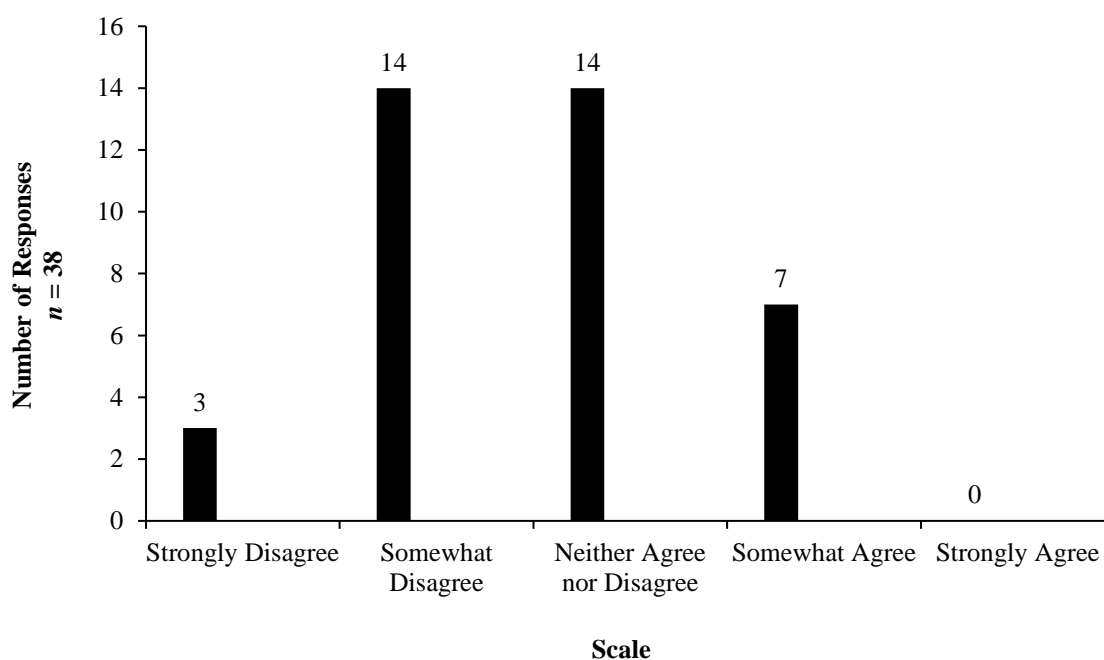
S4Q2. My Students Believe Challenging Themselves Will Not Make Them Any Smarter. Fifty-five percent of participants, or 21 out of 38, either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with the survey question (see Figure 24). Eight responses were neutral,

eight somewhat agreed, and one strongly agreed. The majority of teachers felt their

students believe challenging themselves will make them smarter.

Figure 24

S4Q2. My Students Believe Challenging Themselves Will Not Make Them Any Smarter
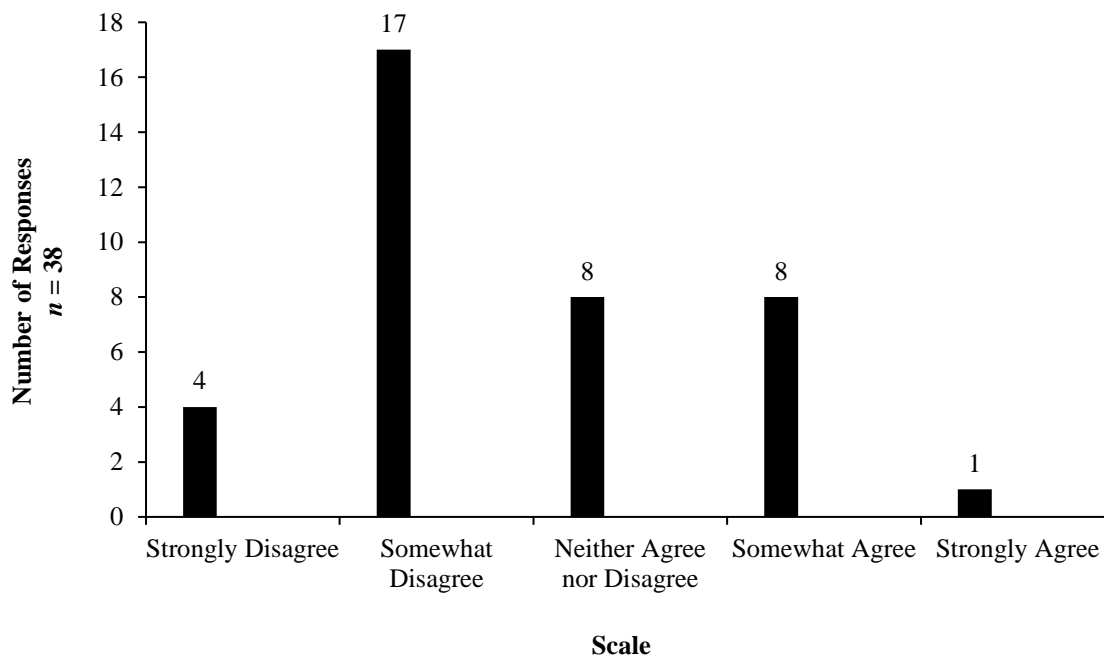
S4Q3. My Students Believe There Are Some Things They Cannot Learn. In

contrast, only 13 out of 38 teachers reported their students can learn anything (see Figure

25). Eleven teachers were neutral. Fourteen participants somewhat agreed or strongly

agreed their students believe there are some things they cannot learn.

Figure 25

S4Q3. My Students Believe There Are Some Things They Cannot Learn
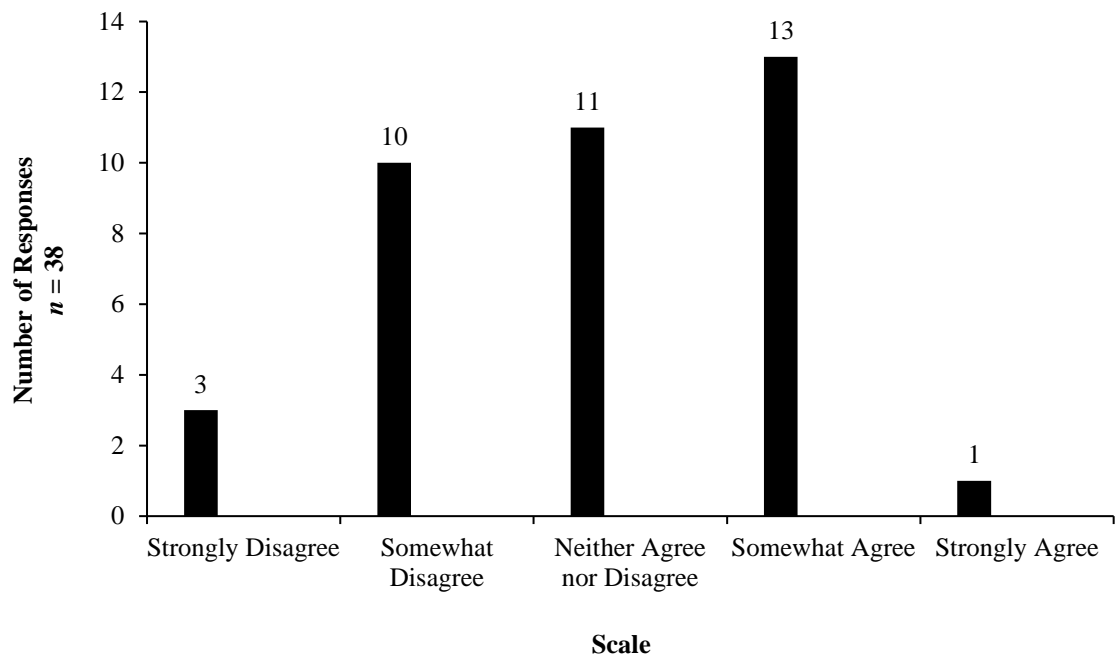
S4Q4. My Students Believe If They Are Not Naturally Smart in a Subject, They Will Never Do Well in It. As shown in Figure 26, 17 out of 37 teachers somewhat agreed their students have a fixed mindset. Ten teachers responded with neutral. Ten felt their students possess a growth mindset.

Figure 26

S4Q4. My Students Believe If They Are Not Naturally Smart in a Subject, They Will Never

Do Well in It
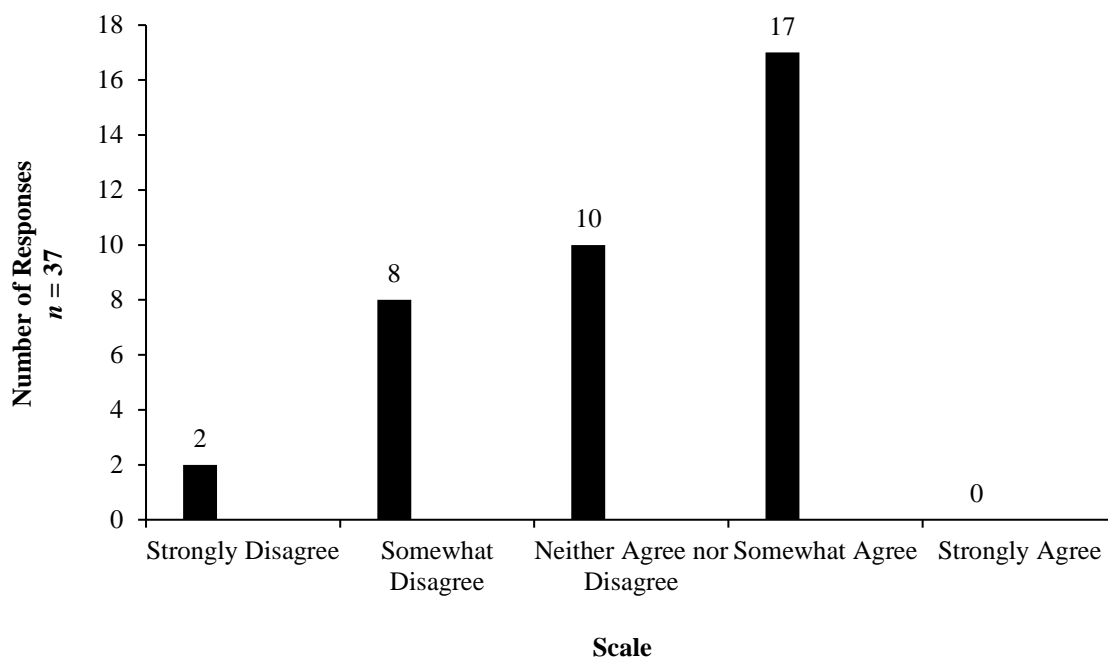
Qualitative Results

Research Question Two

Interview Question One. When asked to define social and emotional learning, all

three counselors included "understanding emotions" in their definitions. Counselor 1

defined social and emotional learning as "helping students to use tools to regulate their

emotions, showing empathy, [developing] positive relationships… [and] understanding

their own self-worth." Counselor 2's definition included "helping students to understand

how emotions affect what they're doing." Counselor 2 also noted, "Managing emotions

can help students learn better… [and] handle basic life skills." Counselor 3 had a

different perspective and defined social and emotional learning as "meeting the

[emotional] needs of children." Counselor 3 found it important to teach kids "better ways to handle things going on in their life [sic]."

Interview Question Two. When the counselors were asked if their school has a social and emotional learning program, only one of the three counselors responded affirmatively. Counselor 1 indicated that her school does not "follow a certain program yet," but their principal "really wanted to implement one" and was "researching the validity" of a few programs. Counselor 1 felt her school "would be implementing one [a program] in the next couple of years for sure." Counselor 2 reported the school is currently using a social and emotional learning program called Conscious Discipline that they "have been implementing for five years." Counselor 3 stated, "We have Positive Behavior Support, which helps kids a lot… [and] we use a lot of outside sources."

Interview Question Three. The counselors expressed similar opinions about implementing social and emotional learning programs into schools. Counselor 1 stated, "I'm a counselor so it's [social and emotional learning] everything I'm about, so I would love to have one [a program]." Counselor 1 recognized, "A lot of the things we [counselors] do is based on that social and emotional piece." According to Counselor 2, "It is a good idea" to implement social and emotional learning programs into schools. Counselor 2 added, "Other states have already chosen to adopt it [a program] as part of their curriculum." Counselor 3 asserted, "There are some good ones [programs] out there," but the school does not use a specific program at this time.

Interview Question Four. All three counselors agreed "schoolwide buy-in" is the most important component to effectively implementing a social and emotional learning program into schools. Counselor 1 commented, "I think having an all school buy-in

would probably be the number one step" to successfully implementing a program. According to Counselor 1, it is important for "administrators to allow staff to help choose the one [program] that is used." Counselor 2 supported Counselor 1's response and stated, "It's not something that only the counselor can do. It needs to be done [implemented] schoolwide." Counselor 2 added, "All teachers need to have an understanding of the process," because they "should integrate in with everything they do." In addition to schoolwide buy-in, Counselor 3 recommended choosing a program that "does cover everything, not just things that pertain directly to school."

Research Question Three

Interview Question Five. When asked how to establish and improve social and emotional development within the curriculum, all three counselors agreed "additional and consistent training" funded by the state would improve social and emotional learning practices in schools. Counselor 1 commented, "Entire staff training [leads] to more buy-in." Counselors 2 and 3 recommended "building on it [skills] every year" and using "interventions." According to Counselor 3, "Breaking it [social and emotional learning skills] down into modules… [and] teaching modules weekly" would help improve social and emotional development within the curriculum. Counselor 3 added, "It [social and emotional learning modules] could be something you build on and keep reviewing."

Interview Question Six. According to the counselors, several social and emotional competencies should be integrated into the academic curriculum. Counselor 1 claimed schools "do a lot for building healthy relationships," but stressed a need for "truly understanding emotions," "regulating emotions," and "identifying emotions." Counselor 2 recognized a need to enhance "coping skills," such as "perseverance" and

"grit." Counselor 3 suggested teaching students how to "understand" and "have a background" or "knowledge of everyday things that are happening." In addition, Counselor 3 stated, "Being responsible [and] all the [positive] character traits tie into being a social and emotional learner."

Interview Question Seven. When asked to identify the most crucial competencies to the success of social and emotional learning skills in today's learners, Counselor 1 identified "self-regulating emotions" as the most crucial competency. Counselor 2 claimed "understanding that we are humans" and "we make mistakes," which "we learn from" is the most important skill. Counselor 3 emphasized the importance of developing "empathy for others" and developing "friendships."

Research Question Four

Interview Question Eight. When addressing the issue of state involvement in establishing social and emotional learning standards, Counselor 1 expressed, "It would be nice to have that [state] support" and "to be consistent in our actions." Counselor 2 stressed it needs "to be started at the state level," but should "involve educators from all over so that there is ownership." Counselor 3 explained "they [the state] probably could be a little more hands-on with that [social and emotional learning involvement] and offer more training for new counselors."

Interview Question Nine. All three counselors supported states requiring social and emotional learning skills to be taught in classrooms. Counselor 1 answered, "It would be nice," because "when a kid would transfer [schools] they would already know the expectations." Counselor 2 explained, "Mandating is the only way it's going to happen,"

but schools still need "that ownership piece." Counselor 3 asserted, "It would be helpful" for the state to mandate social and emotional learning skills.

   Interview Question 10. When asked to list the benefits of state-mandated social and emotional learning skills, Counselor 1 mentioned "discipline will go down" and "increased positive grades." Counselor 1 also suggested developing social and emotional learning skills in elementary students will foster long-term success with "better marriages," "better parenting," and "better relationships" in general. Counselor 2 explained students will be "more successful in school" and "relationships," "have less mental health issues," and "more productivity." Counselor 3 listed "empathy" and "better friendships" as benefits of state-mandated social and emotional learning skills.

Summary

   In this chapter, the results from the teacher survey and counselor interviews were revealed. This mixed-methods study was designed to garner the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers and counselors regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning. The research data revealed overall positive support for implementing social and emotional learning skills and/or programs into classrooms. The quantitative data revealed the majority of teachers believe in the benefits of social and emotional development. However, several survey responses indicated teachers are unable to gauge their students' social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset abilities. Most participants somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with teachers' social and emotional learning scale, but several were neutral or disagreed about their students' abilities to apply social and emotional learning skills for academic achievement and peer relationships.

The qualitative data revealed commonalities among all three counselors. The three counselors were consistent with their support for implementing social and emotional learning skills into classrooms. Five themes emerged from the counselor interview analysis. The five themes included understanding emotions, schoolwide buy-in, transition in pedagogy, state involvement, and long-term success.

When defining social and emotional learning, all three counselors included understanding emotions in their definitions. The counselors emphasized the importance of schoolwide buy-in for a successful program. In addition, the counselors indicated a transition in pedagogy is necessary for social and emotional learning skills to be integrated into academic curriculum. All three counselors recognized that state involvement is crucial if social and emotional learning programs are to be adequately funded and implemented with fidelity. The interview data suggested students gain long-term benefits if social and emotional learning skills are developed in the primary grades.

Chapter Five includes an overall summary of this study. The findings from the data are explained, and perceptions of the teachers and counselors are discussed. The conclusions are supported by findings from the literature review. The implications for practice are addressed, and recommendations for future research regarding social and emotional learning are suggested. Finally, recommendations are made for establishing and improving social and emotional learning skills in schools.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications

This mixed-methods study was conducted to reveal the perceptions of

kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers and counselors regarding the benefits

of social and emotional learning skills, programs, and state involvement. The main

elements of this study are reviewed in this chapter, and how the major elements relate to

social and emotional learning is clarified. The findings outlined in Chapter Four are

revisited. Conclusions and implications for practice supported by current literature are

addressed in subsequent sections, followed by recommendations for future research.

Review of the Study

Grimes (2018) determined an increase in students coming to school without the

social and emotional skills necessary to self-regulate, persevere through challenges, and

empathize with others results in a decrease in academic progress. Mehta (2020) reported

the universal instruction being provided to students is no longer effective in achieving

academic success without a social and emotional learning component. According to

Haymovitz et al. (2018), educators are transitioning from a primarily academic focus to

an academic and personal growth approach to instruction.

The intent of this study was to determine the perceptions of educators regarding

the benefits of teaching social and emotional learning skills in an educational setting. The

perceptions of educators affect learning environments, academic success, and students'

cognizance of their abilities (Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992). The input of kindergarten

through third-grade certified teachers concerning the impact of social and emotional

learning on academic success was emphasized in research question one. Research

questions two, three, and four focused on the counselors' perceptions of the definition of

social and emotional learning, the establishment and improvement of social and emotional learning development within the curriculum, and the importance of state actions in developing social and emotional standards.

The first research question was asked to determine how teachers feel about current social and emotional learning practices within their schools. Teachers were asked to rate their students' social and emotional learning abilities in the areas of social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset. The second research question posed in this study was designed to determine the counselors' definition of social and emotional learning. The third research question was asked to establish the counselors' opinions regarding necessary steps to establish and improve social and emotional development within the curriculum based on their schools' current learning practices. Finally, the fourth question was asked to determine the perceptions of counselors regarding the involvement of state actions in creating social and emotional learning standards.

The quantitative portion of the mixed-method study was conducted using a five-point Likert-type survey to "examine the relationship among variables" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4). Ninety-five kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers from one Missouri school district were invited to participate in an online survey, including a social and emotional learning scale for teachers and questions about the social and emotional learning abilities of students with an emphasis on social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset.

The qualitative research consisted of gathering viewpoints of three counselors by interviewing each one using video conferencing. Fraenkel et al. (2019) described qualitative research as understanding issues or events through the viewpoints of others.

Including both quantitative and qualitative elements of data collection provides a comprehensive understanding of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2019).

Findings

Research Question One

What are the perceptions of certified teachers for kindergarten through third-grade students regarding the effect of social and emotional skills in the areas of social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset on academic achievement?

Analyzing the first section of the teacher survey revealed the majority of teachers support and believe in the academic benefits of teaching social and emotional learning skills. The survey participants predominately reported their principals promote social and emotional learning by creating positive environments and encouraging social and emotional instruction. However, only 65% of teachers were willing to attend workshops to assist in the transition to a whole-child instructional approach.

The second section of the survey revealed most teachers feel positive about their students' social awareness abilities. According to Transforming Education (2020), students with social awareness have "the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures" (para. 1). The participants indicated their students listen to others, care about the feelings of others, and get along with students who are different. Fewer teachers indicated their students are good at describing their own feelings. There were mixed opinions about students being able to disagree without putting others down or starting an argument.

Overall, teachers reported their students are 73% sufficient in demonstrating self-efficacy skills. This section was broken into four questions using a sliding percentage scale. When asked what percentage of students are capable of earning an A or mastering skills, teachers responded an average of 76% of students possess this skill. The participants reported an average of 72% of their students are capable of doing well on tests, even if they are difficult. However, even though teachers responded their students have the capabilities to master skills and do well on tests, the participants reported only 65% of their students are capable of learning the hardest topics in class. The final self-efficacy responses resulted in an average of 77% of students being able to meet all of the goals their teachers set for them.

Research Question Two

How do counselors of kindergarten through third-grade students define social and emotional learning?

During the interviews, each of the three counselors was asked to provide a definition of social and emotional learning, to describe the school's current social and emotional learning program status, to shared views about implementing programs, and to list the necessary components for effective implementation. All three counselors included understanding emotions in their definitions of social and emotional learning. All of the counselors' definitions stressed the importance of students learning how to regulate emotions, build positive relationships, and learn better ways to handle issues in life.

The participants were from three different elementary schools within the same district. Responses varied when asked if the schools currently use a social and emotional program. One of the counselors reported the school was researching programs and hoped

to implement a program in the next couple of years. Another counselor responded they had been implementing a program for five years. The third counselor stated the school does not use a specific social and emotional learning program, but will continue to use Positive Behavior Support and outside resources.

All of the counselors agreed implementing social and emotional programs into schools would be an innovative step toward transitioning to a holistic approach to teaching. One counselor expressed eagerness to have a social and emotional learning program at the school, since the majority of counseling curriculum contains the social and emotional piece. Another counselor thought implementing social and emotional learning programs is a good idea, especially since other states already have programs as part of their curriculum. One participant recognized some good programs out there, but the school has not started the selection process.

All of the counselors agreed schoolwide buy-in is the most important element for successful implementation. According to the interviewees, schoolwide buy-in includes administrators allowing teachers to help with the selection process, involving teachers with implementation decision-making, and finding a comprehensive program that covers students' personal lives in addition to school.

Research Question Three

According to counselors of kindergarten through third-grade students, what is required to establish and improve social and emotional development within the curriculum based on current social and emotional learning practices?

Three of the interview questions were aligned to research question three. First, the counselors were asked their views about establishing and improving social and emotional

development within the curriculum. One participant asserted providing consistent, all-staff training would improve implementation. The other two counselors agreed treating social and emotional learning in a similar manner as academic instruction would increase consistency. The third counselor added breaking social and emotional skills down into modules and using interventions to reteach skills with a low success rate would boost the program's success.

Next, the counselors were asked which competencies should be integrated into the curriculum. The counselors explained most schools do a lot to help students build healthy relationships, but they saw a need for schools to do more to help students truly understand their emotions. Some key competencies listed by the counselors included regulating emotions, identifying emotions, character traits, coping skills, perseverance, and grit.

The final interview question related to research question three asked the counselors what they thought to be the most crucial social and emotional learning competencies for today's learners to develop. The responses varied, but all were associated with the overall theory that teaching social and emotional learning skills in schools is beneficial to students and teachers. Some of the most crucial competencies identified by the counselors included self-regulating emotions, learning from mistakes, and having empathy for others.

Research Question Four

How do counselors of kindergarten through third-grade students perceive the importance of state actions in defining and creating social and emotional learning standards as part of the required curriculum?

The fourth and final research question was addressed through the last three interview questions. The counselors were asked their views regarding state involvement in creating and implementing social and emotional learning in schools. The counselors viewed state involvement as a necessity for effective implementation. The participants concurred state involvement would provide consistency in school actions, supply sufficient funding, involve educators from all over the state, and provide additional high-quality training.

The counselors supported state standards as a required part of school curriculum. One counselor thought it would benefit transfer students. Another counselor asserted mandating the skills is the only way schools are going to implement with fidelity. All of the participants agreed state support would benefit students, teachers, and school culture.

The counselors agreed state-mandated social and emotional learning standards would lead to a positive change in educational environments, increased academic performance, and decreased discipline issues. One counselor suggested developing social and emotional learning skills in the primary grades would promote long-term relationship success. Another participant asserted individuals who develop social and emotional learning skills early on will have fewer mental health issues. One of the counselors stressed the importance of enhancing social and emotional learning skills to establish and maintain friendships.

Conclusions

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to garner certified teacher and counselor perceptions of social and emotional learning benefits. The quantitative data analysis revealed common perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade teachers

regarding social and emotional learning implementation status and student abilities in the areas of social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset.

The teacher survey data revealed most schools expect teachers to address the social and emotional needs of students with or without adequate training or a systematic program to guide the process. The CASEL (2013) declared educators help students develop social and emotional competencies through direct instruction of social and emotional learning skills and use of engaging resources. Regardless of program status, teachers reported school cultures support the social and emotional development of students. Melnick et al. (2017) recommended schools develop social, emotional, and academic competencies by promoting an inclusive climate that supports physical and psychological safety.

The teachers also suggested the principal should create an environment that supports social and emotional development. The CASEL (2013) agreed administrators should provide support through coaching and follow-up training. Most teachers were confident with their ability to teach social and emotional skills to their students and found it easy to integrate informal social and emotional lessons into the academic curriculum. Edwards (2017) suggested teachers might be more receptive to integrating social and emotional learning skills if the curriculum is incorporated into current academic content instead of an additional instructional responsibility.

The CASEL (2013) recommended teacher-focused social and emotional learning programs should train teachers to focus on positive discipline practices to be preventive rather than reactive. The survey participants expressed an interest in receiving training and improving their ability to teach social and emotional learning skills, but the majority

of teachers were not interested in attending a workshop to enhance their abilities to teach

social and emotional learning skills. Administrators can improve teacher well-being and

reduce stress and burnout by providing adequate teacher training (Colvin, 2017;

O'Conner et al., 2017d). Schonert-Reichl (2017) explained teachers are the most

important component to effectively implementing social and emotional learning practices

in schools.

Sections two through four of the teacher survey were concentrated on student

abilities to demonstrate social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset. Overall, the

participants reported students possess and demonstrate sufficient skills in these areas.

However, the data indicated a need for further social awareness instruction to enhance

students' abilities to describe feelings, stand up for themselves without putting others

down, and disagree without starting an argument. According to the CASEL (2013),

students who possess social awareness skills have positive social interactions and

healthier relationships. Jones et al. (2017) found students who possess effective social

skills are more capable of establishing and maintaining friendships.

According to teacher responses, an overall average of 72% of students

demonstrate adequate self-efficacy skills. Nevertheless, teachers indicated only 65% of

students are capable of persevering through learning the hardest topics taught in class.

Jones et al. (2017) argued student-learning increases when children are equipped with

proficient social and emotional learning skills to persevere in difficult times. Greenberg

et al. (2017) asserted individuals with a reasonable sense of self-efficacy are more likely

to persevere through challenges.

Transforming Education (2019) defined growth mindset as the belief one can change because of effort, perseverance, and practice. The growth mindset portion of the survey revealed some teachers were unsure of their students' growth mindset abilities. Johnson and Wiener (2017) directly linked academic learning to emotions and mindset. Several teachers indicated their students possess a fixed mindset rather than a growth mindset when faced with rigorous curriculum or challenging tasks. Waterford (2019) clarified educators can transition a student's mindset from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset by motivating them to learn from mistakes and embrace challenges. Guido (2016) suggested teaching students to view challenges as opportunities for growth. The growth mindset data were inconclusive, since a large percentage of participants responded 'neutral' on this section of the survey.

The qualitative portion of the study consisted of interviewing three counselors. While coding the qualitative data, five themes emerged from the counselor interview responses. The five themes included understanding emotions, schoolwide buy-in, transition in pedagogy, state involvement, and long-term success.

Understanding Emotions

Jones et al. (2017) defined emotional process as regulating emotions and understanding the emotions of others. When asked to define social and emotional learning, all counselors included understanding emotions in their definitions. O'Conner et al. (2017a) defined social and emotional learning as "the process by which children and adults learn to understand and manage emotions" (p. 1). Marchesi and Cook (2012) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize and comprehend emotions.

O'Conner et al. (2017a) reported students must understand their emotions to thrive in a social world.

Schoolwide Buy-In

An examination of responses indicated the counselors agreed schoolwide buy-in is one of the most vital components of successfully implementing a social and emotional learning program. Oberle et al. (2016) recommended schools utilize system-wide strategies to establish and maintain successful social and emotional learning programs. Borowski (2019) supported a comprehensive method of integrating social and emotional learning programs to guide educators and develop a school, family, and community symbiotic relationship. According to Oberle et al. (2016), the schoolwide framework avoids a fragmented approach and provides administrators necessary support to effectively implement social and emotional learning educational practices.

Transition in Pedagogy

During the analysis of interview responses, the counselors identified the need for a transition in pedagogy to achieve successful adoption and implementation of social and emotional learning programs. Johnson and Wiener (2017) noted integrating social and emotional learning skills into pedagogical approaches increases engagement in learning. The counselors recognized teachers have to transition from a primarily academic approach to a whole-child approach. McKown et al. (2016) recommended educators incorporate evidence-based social and emotional instruction and use performance assessment strategies. Waajid et al. (2013) added that students' social and emotional skills are directly influenced by their teachers' pedagogical skills. A transition in

pedagogy to focus on the development of the whole child increases academic achievement and successful peer relationships (Brotto, 2018).

State Involvement

After analyzing the data, state involvement was highlighted as a key element of successful social and emotional learning programs. O'Conner et al. (2017b) discovered social and emotional learning standards are already embedded within many academic state standards. Oberle et al. (2016) acknowledged there is still a lack of support to provide the time and resources necessary to effectively implement and sustain social and emotional learning programs. The counselors realized schools need to acquire and sustain funding prior to adopting and implementing a new program. Johnson and Wiener (2017) suggested increased rigor in new standards to raise expectations of independence and collaboration. Dusenbury and Weissberg (2017) suggested increased involvement from the state could create school environments conducive to teaching and supporting social and emotional learning practices.

Long-Term Success

Mahoney et al. (2018) asserted social and emotional learning programs provide immediate and long-term benefits. The qualitative data revealed several long-term benefits in addition to short-term benefits, including increased academic progress and decreased discipline issues. The long-term benefits identified during the study included better marriages, better parenting, better friendships, fewer mental health issues, and enhanced college-career readiness. Jones et al. (2017) declared children who possess social and emotional learning skills have more successful employment opportunities and maintain better mental health. The CASEL (2013) declared social and emotional skills

critical to being successful students, productive community members, and valuable employees. According to Gayl (2017), social and emotional learning is the missing piece to America's education system for long-term success.

Implications for Practice

This study resulted in valuable insight regarding the growing need for social and emotional learning skills to be taught in schools to ensure students are available to learn (Tate, 2019). Without necessary social and emotional learning skills, students cannot be positive contributors to their academic success (Tate, 2019). The certified teachers and counselors who participated in this study offered similar, supportive responses regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning. The majority of teachers and all three counselors agreed implementing social and emotional learning skills into schools will increase academic performance, foster healthier relationships, and promote long-term success. According to Pajares (1992), teachers are the key component of effective implementation of social and emotional learning programs; therefore, their perceptions regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning are critical to the effectiveness of the program and the transition to a whole-child approach to education. The following implications for practice provide guidance on promoting social and emotional development.

Gain State Support

Based on the data collected in this study, schools should launch and maintain social and emotional learning programs in educational environments. According to the research conducted during this study, the first step to establishing a program should be to gain state support and funding (Hinton, 2018). Without adequate, sustained funding,

schools cannot effectively train teachers, brainstorm ideas, supply tools, or provide resources (Hinton, 2018). The CASEL (2013) reported state assistance for implementation should include resources, such as manuals, sample activities, technology, teacher training, ongoing consultation, and productive feedback. O'Conner et al. (2017b) recommended establishing social and emotional learning state standards to provide guidance for schools as they determine what social and emotional learning skills are important, how to align social and emotional learning skills to academic achievement, and how to make social and emotional learning skills specific with consistency across the state.

The Every Student Succeeds Act, signed into law in December 2015, allows states and local education agencies to reevaluate current policies and goals in place for public education (Gayl, 2017). This act grants policymakers the opportunity to restructure strategies to examine all aspects of learning including social and emotional learning skills (Gayl, 2017). According to Melnick et al. (2017), the Every Student Succeeds Act allows schools to expand their definitions of student success to include social and emotional skills.

Hinton (2018) declared providing funding to schools for implementation of effective social and emotional learning programs, such as Conscious Discipline, PATHS, and Caring School Community will aid schools in transitioning from a solely academic approach to a whole-child approach to education. Gayl (2017) reported the Every Student Succeeds Act also grants states discretion in how they allocate school improvement funds, providing a possible funding source for social and emotional learning implementation. Another potential funding source, the new Student Support and

Academic Enrichment Grants program in Title IV, Part A, ensures all students have access to a comprehensive educational experience (Gayl, 2017).

Achieve Schoolwide Buy-In

Oberle et al. (2016) claimed system-wide strategies are equally significant to classroom-based programs when launching and implementing successful social and emotional programs. The data collected highlight the influence of schoolwide buy-in on implementing new programs. The counselor interviews revealed schoolwide buy-in as a key factor of successful implementation.

The whole-school approach to implementing social and emotional learning programs requires collaboration and support from all stakeholders within the community (Oberle et al., 2016). Borowski (2019) agreed a comprehensive method of integrating social and emotional learning programs guides educators while developing a symbiotic relationship among school, family, and community. Edwards (2017) suggested teachers might be more receptive to integrating social and emotional learning skills if the curricula are integrated into current academic content. Oberle et al. (2016) insisted this comprehensive method of integrating social and emotional learning programs avoids a fragmented approach and promotes effective social and emotional learning practices.

Select an Effective Program

The CASEL (2013) recommended selecting a social and emotional learning program based on grade range coverage, classroom approach, assessment tools, program costs, training and support, review of material, and program evaluations. The participants in this study also encouraged schools to research the validity of programs prior to adoption. According to the CASEL (2013), effective social and emotional learning

programs include high-quality training for teachers. Stringer (2017) suggested schools select a program based on student and school needs. The counselors proposed adopting social and emotional learning programs that emphasize self-regulating emotions, empathy, perseverance, and healthy relationships.

O'Conner et al. (2017a) concluded many successful social and emotional learning programs consist of a hybrid approach including evidence-based and executive functioning implementation. According to O'Conner et al. (2017a), "sequenced, active, focused, and explicit" instructional techniques and practices, necessary professional development, and technology training are three common characteristics of effective social and emotional learning programs (p. 4). McCormick et al. (2015) found the most effective programs to be the ones that include extensive training for teachers.

Implement and Assess with Fidelity

Jones and Doolittle (2017) advised schools to implement social and emotional learning through direct instruction, modified classroom climate, improved student-teacher relationships, and revised school expectations. The CASEL (2013) claimed the effectiveness of evidence-based social and emotional learning programs is dependent upon commitment and ongoing support. Setting, targets, components, and outcomes are four key elements of social and emotional learning programs (Jones et al., 2017). Poor program implementation can hinder student achievement and negatively affect the program's success (CASEL, 2013).

Colvin (2017) explained that during the first year of implementation, teacher training is the priority. During the second year, teachers start teaching students what they themselves have learned (Colvin, 2017). Hamilton et al. (2019) recommended teachers

view the time dedicated to implementing social and emotional learning programs as significant in terms of academic achievement rather than detracting from instructional time. According to O'Conner et al. (2017b), closely monitoring implementation fidelity with a quantitative rating scale reduces variances in expected outcomes. O'Conner et al. (2017b) also encouraged the use of qualitative measures for assessment. The CASEL (2013) identified essential elements of implementation including administrative support to endorse social and emotional learning practices and model social and emotional learning language and behaviors.

The readiness of a school is also essential to the success of a social and emotional learning program and includes sufficient funds, human resource needs, sequential planning and goals, and ongoing progress monitoring (CASEL, 2013). O'Conner et al. (2017a) urged districts to use vertical and horizontal alignment to assess and monitor data. Districts should slowly phase in implementation, gradually expand the program, and continue teacher support to be successful (O'Conner et al., 2017b). Yoder (2014) noted adopting standards, developing a curriculum with accountability measures to ensure consistency, and sufficient teacher training are critical elements to a successful social and emotional learning program.

Recommendations for Future Research

This mixed-methods study was conducted to collect perceptions of certified teachers and counselors regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning. According to the CASEL (2018), educational leaders must address the growing need for social and emotional learning professional development and implementation in classrooms to accurately identify student needs and equip today's students with the 21st-

century skills required for success. The results of this study spotlighted additional inquiries worthy of further investigation including social and emotional learning skills and poverty, comparison of schools currently using social and emotional learning programs with schools that are not, and the impact of social and emotional learning skills during a pandemic.

Social and Emotional Learning Skills and Poverty

During the interviews, one counselor expressed concern about selecting a social and emotional learning program that meets the emotional needs of all students. The counselor recognized that, much like academic needs, social and emotional needs are different for every student. Malkemes and Waters (2017) discovered, "Implementing effective early interventions that include social-emotional learning could be essential in reducing the toxic effects of poverty" (p. 5). Malkemes and Waters (2017) found despite academic success, students from generational poverty continue to display "skepticism, defensiveness, disengagement, lack of self-control, a sense of entitlement, or immediate self-gratification" (p. 3). Social and emotional learning is the missing piece to America's education system (Gayl, 2017).

Schools with Social and Emotional Programs vs. Schools Without

Based on the counselor interviews, only one of the three schools included in the study currently implements a social and emotional program. Teaching social and emotional skills to students is an essential component of every counseling curriculum; therefore, the qualitative data responses were similar. However, the certified teacher survey responses most likely varied due to only one school currently implementing a social and emotional learning program. This variation warrants future research to

determine effectiveness of social and emotional learning programs and to document differences among schools based on their program implementation status. According to Kendziora and Yoder (2016), even minimal implementation of social and emotional learning programs progressively improves school culture, social and emotional skills, academic achievement, and discipline.

Social and Emotional Learning Skills During a Global Pandemic

The year 2020 will forever be an integral part of the nation's history due to COVID-19. This study was initiated in 2018, prior to the global pandemic. At that time, the hope was for this study to contribute to increased awareness of the benefits of social and emotional learning. In 2016, Oberle et al. reported the need to incorporate high-quality social and emotional learning skills into daily classroom instruction, and practices had increased in priority over the last 10 years. The onset of COVID-19 accelerated the necessity of social and emotional learning skills to be taught in schools. However, transitioning from a physical setting to a digital setting without prior planning presented several challenges for teachers, students, and families (Smith & Falbe, 2020). Educators were faced with refining instructional practices while continuing to meet their students' social and emotional needs during distance learning (Smith & Falbe, 2020). According to the American Institutes for Research (2020), "The current crisis has ignited a clear call to action for schools to be ready to provide comprehensive supports to address the needs of children, youth, and their families" (p. 1).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of certified teachers and counselors regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning. New knowledge

generated by this study may encourage educational leaders to emphasize social and emotional skills in their quest to provide a whole-child approach to education. Mehta (2020) pointed out the one-size-fits-all mentality is no longer effective in achieving academic success for all students. Educators also realize students are coming to school without the ability to self-regulate, persevere through challenges, and empathize with others, which impedes their potential for academic success (Grimes, 2018).

The findings of the study revealed social and emotional learning skills are perceived to yield positive benefits to students and teachers. Now more than ever, the whole-child instructional approach is necessary for academic achievement. Social and emotional learning skills were found to foster a positive school culture, establish healthy relationships, improve academic achievement, and provide long-term success. Data indicated teachers support the implementation of social and emotional learning programs to promote safe educational environments. Teachers also reported their students possess or are capable of learning social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset skills.

School counselors defined social and emotional learning as the ability to recognize, identify, and understand emotions. Consistency is an important element of successful social and emotional learning programs. This study revealed a large variation in the degree of program implementation. O'Conner et al. (2017b) asserted establishing social and emotional learning state standards will provide consistency across the state. The counselors suggested adopting programs that emphasize regulating emotions, perseverance, healthy relationships, empathy, and coping skills. Based on the data, without schoolwide buy-in, social and emotional learning programs will fail. The need for state involvement was also recognized as a key element to any program's success.

While drawing conclusions following data analysis, five themes emerged including understanding emotions, schoolwide buy-in, transition in pedagogy, state involvement, and long-term success. These themes suggested four implications for practice for schools to effectively establish and implement social and emotional learning programs. First, schools need to gain state support to secure adequate funding. Next, achieving schoolwide buy-in was recognized by interview participants as a key element of successful implementation. Selecting an effective social and emotional program that meets the students' and school's needs is the next step. Finally, implementing and assessing the program with fidelity are crucial to progress monitoring and interventions.

The teachers' and counselors' overall perceptions were positive and supportive of integrating social and emotional development into current academic curriculum. The participants reported their schools were already transitioning to a whole-child approach and were eager to advance their instructional strategies to meet the academic and emotional needs of their students. In order for this to happen, schools must gain state support, achieve schoolwide buy-in, select an effective program, and implement and assess with fidelity.

Throughout the study, three recommendations for future research surfaced including social and emotional learning and poverty, schools with social and emotional learning programs versus schools without, and social and emotional learning skills during a global pandemic. Educators, researchers, and policymakers have asked how to support the overall development of students to provide skills that promote cognitive and emotional growth (O'Conner et al., 2017a). Social and emotional learning programs provide a solution to their question with guidance for successful implementation. To

prepare students for promising futures, policymakers, administrators, and educators must

integrate social and emotional learning programs into schools and start viewing social

and emotional learning as critical to education (Johnson & Wiener, 2017; Stringer, 2017).

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Appendix A

Request to Use Social and Emotional Learning Assessment for Students

Fwd: Request to use social and emotional learning Assessment for
Students as a research instrument
Katie Buckley [katie@transformingeducation.org]
Sent: Friday, January 31, 2020 12:50 PM
To: Tina Morse
Cc: Cori Stott [cori@transformingeducation.org]

Hello,
You are certainly welcome to use this tool in your research. Please just cite the relevant
researchers/organizations who curated each scale (you can find more information here).

Thanks,
Katie

From: **Transforming Education** <info@transformingeducation.org>
Date: Fri, Jan 31, 2020 at 1:21 PM
Subject: Fwd: Request to use social and emotional learning Assessment for Students as a
research instrument
To: Katie Buckley <katie@transformingeducation.org>
---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Tina Morse** <tm456@lindenwood.edu>
Date: Fri, Jan 31, 2020 at 12:09 PM
Subject: Request to use social and emotional learning Assessment for Students as a
research instrument To: info@transformingeducation.org
<info@transformingeducation.org>

To Whom It May Concern:
I am conducting research for my dissertation titled Perceptions Regarding the Benefits of
Social and Emotional Learning. I found your social and emotional learning scale for
teachers (https://www.transformingeducation.org/sel-assessment/) and would like to use
this tool in my research. Can you please grant me permission to use this assessment as
one of my research instruments?
Thank you.

 Katie Buckley, Ed.D.
Managing Director, Research
Transforming Education
T: 617 453 9750 x 105
115 Broad St, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02110

Appendix B

Request to Use Social and Emotional Learning Scale for Teachers

Re: Request to use social and emotional learning scale for teachers as a research instrument
Roberts, Amanda [a.roberts@yale.edu] on behalf of RULER Training (Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence) [rulertraining@yale.edu]
Sent: Frida
y, January
31, 2020
1:26 PM
To: Tina
Morse

Hi Tina,

Yes, you can use this scale; we just ask that you cite this article:
https://www.researchgate.net/publica
on/275555606_Assessing_Teachers'_Beliefs_About_Social_and_Emotional_Learning

Thank you!

Warmly,
The RULER Team

Subscribe to our YCEI newsletter!

RULER

rulertraining@yale.edu   Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence
www.rulerapproach.org   Yale Child Study Center
Training Events and Applications   Yale University

From: Tina Morse <tm456@lindenwood.edu>
Date: Friday, January 31, 2020 at 11:58 AM
To: "RULER Training (Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence)"
<rulertraining@yale.edu> **Subject:** Request to use social and
emotional learning scale for teachers as a research instrument

To Whom It May Concern:
I am conducting research for my dissertation titled Perceptions Regarding the Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning. I found your social and emotional learning scale for teachers and would like to use this tool in my research. Can you please grant me permission to use this scale as one of my research instruments?

Thank you.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Please answer the following questions based on your feelings and experiences.

1. How would you define social and emotional learning? (RQ2)

2. Does your school use a social and emotional learning program? If so, which one?
    (RQ2)

3. What are your views about implementing social and emotional learning programs
    into schools? (RQ2)

4. What components do you feel are necessary to effectively implement a social and
    emotional learning program into schools? (RQ2)

5. What actions do you feel are required to establish and improve social and
    emotional development within the curriculum based on current social and
    emotional learning practices in your school? (RQ3)

6. What social and emotional competencies should be integrated into the academic
    curriculum? (RQ3)

7. Which of these competencies do you feel are the most crucial to the success of
    social and emotional learning skills in today's learners? (RQ3)

8. What state actions do you perceive as necessary to define and create social and
    emotional learning standards as a required part of the curriculum? (RQ4)

9. Explain why you do or do not believe states should require social and emotional
    learning skills to be taught in classrooms. (RQ4)

10. What benefits do you perceive for students and schools if social and emotional
    learning skills become part of the state-mandated curriculum? (RQ4)

Appendix D

Certified Teacher Survey

Social and Emotional Learning Scale for Teachers

Please read the following definition: *Social and Emotional Learning refers to the development of skills related to recognizing and managing emotions, developing care and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively* (Brackett et al., 2012).

With the definition you read above in mind, please read the following statements and think about how true each is for YOU. Rate the extent to which YOU agree or disagree with each statement.

Five-Point Likert-Type Scale

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neither   Agree   Strongly Agree

1. My school expects teachers to address children's social and emotional needs.

2. The culture in my school supports the development of children's social and emotional skills.

3. All teachers should receive training on how to teach social and emotional skills to students.

4. Taking care of my students' social and emotional needs comes naturally to me.

5. My principal creates an environment that promotes social and emotional learning for our students.

6. Informal lessons in social and emotional learning are part of my regular teaching practice.

7. I feel confident in my ability to provide instruction on social and emotional learning.

8. My principal encourages the teaching of social and emotional skills to students.

9. I want to improve my ability to teach social and emotional skills to students.

10. I would like to attend a workshop to learn how to develop my students' social and

emotional skills.

Social and Emotional Learning Assessment for K-3 Educators focusing on social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset (Transforming Education, 2019).

Social Awareness Scale

Social Awareness is the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others.

This section will allow us to better understand your students' actions and thoughts when they are with their peers. Please answer the following based on the last 30 days.

Five-Point Likert-Type Scale

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neither   Agree   Strongly Agree

1. My students listen to other people's opinions and points of view.

2. My students care about other people's feelings.

3. My students compliment others' accomplishments.

4. My students get along with students who are different from them.

5. My students are good at describing their feelings.

6. My students are able to stand up for themselves without putting others down.

7. My students are able to disagree with others without starting an argument.

Self-Efficacy Scale

Self-Efficacy is the belief in one's ability to succeed in achieving an outcome or reaching a goal.

This section will allow us to better understand how confident your students are at school.

Slider Percentage Scale

What percentage of your students:

1. Can earn an A or master skills in your class?

2. Can do well on tests, even when they are difficult?

3. Can learn the hardest topics in class?

4. Can meet all the learning goals you set for them?

Growth Mindset Scale

Growth Mindset is the belief that one can change as a result of effort, perseverance, and practice.

This section will allow us to better understand how your students feel about their own intelligence.

Five-Point Likert-Type Scale

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neither   Agree   Strongly Agree

1. My students view their intelligence as something they cannot change very much.

2. My students believe challenging themselves will not make them any smarter.

3. My students believe there are some things they cannot learn.

4. My students believe if they are not naturally smart in a subject, they will never do

   well in it.

Appendix E

Permission Letter

Date:

RE: Permission to Conduct Research in xxxx Public Schools – District xx

To: xxxx, Superintendent of Schools

      I am writing to request permission to conduct research in the xxxx Public Schools – District xx. I am currently pursuing my doctorate through Lindenwood University and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled *Perceptions Regarding the Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning*. I am asking permission to invite all kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers to participate in an online survey. Furthermore, I am asking permission to interview the three counselors who serve kindergarten through third-grade students. This study will provide a comprehensive analysis of how kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers and counselors perceive current social and emotional learning practices in schools with an emphasis on social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset.

      If you agree, please sign below, scan this page, and email to me, Tina Morse, at tm456@lindenwood.edu.

      Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding this study.

Sincerely,

Tina Morse,
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

Approved by:

_____

Print name and title here

_____   _____

Signature   Date

Appendix F

Lindenwood Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Nov 2, 2020 3:02:11 PM CST
RE:
IRB-21-51: Initial - Perceptions Regarding the Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning

Dear Tina Morse,
The study, Perceptions Regarding the Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning, has been Approved as Exempt.
Category: Category 1. Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction. This includes most research on regular and special education instructional strategies, and research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

The submission was approved on November 2, 2020.
Here are the findings:
Regulatory Determinations

- This study has been determined to be minimal risk because the research is not obtaining data considered sensitive information or performing interventions posing harm greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

Sincerely,
Lindenwood University (lindenwood) Institutional Review Board

Appendix G

Letter of Participation for Survey

Date:

Dear Prospective Participants,

My name is Tina Morse, and I am requesting your participation in my doctoral dissertation research project at Lindenwood University. The study is entitled *Perceptions Regarding the Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning*. Participants will be asked to complete a 15-minute online survey. We are conducting this study to identify kindergarten through third-grade certified teacher and counselor perceptions regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning as school-based interventions.

I have received permission to conduct research in the xxxxx School District from the superintendent. In order to conduct my research, I would like to invite all kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers to participate in the completion of an online survey at the following link: xxxxxxxxxx. The survey should take 15 minutes or less to complete.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. All information obtained through this research will be reported anonymously. I will only receive the anonymous data collected from the survey. Certified teacher participants will indicate consent by completing the research instrument but may also review the informed consent form attached to this email.

Thank you in advance to those willing to participate and support this study. I hope the results of this study will identify social and emotional learning strengths and weaknesses and provide support for social and emotional learning school-based interventions. If you have questions, you can contact me at tm456@lindenwood.edu. Dr. Shelly Fransen, the dissertation chair for this research project, may be contacted at sfransen@lindenwood.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Tina Morse
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

Appendix H

Informed Consent for Survey

LINDENWOOD

Survey Research Information Sheet

You are being asked to participate in a survey conducted by Tina Morse under the supervision of Dr. Shelly Fransen at Lindenwood University. We are conducting this study to identify kindergarten through third-grade certified teacher and counselor perceptions regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning as school-based interventions. This study will provide a comprehensive analysis of how kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers and counselors from one Missouri school district perceive current social and emotional learning practices in schools with an emphasis on social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset. You will be asked questions about your perceptions of social and emotional learning regarding academic achievement and teacher efficacy. It will take about 15 minutes to complete the survey.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw at any time by simply not completing the survey or closing the browser window.

There are no risks from participating in this project. We will not collect any information that may identify you. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Tina Morse: tm456@lindenwood.edu

Dr. Shelly Fransen: sfransen@lindenwood.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu.

By clicking the link below, I confirm that I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be required to do, and the risks involved. I understand that I can discontinue participation at any time by closing the survey browser. My consent also indicates that I am at least 18 years of age.

You can withdraw from this study at any time by simply closing the browser window. Please feel free to print a copy of this information sheet.

Appendix I

Letter of Participation for Interviews

Date:

Dear Counselors,

My name is Tina Morse, and I am requesting your participation in my doctoral dissertation research project at Lindenwood University. The study is entitled *Perceptions Regarding the Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning*. Participants will be asked to complete a 45-minute one-on-one interview. We are conducting this study to identify kindergarten through third-grade teacher and counselor perceptions regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning as school-based interventions.

I have received permission to conduct research in the xxxxx School District from the superintendent. In order to conduct my research, I would like to invite the kindergarten through third-grade counselors to participate in one-on-one interviews via video conference. The interviews should take 45 minutes or less to complete.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. All information obtained through this research will be reported anonymously. Data codes or pseudonyms will be used to lessen the possibility of identifying interview participants. Interviewees will indicate consent by participating in the interviews and signing an informed consent form attached to this email.

Thank you in advance to those willing to participate and support this study. I hope the results of this study will identify social and emotional learning strengths and weaknesses and provide support for social and emotional learning school-based interventions. If you have questions, you can contact me at tm456@lindenwood.edu. Dr. Shelly Fransen, the dissertation chair for this research project, may be contacted at sfransen@lindenwood.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Tina Morse
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

Appendix J

Informed Consent for Interview

LINDENWOOD

Research Study Consent Form

Perceptions Regarding the Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning

Before reading this consent form, please know:

- Your decision to participate is your choice
- You will have time to think about the study
- You will be able to withdraw from this study at any time
- You are free to ask questions about the study at any time

After reading this consent form, we hope that you will know:

- Why we are conducting this study
- What you will be required to do
- What are the possible risks and benefits of the study
- What alternatives are available, if the study involves treatment or therapy
- What to do if you have questions or concerns during the study

---

Basic information about this study:

- We are interested in eliciting the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers and counselors from one Missouri school district regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning as school-based interventions.
- You will participate in a 45-minute one-on-one interview via video conference.
- There are no risks involved with participation in this project. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

LINDENWOOD

Research Study Consent Form

Perceptions Regarding the Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning

You are asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Tina Morse under the guidance of Dr. Shelly Fransen at Lindenwood University. Being in a research study is voluntary, and you are free to stop at any time. Before you choose to participate, you are free to discuss this research study with family, friends, or a physician. Do not feel like you must join this study until all of your questions or concerns are answered. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form.

Why is this research being conducted?
We are conducting this study to identify kindergarten through third-grade certified teacher and counselor perceptions regarding the benefits of social and emotional learning as school-based interventions. This study will provide a comprehensive analysis of how kindergarten through third-grade certified teachers and counselors from one Missouri school district perceive current social and emotional learning practices in schools with an emphasis on social awareness, self-efficacy, and growth mindset. You will be asked questions about your perceptions of social and emotional learning regarding academic achievement and teacher efficacy. We will be asking three people to answer these questions.

What am I being asked to do?
1. You will receive an email requesting your participation in a voluntary interview via video conference. The email will contain a suggested time and date for individual interviews.
2. Once interview times and dates are confirmed, you will sign and review the consent form included in the email.
3. Following the review and signing of the consent forms, interviews will be conducted.

How long will I be in this study?

Individual interviews will last no longer than 45 minutes.

What are the risks of this study?

- Privacy and Confidentiality: We will not be collecting any information that will identify you.

What are the benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefits for completing this survey. We hope what we learn may benefit other people in the future.

What if I do not choose to participate in this research?

It is always your choice to participate in this study. You may withdraw at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions or perform tasks that make you uncomfortable. If you decide to withdraw, you will not receive any penalty or loss of benefits. If you would like to withdraw from the study, please use the contact information found at the end of this form.

What if new information becomes available about the study?

During the course of this study, we may find information that could be important to you and your decision to participate in this research. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

How will you keep my information private?

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation. Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location. The only people who will be able to see your data include members of the research team, qualified staff of Lindenwood University, and representatives of state or federal agencies.

How can I withdraw from this study?

Notify the research team immediately if you would like to withdraw from this research study.

Who can I contact with questions or concerns?

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or concerns about the study, or if you feel under any pressure to enroll or to continue to participate in this study, you may contact the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board Director, Michael Leary, at (636) 949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu. You can contact the researcher, Tina Morse, directly at tm456@lindenwood.edu. You may also contact Dr. Shelly Fransen at sfransen@lindenwood.edu.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   **Date**

_____
Participant's Printed Name

_____   _____
Signature of Principle Investigator or Designee   **Date**

_____
Investigator or Designee Printed Name

Vita

Tina L. Morse has taught elementary students for 23 years. She is currently a second-grade teacher and science curriculum specialist for Rolla Public Schools in Rolla, Missouri. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Drury University in Springfield, Missouri; a Master of Educational Technology degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia in Columbia, Missouri; and an Educational Specialist degree in Instructional Leadership from Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri.