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Effective Social Emotional Lessons and Strategies for Center Based Students With Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities

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EFFECTIVE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LESSONS AND STRATEGIES FOR CENTER

BASED STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES

BY

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Abstract

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) has become a popular phrase in all aspects of the educational world of the last couple decades. Research shows the clear need for teaching students the skills they need to function socially and emotionally. This is becoming increasingly important with the rise of students diagnosed with Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD). Educators are learning that traditional approaches modifying student behaviors, such as using punishments and rewards are not working for students with EBD. Solutions to best supporting students with EBD need to be teaching SEL skills, not trying to manipulate motivation. This thesis looks at research into these topics to give greater understanding and points to future research.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"Kids do well if they can," (Greene, 2016, p. 5). If Greene is right then the primary job of educators is to find the reasons why a student is not doing well and then give them the tools to be successful. This may sound simple but the reasons why students are not doing well seem to be increasing. Recent years have seen dramatic increases in the mental health needs of students in grades K-12. According to the National Center of Education Statistics (2018), the number of students who were served with an Emotional Disturbance otherwise known as Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD) under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in the United States was at 353,000 students in the 2017-2018 school year. Hoagwood & Johnson (2003) found that as many as 20% of students may have a diagnosable psychiatric condition and five percent of these have serious mental health needs. Of that 20% of students with diagnosable conditions it is estimated that only 20% actually receive services for their mental health condition. The high levels of students with EBD or other major mental health needs is concerning because the outcomes of students with EBD are grim. Gage et al. (2012) has found that students with EBD are more likely to have negative school outcomes such as failing courses, suspensions, and dropping out of school. In addition, Wagner et al. (2005) found that 58% of students with EBD have been arrested at least one time after leaving high school and 43% are on or have been on probation or parole. These statistics show that there is a need for quality teacher training and programs to help support this percentage of the school age population with mental health needs.

Emotional Behavior Disorders

The rights of students with disabilities such as EBD and other mental health needs have been fought for and defended for years now. Going back to Brown v. The Board of Education

(1954) which led to the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and the 1970 Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA) (Yell, 2012). These early laws focused on providing federal funding for students in poverty and those with disabilities. These laws helped create the basis for more legal cases like Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (1972) and Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia (1972), which supported children with disabilities and held those not following these new laws accountable. These led to further laws like the Education for all Handicapped Children (EAHCA) act of 1975, the Handicapped Children's Protection Act of 1986, and current leading law the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) which started in 1990 and updated in 1997 and most recently in 2004. IDEA and the court cases and laws leading up to it have established key parts of the special education system such as Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), the Individual Education Plan (IEP), requirements for transition programs for students 18-21 years old still needing support, established 12 main disability categories (including emotional disturbance otherwise known as EBD), and many other key issues such as a person first mindset. With IDEA becoming the national requirement for special education, no longer are children kicked out of school or deemed "unteachable". Instead they are given support and goals to assist them (Yell, 2012). A view that is becoming more and more mainstream is that "… all students are capable of learning at a level that engages and challenges them," (Spring, 2016).

IDEA defines Emotional Disturbance as a

> (i) Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

(A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.

(B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.

(C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.

(D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

(E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

(ii) Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia (IDEA CFR§300.8 (c) 4).

This definition in IDEA is broad and students with EBD can look very different from each other and many different mental health problems contribute and cause a student to qualify as having EBD. Common mental health problems associated with students with EBD are Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Conduct disorder, Anxiety, Depression, and schizophrenia (Kaufman, 2005; Matson, 2009). There are many theories related to the main needs of students with EBD ranging from a need for higher structure, stronger discipline, increased motivation, racial equity, and academic support. However, the majority of recent research says that the key problems associated with EBD students relates to a lack of skills and the need for Social Emotional Learning (SEL) (Greene, 2016; Kaufman, 2005; Matson, 2005).

A key term to many discussions about students with EBD and other disabilities is disproportionality. Disproportionality is when a specific group, race, or ethnicity is over or under represented in different settings. There are many examples of this in the special education field. In the United States, African Americans are 2.28 times more likely than any other racial group to be in Special Education in addition to being more frequently placed in alternative educational

settings for behavioral problems (Bean, 2013). Dropout rates in High School show African American and Latino students drop out at much higher rates compared to white students (Bean, 2013; Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). In elementary schools and middle schools' African American students were two and four times, respectively, more likely to be referred for discipline than white students (Skiba et al., 2011). Hispanic students were found to have two times the referrals compared to white students in middle schools.

Center based Programing

Another key aspect of IDEA is the principle of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (Yell, 2012). LRE means that students should be with their typically developing peers as much as possible, while still meeting their needs as defined in the special education evaluations and IEPs. In special education, there are eight different environments or settings outlined by the Minnesota Department of Education to describe what and how services are provided to students with IEPs. Setting one is the least restrictive, meaning students at this level have the most access to a mainstream education setting, and setting eight is the most restrictive, meaning students have the least access to a mainstream education setting.

1. Students receive special education services outside the regular education classroom for less than 21 percent of the day.

2. Students receive special education services outside the regular education classroom, typically a resource room, for 21 percent to 60 percent of the school day.

3. Students are outside of the regular education classroom for more than 60 percent of the day.

4. Students receive special education services at separate school facilities for more than 50 percent of the school day.

5. Students receive special education services at a private, separate day school for more than 50 percent of the school day.

6. Students receive special education services at a public residential facility for more than 50 percent of the school day.

7. Students receive special education services at a private residential facility for more than 50 percent of the school day.

8. Special education services are delivered in a homebound or hospital or home-based setting (Special Education Placement Settings, n.d.).

Social Emotional Learning

According to The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), "Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) 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,"(What is SEL?, n.d.). SEL is increasingly being implemented at the district, school, and classroom levels. Research has shown that using quality SEL programs has the potential to improve the academic, mental health, and behavioral outcomes for students, especially those who are already at risk for social, emotional, behavioral, and academic challenges. (Durlak et al., 2011; Evans & English, 2002; Jones, Brown, & Aber, 2011).

Thesis Questions

This thesis intends to research which SEL programs and practices are most effective at helping students in Center Based EBD programs increase their social, emotional, behavioral, and academic success. The thesis will define Center Based EBD programs as settings 3 and 4 programs as defined by the Minnesota Department of Education (Special Education Placement

Settings, n.d.). Students in these programs have some of the most intense needs and worst long-term outcomes (Gage et al., 2012). This author will attempt to answer the following questions by researching and reviewing the literature on EBD and SEL:

- Who are students in Center Based EBD programs?

- What is SEL and what standards exist about SEL?

- How do you assess the needs of students in Center Based EBD programs?

- What are effective SEL programs for students in Center Based EBD programs?

- What role does diversity play in students in Center Based EBD programs?

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature about students with Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD) and how Social Emotional Learning (SEL) affects their development. The author reviewed books found both in the classroom study as well as the Bethel library, published journal articles, and digital data taken from leaders in the field of SEL. The two sources that help form the framework of how much of this paper is written are CASEL (2013) and Greene (2016). CASEL (2013) is the leader in the field of SEL, identifying the five core Social Emotional Competencies and providing a treasure trove of information and research on SEL topics. Greene (2016) has created the Collaborative and Proactive Solution approach to behaviorally challenged students, which challenges schools and teachers to look at children and discipline in a new, researched-backed, light. Some programs seek radical changes on how to view and treat students with EBD while others encourage smaller more feasible changes. The author's focus in the research was to find which SEL programs or strategies would be most helpful to elementary students in center-based classrooms or federal settings 3 and 4 that have EBD. The author was able to find some studies that were done exclusively in settings 3 and 4 however, much of the research in this field focuses on programs implemented in a school wide or mainstream classroom level. The author takes this data and applies it when appropriate to students in center-based programs. Another important point the author will address is the racial disportionality present in special education as a whole and specifically for students with EBD.

The chapter is broken into four sections. First, it looks at students with EBD as to what are their strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Second, it will focus on what is known about SEL and what standards exist around it. Third, the thesis will look at how teachers assess these students and their needs in relation to SEL. Fourth, and finally, the thesis will take a deeper

review of specific SEL programs. Throughout the paper the author will bring up topics of diversity in students with EBD and their programming.

Students with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders

Kauffman (2005) broke the behaviors of students with EBD into two main categories, "externalizing (aggressive, acting out behavior) and internalizing behaviors (social withdrawal)," (p. 8). Students with EBD come from all sorts of backgrounds (both from privilege and poverty, both stable and abusive) and have varying personal traits (some with lower intelligence and some who are very intelligent). Kauffman emphasized that the problems teachers see in students today are, "persistent human problems," (p. 8) which have been present in the human race for centuries. While Kauffman gave many examples and ideas about how to identify and assess students with EBD the author also admits it is, "unavoidably subjective" because, "norms, rules, and expectations, and the appraisal of the extent to which particular individuals deviate from them, requires subjective judgement," (p. 11). While assessments are often subjective there are some common disorders that are connected with students with EBD. Common mental health problems associated with students with EBD are Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Conduct disorder, Anxiety, Depression, and schizophrenia (Kaufman, 2005; Matson, 2009). More often than not, two or more of these disorders will be present at the same time in students.

Related Disorders

Commonly students with EBD have been described as having problems with both attention and over activity. It is not surprising then that many students with EBD also have ADHD (Kaufman, 2005; Matson, 2009). ADHD is defined as a developmental disorder that is often seen early in life and persists throughout a person's life. It is marked by trouble focusing

and sustaining attention, trouble controlling impulsive action, and trouble showing appropriate motivation.

A student is classified as having a Conduct Disorder (CD) if he or she, "exhibits a persistent pattern of antisocial behavior that significantly impairs everyday functioning at home or school…" (Kauffman, 2005). CD appeared in students in two general forms; overt aggression and covert antisocial behavior, and it is often the case that students with CD show both forms. Overt aggression is marked by both frequent noncompliance and physical aggression (hitting, kicking, throwing objects). Children who have overt aggression often look very similar to other children their age when young; many young children can get aggressive. However, children with CD often get more aggressive with age where typically developing children will move away from aggression. Covert antisocial behavior includes many different traits such as; stealing, lying, fire setting, drug use, vandalism, manipulation of students, and running away.

Anxiety disorders are wide and varied but in general they are disorders which cause students to have out of the norm behaviors because of distress, tension, or uneasiness (Kauffman, 2005). Common anxiety disorders and anxiety causing problems are; obsessive compulsive disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, stereotyped movement disorders, selective mutism, eating disorders, elimination disorders, sexual problems, and social isolation and ineptitude. While there are no quick fixes or one size fits all solutions to anxiety disorders common treatments are; exposure, systematic desensitization, modeling, contingency management, and therapy (Matson, 2009).

Depression and suicidal behavior are also very common in students with EBD. One of the main points in IDEAs (2004) definition of EBD is, "A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression." Depression in children often starts when a child is young and gets

progressively worse as they get older leading to very extreme behaviors such as self-harm and suicide (Kauffman, 2005). Common symptoms of depression are; not being able to feel pleasure, depressed mood, appetite problems, sleep problems, fatigue, feelings of worthlessness, self-reproach, excessive or inappropriate guilt, hopelessness, inability to concentrate, and suicidal thoughts. Depressive bouts can be both short term and long term, however longer bouts with depression of two or more years are connected with more significant behaviors.

Schizophrenia is a psychotic disorder, "in which people usually have two or more of the following symptoms:

- Delusions

- Hallucinations

- Disorganized speech (e.g., they may frequently get derailed or be incoherent)

- Grossly disorganized or catatonic behavior

- Negative symptoms such as lack of affect, inability to think logically, or inability to make decisions" (Kauffman, 2005, p. 413).

While schizophrenia is mostly found in adults it can also appear in children. Sometimes the symptoms will go fully away but most people with schizophrenia battle it their entire lives.

While there are many other disorders that can be associated with children with EBD and sometimes, they may not have any diagnosable disorder, this is a good summary of the common problems related to students with EBD.

Assessing for EBD

As stated, before IDEA gives a definition of EBD with five sub points that should be used to assess students for EBD.

(i) Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following

characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a

child's educational performance:

> (A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or
>
> health factors.
>
> (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with
>
> peers and teachers.
>
> (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
>
> (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
>
> (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or
>
> school problems. (IDEA CFR§300.8 (c) 4).

As a multidisciplinary team (MDT) assesses a student for these five points of criteria they

should not only look into how the student fits into these categories at school but also how the

student fits into these categories at home and other social settings. While assessing, the MDT

should look at norm referenced test of intelligence and achievement, behavior ratings, direct

observation, teacher interviews, family interviews, student interviews when appropriate,

assessments of peer relations, curriculum-based measurements, manifestation determination

assessments, and very importantly a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA). The FBA is the

process of collecting data that helps understand the reasons behind the problem behavior.

Moreno & Bullock (2015) suggested the FBA as a first step in the process before referral to

special education is approached. This can be helpful in preventing students from entering into

special education as the results of an FBA help staff meet the needs of students. The authors

explain that FBA uses evidence-based research to find the function of the challenging behaviors

of the student. Once that function is found the FBA helps create a plan to work towards more

appropriate behavior to meet the same function as the negative behavior. With the lack of

effectiveness of current practices, such as zero tolerance, the authors believe that FBA is the next

step to improve the education outcomes of students. The FBA is also important for helping with

the disportionality in special education because it can help to look at problems shown by students

and let staff look at them more objectively.

Disportionality

The last topic that must be reviewed is when analyzing the demographics of students with

EBD is the racial breakdown. As stated before, African American and Hispanic students are

more than two times more likely to receive discipline referrals (Skiba et al., 2011). One theory

for the disproportionality of African American and Latino students in special education is that

because most teachers are white and female, about 86%, they do not understand the cultural

differences between themselves and their students of various ethnicities (Bean, 2013; Moreno &

Bullock, 2015). Bean (2013) reviewed studies which examined the difference in the perception

of mothers and teachers on externalizing behaviors in children, and found that mothers believed

students had less behaviors as they grew older where teachers believed that behaviors increased

as they grew older. This racial difference between teachers and students has also been theorized

to lead to lower academic expectations of many non-white students (Moreno & Bullock, 2015;

Moreno & Gaytan, 2013).

Bean (2013) discovered that in areas with large populations of African American

students, African American students were more likely to be sent to the office for minor

infractions while their white counterparts were only sent to the office for serious offences. Others

refer to factors for disportionality such as loose federal definitions of EBD, zero tolerance

policies, and limited time spent looking into the behavioral background of students (Moreno & Bullock, 2015).

SEL Theory and Standards

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is based on the premise that some students need to be taught different social and emotional skills in order to be successful. The first step in teaching skills to students is finding out what they should know. In this section this paper will look at what theories and research exist about SEL, what the standards are to help teach these skills, and what assessments exist for SEL.

Theory

Social skills allow students to maintain positive interpersonal relationships, be accepted by peers, and get along with a larger social environment (Kauffman, 2005). Kauffman (2005) summarizes social skills by saying, "at the heart of social skills is the ability to communicate verbally and nonverbally…" (p. 211). CASEL (2013) stated the two primary goals of SEL programs are to, "(1) promote students' self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship, and responsible decision-making skills; and (2) improve student attitudes and beliefs about self, others, and school." (p. 10). When these goals are met students have, "more positive social behaviors and peer relationships, fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and improved grades and test scores," (p. 10).

Students with EBD commonly struggle with the social skills of making and keeping friends, listening to others, taking turns in conversation, greeting others, joining ongoing activities, giving compliments, expressing anger in socially acceptable ways, offering to help others, following rules, being organized and focused, and doing high quality work (Kauffman, 2005). Many students with EBD also have language disorders which can cause some major

behaviors as they struggle with communicating or understanding communication. Sadly, with their low social skills it is logical that many students with EBD have poor short and long term outcomes such as physical and verbal aggression, lower peer status, self-injury, failing courses, suspension, dropping out of school, as well as high arrest and probation rates post high school (Wagner et al., 2005; Matson, 2009).

To succeed then, students with EBD need instruction in social emotional skills such as; identifying, labeling, and expressing needs wants and feelings, describing and interpreting emotions of oneself and others, as well as recognizing emotions, providing control over them, and integrating them into appropriate social behavior (Kauffman, 2005). Greene (2016) summarizes the skills students need into three categories: flexibility/adaptability skills, frustration tolerance skills, and problem-solving skills. Matson (2009), goes a little deeper and explains 3 types of social skill deficits; acquisition deficits (does not have a skill, like asking for help), performance deficits (has the skill but does not use it in some situations because of cognitive distortions like anxiety, anger, or lack of motivation), and fluency deficits (knows what to do and has practiced it but still cannot do it, for example a student with ADHD knows not to interrupt but can't wait as he has practiced)

Helpful methods for building these lagging skills are; training of social skills as replacement behavior (to decrease negative and increase positive behavior), social skills training (verbal instructions, modeling, behavioral rehearsal, roleplay, and feedback/ reinforcement), social stories, and cognitive based programs (focus on the thoughts behind the behavior with direct instruction and practice). (Matson, 2009.) When both student-teacher and student-peer relationships are positive, student engagement increases and the knowledge taken from SEL is more effective (Yang, 2018). In addition, if the students' perceptions of student- teacher, student-

peer relationships, and SEL instruction are positive then SEL is more effective. Ways to improve perception are, "cooperation and communication among teachers, teacher training, clear procedures and structures, support from the school principal, a well-defined school policy or vision, a caring and inviting school climate, and integration of SEL into the general curriculum and daily teaching practices," (p. 58). These methods tend to be most effective when multiple strategies are used in conjunction (Matson, 2009).

When implementing SEL programs or strategies, outcomes are most effective when done not just at a classroom level, but also at the district and school level (CASEL, 2013). For results that are both long term and help the student in their wider context, both home and school, then it is important that the SEL instruction is coordinated with school, family, and even community activities when possible.

While others like CASEL (2013), Kauffman, (2005), and Matson (2009) looked into, generally, what skills and strategies are important, Greene (2016) took it further, challenging much of how educators view and respond to challenging behavior. When Greene (2016) talked about inappropriate behaviors from students such as; hitting, kicking, yelling, swearing, or any other socially unacceptable behavior he refers to the behavior as an incompatibility episode. Greene stated, "An incompatibility episode is an episode that communicates to us that there is incompatibility between a child's skills and certain demands and expectations," (p. 32). While Greene (2016) does not deny the presence of disorders, such as conduct disorder, in behaviorally challenging children, Green does simplify things. Green (2016) stated that, "Challenging kids are challenging because they're lacking the skills to not be challenging," (p. 5). In fact, he states that, "Kids do well if they can," (p. 5) meaning that if a student has the skills to succeed, he will. The majority of students, including students with EBD, naturally have the motivation to do well. This

challenges theory and practice around other methods like replacement behaviors and reinforcement or at least how those practices are implemented.

Greene (2016) reported that the majority of school responses to socially unacceptable behavior are based on the belief that these challenging students are, "attention seeking, manipulative, unmotivated, coercive, and limit testing," (p. 4). The author continued to say that because of these beliefs about challenging students the majority of school responses are not appropriate. Schools focus on motivation by giving and taking away privileges with tools like sticker charts. Greene's belief is that students are already motivated to succeed, "human beings - behaviorally challenging kids included - have a strong preference for doing well (as opposed to doing poorly)," (p. 6). Children that are well behaved are well behaved because they have the skills to do so, not because of discipline programs. When educators use extreme discipline options such as detention, suspension, expulsion, paddling, and restraint and seclusion educators are using options that research shows do not actually help or change behavior. Instead educators see that the kids that receive these options have the least growth and improvement. When teachers respond to behavior, Greene suggested that teachers use the Least Toxic Response. Similar to the Least Restrictive Environment aspect of IDEA, this is the idea that teachers should respond in a way that is going to be the least toxic and most helpful to the student in question. This means taking a deep look and current discipline methods and their effectiveness.

This is a direct challenge to traditional notions that negative behaviors of student's "work" for them, getting them attention or letting them avoid tasks they do not want to do and educators need to punish them so they choose different behaviors. The problem Greene indicated is that they are getting attention and avoiding tasks in maladaptive ways instead of reacting in adaptive ways. This may seem like Greene (2016) suggested that educators should throw away

tools like FBAs. However, he indicated that tools like the FBA are still helpful, educators just need to change their response to the result of these tools.

Another key point that Greene (2016) emphasized is that this process must be in partnership with the students in question. When done this way the student not only learns the skill in question but learns the skill of solving problems with the teacher. Finally, Greene made it clear that the biggest change is going to happen when our responses are proactive solutions (plan and practice) instead of reactive responses (punishments). In summary, adult imposed consequences, even the popular "natural" consequences, are not going to change behavior or teach students anything. If educators want real change, they need to figure out what skills are lacking in these students and start walking with these students to teach them those missing skills.

CASEL Standards

CASEL is the leader in SEL research and study. Their work formed the foundation on which most modern research in SEL is based. CASEL developed a framework that identifies five core SEL competencies; Self-Awareness, Self- Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible decision making (What is SEL?, n.d.).

Figure 1. The Five Social and Emotional Learning Core Competencies

Self- Awareness is knowing what one's emotions are and how they affect one's behavior, as well as having a realistic view of one's strengths and weaknesses. Self- Management is the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in addition to managing stress, controlling impulse, motivating oneself, and making and attempting goals. Social awareness is one's ability to understand how others from different perspectives or backgrounds might feel and understanding how these perspectives affect social and ethical norms. Relationship skills refer to being able to make and keep positive and healthy relationships, requiring the skills of communicating clearly, listening, teamwork, conflict resolution, and requesting help when appropriate. Responsible decision-making is being able to think through the ethical, safety, and social consequences of possible actions and then make positive choices.

State standards

In addition to CASEL's standards for SEL this author wanted to know whether there were any state standards around SEL. Eklund, Kilpatrick, Kilgus, Haider, & Eckert (2018) conducted a study to see if any preschool through 12th grade standards existed in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. They hypothesized that,

> The comparatively restricted research in K–12 has resulted in either (a) relatively fewer standalone SEL standards across states, or (b) the adoption of standards within health, physical education, and school counseling standards (thereby suggesting a more secondary focus on SEL when compared with the standalone model). (p. 319)

They frequently used the terms" standalone standards" or "freestanding standards" interchangeably. When they described a standard like this, they mean that the standard is just there under a social emotional domain, not under other standards like health, physical education, or counseling. They did their primary research by internet searches on State websites and if they

could not find any data then they would make emails and phone calls to the department of education of the states from which they needed more information.

Eklund et al., (2018) found that any SEL standard adoptions are pretty recent, with Illinois being first to adopt any freestanding SEL standards in 2004 followed by Pennsylvania in 2012. Authors found all 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC), have freestanding SEL standards for preschool which align with at least three of the five CASEL competencies. After Preschool there was a huge drop off in freestanding SEL standards. Most SEL standards were embedded into physical education, health, and/or school counseling standards. They found 49 states and DC having SEL standards embedded in health and PE standards connected with at least 4 of 5 CASEL competencies. The exception was Ohio which had freestanding SEL standards. In addition, 20 states had SEL standards embedded in counseling standards but not all were K-12. Finally, only 11 states had Freestanding SEL standards, however, they were all not for every grade, many were just for specific grades such as K-3. Only eight states had freestanding SEL standards for all grades. In addition, they mention what freestanding SEL standards have been established vary greatly. Authors did acknowledge some potential flaws in their study. First, their search terms may have been flawed and they may have missed some information that does not exist on the internet. In addition, when they did not find information online it was up to the state officials to provide them with accurate information. In cases where state officials did not reply it is possible that more information was available. Finally, this study did not look deeply into the exact content and quality of the standards that were reported, meaning while the standards do exist many could be poorly written or not based on research.

District Standards

Even when States do not have standalone SEL standards some school districts adopt their own standards anyway. Intermediate School District 287 in Minnesota created their own set of standards in 2008 based on the state standards of Alaska and Illinois. The district states that SEL is important because, "The challenge of raising knowledgeable, capable, caring, and responsible students... can be enhanced by thoughtful, sustained, and systematic attention to students' social and emotional learning (SEL)," (Intermediate District 287, 2008). Then they developed four overarching goals for their standards to fit in: Self Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Social Management. District 287's definition of Self Awareness, Self-Management, and Social Awareness correspond directly to CASEL's definitions of the same name, and District 287's Social Management corresponds directly to CASEL's Relationship Skills competency.

In each of District 287's four overarching goals they have the standards for each goal. For Self-Awareness the standards are that students demonstrate an awareness of personal needs and emotions, personal traits, external supports, and having a sense of personal responsibility. For Self-Management the standards are that students demonstrate an ability to manage needs and emotions, show honesty and integrity, have effective choice-making and decision-making skills, and have increasing independence and are able to set and achieve goals. For Social Awareness the standards are that students demonstrate awareness of others' roles, emotions, and perspectives; desire to have a positive contribution to community; awareness of cultural issues and respect for dignity and differences of others; and can read social and environmental cues. Finally, for Social Management the standards are that students will use social skills to connect effectively with others; create positive relationships; and prevent, manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.

Each standard is divided into six different levels to determine a student's level of mastery of that standard. The levels are: initial, emerging, developing, intermediate, advanced, and proficient. For each standard a description of what a student would need to be able to reach each level is given. These levels get progressively more challenging and are connected to what research has shown to be developmentally appropriate.

For example,

1. Goal: Self Awareness

    a. Standard: Demonstrating an awareness of one's needs and emotions.

        i. Initial level: a student is able to,

            1. Indicate pleasure, displeasure, and discomfort.

            2. Indicate hunger, thirsty, sick, tired. (p. 6).

        ii. Proficient level: a student would need to be able to,

            1. Describe how changing their interpretation of an event can alter how they feel about it.

            2. Use self-reflection to make sure their emotions are in line with the truth of a situation.

            3. Acknowledge an emotion and determine the appropriate time and place to safely digest it.

            4. Teach others. (p. 6)

Each of these levels connect to the age ranges listed in the table below from Intermediate School District 287 (2008).

District 287 Performance Indicators— Current Language	Corresponding Grade Level
Initial	Infant through Preschool
Emerging	Early Elementary
Developing	Late Elementary
Intermediate	Middle School
Advanced	Early High School
Proficient	Late High School

This district promotes CASEL's competencies often in its work with teacher training and a SEL assessment used by the district is based off of the CASEL competencies. The author was confused about why the district put so much focus on the CASEL competencies but made their own standards that are different from CASEL's. The author emailed Katherine Utter, the Social Emotional Learning Coordinator, at District 287 to discover why there seems to be a disconnect between their standards and the actual resources they used. Below is the email and response between the author and Katherine Utter.

From the author to Katherine Utter on, January 18, 2020:

Hey Kathy,

I am currently writing my master thesis on SEL and student with EBD. and I had a few questions about 287 standards and the BAT that I was hoping you could answer or connect me with someone who could answer for me.

(1) is the BAT something that 287 created or is it taken from somewhere else?

(2) the BAT and other items on the 287 SEL website focus around CASELS 5 SEL competencies. however, 287's SEL standards change that a little to Self Management, self

awareness, social management, and social awareness. Do you know why 287's standards deviate from the CASEL standards?

Thanks

Kevin Collings

From Katherine Utter the author on, January 21, 2020:

HI Kevin,

Yes, we created the BAT based on our standards and benchmarks. It was originally 15 questions and followed our standards more directly. It was changed to be easier for teachers to complete. When it was changed, it was realigned to match the 5 CASEL areas, so it is a little out of step with how our standards and benchmarks are written. When we wrote and adopted our standards and benchmarks, we decided to model them off of those done in Alaska. All the CASEL areas are included, they are just folded in to it works with 4 areas (self awareness, self management, social awareness, social management). Surprisingly no one, except you, has mentioned the difference. Good eyes!! I used to explain it to people, but their eyes kinda glazed over and there is so much more important stuff to talk about when I only get 15-30 minutes with a teacher.

Katherine Utter, LICSW

BAT referred to in this conversation stands for Benchmark Assessment Tool and is a SEL assessment that was created by the district. The author will discuss the BAT in more detail in the assessment section of this essay. So, the district while still respecting CASEL and the work it has done still believed that the standards should be summarized in the 4 categories made in Alaska as opposed to the five of CASEL.

Program Standards

In their study, Lawson, McKenzie, Becker, Selby, & Hoover (2019) identified the core components present in evidence-based elementary school SEL programs. They did this in the hope that this information would be helpful for school districts and teachers in picking and implementing SEL programs. The authors choose 14 SEL programs that were approved by CASEL's guide for SEL programs (SELect). To be considered SELect by CASEL a program had to meet 6 criteria:

1. Focuses on all 5 areas of CASEL competence.

2. Provides opportunities to practice.

3. Offers multi- year programming.

4. Offers training and other implementation support.

5. Has at least one evaluation study that included a comparison group and pre-post measures.

6. Documents a positive impact on one of the four outcome domains (academics, conduct problems, emotional distress, and social behavior) (p. 459).

Programs used in this study also needed to focus on explicit skill instruction not just teacher instructional practices. The 14 programs that fit the criteria are as follows; Second Step, Incredible Years-Incredible Teachers, PATHS, I Can Problem Solve, Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving, MindUp, Michigan Model for Health, 4Rs, Open Circle, Positive Action, Raising Healthy Children, Resolving Conflict Creativity, Steps to Respect, and Too Good for Violence.

Authors then created a coding manual based on CASEL's 5 areas of SEL competency to assess what the core components are and how they connected with CASEL's 5 areas of SEL competency. From this study the authors defined 12 core components from the programs;

identifying one's' feelings, interplay of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, behavioral coping skills/relaxation, cognitive coping/self-talk, goal setting and planning, mindfulness, identifying others' feelings, perspective taking, valuing diversity, problem solving, assertiveness, and social skills.

The results of this study revealed the feasibility of classifying the core components for multiple evidence-based school SEL programs (Lawson, et al., 2019). This study also demonstrated that a majority of core components were present in a majority of the programs. This is shown by 7 of the 12 components being present in 10 of the 14 programs. The components that were most prevalent were social skills, identifying others' feelings, behavioral coping skills/relaxation, and identifying one's own feelings. The least frequent components were mindfulness, valuing diversity, cognitive coping/self-talk, and goal setting and planning. Looking at these 12 core components is a first step in working to create a more complete modular system for SEL lessons. Instead of teachers needing to look through many different programs to find needed material, if programs can be combined based on core components, then teachers could more easily find resources and tailor lessons to specific student needs. The authors believed that creating a modular SEL program is the next step forward, however they stated that to do this it will take a lot of study into its effectiveness and feasibility. While this study does look at many evidence-based programs, it does not look at information about how effective each of these programs and core components are at actually teaching the skills they focus on. Also, while the study was published in 2019, it only used programs that were created before 2013 because that was when CASEL's most recent guide for evidenced based programs was published.

Assessment

Now that it is established who students with EBD are and which SEL skills schools should be looking for, it is important to look at how to assess those skills so that appropriate SEL planning can happen. Assessing the extent to which students have mastered SEL skills is critical in dealing with behaviors (Kauffman, 2005). There are many different types of SEL assessments; student self-reports, teacher and staff reports, performance measures, family reports, and peer reports. When using these reports there are many factors to take in including the; race, age, culture, and family of this student. In this section the paper will look at some specific tools, as well as different places to find different assessment tools you might need.

WCSD Student Social and Emotional Competency Assessment

In creating their SEL assessment tool Davidson (2018), looked at many sources and theories to make sure their assessment would be the most effective. This assessment was made with CASEL and the Washoe County School District (WCSD) in a partnership. They call the two assessments they created, the "WCSD Student Social and Emotional Competency Assessment – Long Form" consisting of 40 questions and the "WCSD Student Social and Emotional Competency Assessment – Short Form" consisting of 17 questions. Both of these are assessments completed by students. They used four guiding recommendations for SEL assessments laid out by McKnown (2016) which state that SEL assessments should be,

1) conducted on a large scale without the need for trained clinicians or researchers,

2) based on strong theoretical models,

3) informed by educators so that they are practical and solve "real world" problems that teachers care about, and

4) able to assess a range of dimensions that can develop a comprehensive picture of a

student's social and emotional needs and strengths (p. 93).

They had three different phases where they would go back and forth with developing the items

and then giving the test to students. During this time approximately 7000 students' grades 5th,

6th, 8th, and 11th took and retook the test over a 4-year span. While the authors were initially

very excited about their first set of questions, they realized there were going to be many

challenges in making an effective tool. They then had to take into account psychometric

properties, the response option structure, and the survey environment to get to a point where the

data, educators, and students all felt the tool was useful enough to make decisions based on the

results. After the third round and final refinement, they felt good enough about the test to provide

it to others. However, they reported the main thing they learned was that it was vital to

emphasize the importance of the survey as well and the confidentiality of the survey. "Students

in our focus groups indicated not taking the questionnaire very seriously when proctors did not

convey its importance, and not responding honestly when they questioned the confidentiality of

the survey," (Davidson, 2018).

Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unresolved Problems (ALSUP)

Ross Greene (2016), has created an assessment that focuses on the skills a student may be

lacking called, the "Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unresolved Problems" (ALSUP). This

assessment is filled out by teachers and school staff that work with the student in question. The

intention is that this would be filled out together as a team in a meeting. It also is different from

traditional assessments as Greene suggested that participants should not fill it out beforehand

then come together, because its purpose is to be a discussion guide more than a typical checklist

assessment. The goal of this discussion is to figure out what lagging skills and unsolved problems the student in question is facing.

Visually the assessment is split into two sections; the first is a list of lagging skills that are common to many students and the second is titled "Unsolved Problems" and is blank (Greene, 2016). The first step is to go through the list of lagging skills and check those that apply to the student. Every time staff check off a box in the lagging skills section you stop and go to the unresolved problem section before moving on to more lagging skills. In the unresolved problem section staff lists the specific unresolved problems related to the lagging skill they just checked off. An example of this is if the first lagging skill checked is, "Difficulty handling transition, shifting from one mind-set of tasks to another," (p. 33) then under the unsolved problem you might write, "Difficulty moving from homeroom to Chinese class," (p. 49). Staff should put as many unsolved problems for a student as fit the lagging skill. An unsolved problem many fit into more than one lagging skill but only needs to be written one time. Greene (2016) said, it is important to remember when filling the ASLUP, "the sole focus is on lagging skills and unsolved problems; these are the things educators can actually do something about. And there's no pressure to explain anything; the ALSUP is going to do the explaining for you," (p. 34). While this is not a checklist to be scored and turned into data, Greene does have a next step to use the data. This is all a part of Greene's Collaborative and Proactive Solutions model that will be explained in more detail in the next section, about SEL programs and strategies.

The Benchmark Assessment Tool

The Benchmark Assessment Tool (n.d.) was developed by Intermediate School District 287 to give teachers a general view of where their students were at based on SEL standards. This tool is a five-question rating scale filled out by teachers. Teachers rate students on their level of

mastery of each of CASEL five areas of competency. Students are rated at Initial, Emerging, Developing. Intermediate, Advanced, or Proficient. Initial relates to a preschooler's ability level and Proficient relates to a student graduated high school, based on typical developmental growth. Additional descriptions for deciding which level to place a student at is given in the BAT instructions.

SEL Assessment Guide

Again, CASEL demonstrated itself as a leader in this field, with their SEL Assessment Guide (n.d.). CASEL has an exhaustive list of different assessments that could be used to help schools see where the student skills are at compared to their SEL competencies. Along with this list they have helpful comments to help the teacher decide which tool would be most helpful to assess the student. This list includes the WCSD assessment previously mentioned, as it was created in partnership with CASEL.

Bias in Assessment

Assessments have been found to yield biased results because the assessment process tends to be targeted at students who are white English speakers. This means the results of assessments with these biases will have mixed results and may not give any accurate picture of the student's abilities (Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). When choosing any assessment, it is vitally important to take into account both language and cultural aspects before implementing anything. In addition, another important tool in assessing the skills and needs of students with EBD is the FBA (Moreno & Bullock, 2015). Not only is the FBA necessary to look at as you assess for EBD, as started earlier in this paper, but it is important to complete and update to help understand new and changing behaviors, and how a student's culture affects them.

SEL Programs

At this point the thesis writer has looked at who students with EBD are, what are SEL skills, and how these two meet in assessment. Now the author will discuss how some specific SEL programs and strategies work to give students the lacking skills found in the assessments, and helpful thoughts about how to implement them.

Greene

Greene's (2016) plan for teaching students social and emotional skills is based on his belief that the answer to challenging behavior is not consequences but the teaching of skills. This teaching needed to be both proactive and collaborative with the student. Greene's method focused more on walking with the student to find solutions as a means to build skills rather than on direct instruction of skills, which is the focus of most other SEL programs. Greene's Collaborative and Proactive Solutions model starts with the team of people who work with the student meeting and filling out the ALSUP and deciding what unsolved problems the student has (see assessment section of this paper for more details on the ALSUP). Then it moves to deciding which of these unsolved problems the teacher is going to tackle first and which will be put aside for now. Greene makes it clear that by putting aside a problem, educators are not forgetting about it, instead they are saying they have "bigger fish to fry." Once an educator has picked two or three unsolved problems to work on, they can start using the Problem-Solving Plan.

Greene's (2016) Problem Solving Plan walks school staff from the process of taking Unresolved problems from the ASLUP and finding a solution to them. It is boiled down to a six-step process:

1. Identify the unsolved problem

2. Identify which staff is going to take a lead on solving the problem

3. Get the students' perspective and concern related to the problem

4. Identify and express the adult concern about the unresolved problems

5. Staff and students work together to find and implement a solution

6. Assess whether the solution worked then either move to the next problem or go back to step three and try again.

In this process the third, fourth, and fifth step are where most of the work happens. The third step, getting the student's perspective, can often be the hardest part for educators. In this part educators need to come to the students humbly, accepting that even if the educator thinks the problem is obvious, maybe there's more to it than expected. Greene suggests using phrasing like, "I noticed that," you are having difficulty with (unresolved problem), "what's up?" (p. 76). It can be difficult for the teacher to let the student express themselves before giving their own worries and answers. It can also be difficult for the student at first. Just like educators, these students are used to adult imposed consequences and may not trust that they will be listened to and believed.

The fourth step, where the educator expresses concern, can also be a little tricky. While teachers get to express what they are thinking, they need to hold off on solutions, for now at least. In this step Greene (2016) suggested using language such as, "The thing is..." or "My concern is..." (p. 98) to express how the teacher sees the unsolved problem affecting the student and others. The fifth step, where staff and students find a solution together, has similar challenges for educators. The educator needs to make sure they are not coming into this plan already "knowing" what the answer to the problem is, again they must humbly approach the student and attempt to work with them to find a solution that meets the needs of both parties. This starts with summarizing the concerns of both parties then using phrases like, "Let's think about how we can solve this problem," or "Let's think about how we can work that out," (p. 99).

The adult then needs to offer the students the first chance to think of solutions. Then the adult can start to share their thoughts. However, it is important that the plan is made together. When that happens, both the student and educator share equal credit in making the plan. Finally, it is important to remember that this process will probably take multiple tries to find a solution that works. Even if the solution comes after many tries to find any answer, the process of using this method helps teach the skills of handling problems in real life. This is something that adult imposed consequences will never do.

Summer Program Strategy Approach

Bailey et al., (2019) completed a study using a six-week Pre-K - 8th grade summer program with low income urban students, which focused more on skills instead of a specific curriculum. This study had one class for each grade and totaled 169 kids with 19 teachers. They started the study using three guiding principles; SEL should be centered around a developmental model, SEL instruction should be flexible and focus on strategies over curriculum, and SEL instruction is most effective when teachers are able to use it flexibly to meet student needs. They used a strategy-based approach where teachers were able to choose strategies from a list which they believed their students most needed. The most common needs chosen by Pre-K - 5th grade teachers were; focusing and paying attention, addressing conflict effectively, and managing emotions. The 6th - 8th grade teachers choose; using self-control, participating as an active member of the community, and demonstrating behavior that fosters friendship. Teachers would use two or three strategies a day with students and the use of strategies took an average of seven to 11 minutes to implement per strategy.

Data was taken from daily implementation data about SEL strategies, weekly classroom challenges, and beginning and end of summer reports of student SEL skills (Bailey et al., 2019).

Results of data showed growth in all of the SEL categories that were assessed throughout the summer. And similar to other studies, students with the lowest skills showed the most growth. Results also showed teachers reporting positive views of the program. They liked having the flexibility to choose which strategies to use, while still being provided detailed and scripted instructions on how to implement the individual strategies. Based on these results the authors found that many SEL programs are very specific and order dependent. They focus on doing the program in the "correct" order in the "correct" way to make sure that things are done well. However, this takes away the teacher's ability to adapt and adjust this to best fit with the needs of their specific students. They seek a flexible and adaptable curriculum that can be adjusted to fit the needs of individuals and places while still giving quality content. It would focus on teaching strategies rather than be a step by step curriculum. Problems identified with this study include that it was very short with very different classrooms, it had very simple data collection, there was no baseline to test ability levels of teachers in teaching SEL before receiving the resources or training, and there was no control group.

Paths

Kam et al., (2004) completed a study on the effectiveness of the PATHS curriculum on internalized and externalized behaviors, depression, social competency, positive and negative feeling vocabulary, and problem-solving skills.

The PATHS prevention strategy operates under the following four assumptions:

1. Children's ability to understand and discuss emotions is related to both communicative development and the ability to inhibit behavior and show self-control.

2. Children's ability to manage, understand, and discuss emotions operates under developmental constraints and is also affected by socialization practices.

3. Children's ability to understand their own and others' emotions is a central component of effective problem solving.

4. The school environment is a fundamental ecology, and one that can be a central locus of change. (p. 68)

The study tracked 133 students with disabilities, 1st through 3rd grade, in federal setting 3 self-contained classrooms (97 boys, 36 girls; 88 White, 27 African American, 18 of other ethnic origins) in seven elementary schools. According to Washington State classification 53 of these children had learning disabilities, 23 had mild developmental disability, 31 had emotional and behavioral disorders, 21 had physical disabilities or health impairments (many of these children had attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder), and 5 had multiple handicaps. Half of the classrooms were intervention and half were controlled. Teachers received a three-day training workshop. The intervention lessons were taught three days a week and were about 20-30 minutes a lesson. Data was collected through teacher rating scales, child self-reporting scales, a feeling word vocabulary assessment, and child interviews. Data was taken three times; pre intervention, directly post intervention, and in a two year follow up. The PATHS curriculum was taught on a regular basis throughout most of one school year, and had daily activities for promoting generalization.

Results revealed intervention and control groups were generally similar in baseline testing except that the intervention group had higher internalizing behaviors (Kam et al., (2004). Every time data was collected, teachers reported decreased externalizing behaviors in the treatment group and increased behaviors in the control group. For internalizing behaviors, both groups demonstrated increases over the years, however, the treatment group showed a significantly lower increase. No difference between the control and treatment groups in social

competence. In the self-reported depression rating, both groups reported lower depression scores (less depression symptoms). However, the treatment group reported a much higher rate of decline than the control group. The treatment group increased their negative feeling vocabulary at a faster rate than control. While both groups increased their positive feeling vocabulary at the same rate. For problem solving skills, there was no significant difference between control and intervention group. However, there was a marginal decrease in aggressive solutions and increase in non-confrontational solutions for the intervention group.

Authors indicated that the most significant benefits of the PATHS curriculum were in the decrease in teacher reported externalizing and internalizing problems as well as reductions in depression self-reported in the children even after a two year follow up (Kam et al., 2004). The major problems authors found were that, while most students were in self-contained classrooms for the majority of the day, the data was not specific to disability, such as EBD. In addition, it was not done as a full school program as PATHS intended, which would involve things like common language and posters around the building to reinforce lessons.

Stop and Think

McDaniel et al., (2017) performed a study to see the effect of the "Stop and Think" curriculum on five students in 2nd and 3rd grade in a self-contained classroom for students with challenging behavior in an alternative school. The students' class sizes ranged from 6 to 8 students and each class had one teacher and one paraprofessional. The study measured the effect of the curriculum on students' negative social behavior. Negative social behavior was,

> ...defined as instances of arguing, teasing, failing to accept consequences such as arguing
>
> or demonstrating noncompliance, verbal aggression when assigned a consequence by an

adult, interrupting, inadequate or inappropriate turn-taking, not keeping hands and feet to self, leaving the assigned area, and socially inappropriate comments or language (p. 59). Teachers were given a two-hour training on the curriculum, and implemented it with students for three consecutive weeks. The students were observed for data on the negative social behaviors pre and post observation as well as during the weeks when the curriculum was actually being implemented. The results showed while all five students had high levels of negative social behaviors before the intervention, they all showed significant decrease in those behaviors post intervention. The authors believed these results indicated that the "Stop and Think" curriculum is able to be implemented with fidelity with limited training and is highly effective in improving behavior and social skills. Some limitations of this study were that it had no control group, it had a very small number of students involved, it had only a two week follow up, they only took behavior data on academic time not social time, and they did not track academic outcomes.

Friends

Schoenfeld & Mathur, (2009) did a study on the effectiveness of the Friends curriculum at decreasing student anxiety at school, increasing academic engagement and increasing appropriate classroom behaviors. The study involved three, 6th grade students with EBD and anxiety at a private school for students with emotional or behavioral needs, all of whom took daily psychiatric medication. The results were measured by rating scales, observation, and teacher reports. The curriculum was implemented in twelve, 1 on 1, thirty-minute sessions done twice a week, with the researcher who was self-taught in the curriculum.

The results suggested that all three students showed significantly lower anxiety, increases in academic engagement, and increases in appropriate school behavior in post intervention assessments. This seems to indicate that the curriculum can be very effective with only partial

implementation and limited training. Limitations in this study were that it had a small sample size of only three students, not having a control group, having a short post observation of only three months, and no measurement of the academic growth of students.

Take Charge

Van Loan et al., (2019) completed a study to find the effectiveness of the "Take Charge" curriculum in improving students' knowledge of and ability to use social problems solving skills. There were 92 students involved in the study. They were from 11 different self-contained EBD classrooms which included, "69 males and 23 females, with a mean age of 13.3… 48 African American, 33 Caucasian, five Hispanic/Latino, and six students designated into another category," (p. 45). The "Take Charge" curriculum is a 26 lesson-program focusing on teaching six key steps of social information processing, "Check—see if you're angry, Hold on—calm down and think, Analyze—figure out the cause, Reflect—on possible solutions, Go for it—pick a solution, and Evaluate—see what happened," (p. 146).

Teachers were given a one day, seven-hour training on the program and implemented the program over three months (Van Loan et al., 2019). The results were reported by a questionnaire and inventory taken by the students, pre-intervention and post-intervention, and within a month of completing the program. Both the control and the intervention group had similar scores on the pre-intervention data. In the post-intervention data, the intervention group revealed significant improvement in knowledge of and ability to use social problems solving skills, compared to minor improvement in the control group. Authors concluded that the results indicated that the "Take Charge" curriculum was able to give students foundations knowledge about social skills and help them apply it to their lives, improving student behavior. Problems with the study were

that the authors only used student report data not any teacher reports, they did not get any student opinions of the curriculum, and there was no long-term follow-up.

Social Harmony

The purpose of this study, by Haymovitz, Houseal-Allport, Lee, & Svistova, (2018) was to examine the perceived impact of a universal school wide SEL program, Social Harmony, after three years of school wide implementation. Participants were chosen from the Orchard Valley Waldorf school, which has been implementing Social Harmony for three years. The whole school community was offered a chance to participate. Then 32 students (7th/ 8th graders), parents, administrators, and faculty members chose to participate in the study. Results were not sorted by the position of the person completing the study.

The authors used concept mapping to assess the perceived impact. Concept mapping is a six-step process: preparation, brainstorming, structuring of statements, representation of the statements, interpretation, and utilization. With the focus prompt of, "One specific result of Social Harmony in our school has been..." (p. 49). Participants were asked to provide as many responses that they thought applicable. After creating the ideas participants were asked to group and order the responses. The creation of ideas/statements and the sorting of the ideas happened in two different sessions. While all 32 participants completed the creation of ideas section only 10 participants completed the ordering of the response section that happened on a separate day. The participants created 80 statements which were organized into 6 themes; faculty, school climate, student relationships, individual students, infrastructure, and parents' relations. Under faculty themes were having a unified way of handling discipline and having more awareness by faculty of problems faced by students. Under school climate themes were improved teacher-student relationships, student behavior not viewed as "good or bad", and students feeling" listened to"

and "taken seriously." Under student relationships themes were the school feeling more inclusive, students feeling better at talking to other students, improved ability to handle conflict, and older students supporting younger students. A drawback was that students said they felt forced to talk with people they were fighting with. Under individual students' themes were an increased willingness to ask for support for teachers, better ability to take others' perspective, better at expressing feelings and needs, feeling closer to other students, and feeling better at solving problems. Under Infrastructure themes were feeling that the program was a lot of work, new staff not being trained, hard to make a Social Harmony committee because of time, and many people had reverted back to old school discipline methods because there was not proper infrastructure such as a clear leader with time to invest in planning and training. Under parents' relationships themes were feeling parents were not given enough information about how Social Harmony was used, feeling it was not used when needed in previous years, and feeling the connection between parents and the committee has diminished from the time the school started implementing Social Harmony.

Results demonstrated that students, parents, and teachers all felt that the program was helpful. "Specifically, study participants consistently reported that after the implementation of Social Harmony, they observed stronger preparedness and self-efficacy of faculty and staff members to identify and address social–emotional concerns, better relationships, more positive perceptions of self and others, and improved school climate," (p. 51). This study also showed the desire of school staff to have a common framework, language, and training within a school setting to make the program most effective. The two components that were reported as most lacking in the school implementation of this program were lack of parental involvement and lack of a strong consistent leader. Authors suggested that a strong leader, such as a social worker, be

put in place. Another limitation of the study noted that the school that used this curriculum is a small, private Waldorf school. These schools are already very different from the majority of schools by intention. This makes it challenging to assess the effectiveness and feasibility of this program in other school settings. There also was no data on the frequency of disciplinary transactions before and after the intervention started.

Second Step

Having high social emotional skills have been shown to be a predictor of student success later in life. Many studies have been completed into the effectiveness of various social emotional skill programs to improve outcomes for students. However, Low, Smolkowski, Cook, & Desfosses (2019) found that few studies looked into the effect of these programs beyond a year. Therefore, in this study authors sought to see the effect of a specific social emotional skills program, "Second Step", would have over a longer span of 2 years. "Second Step" is a program that has already shown positive outcomes in studies of one year or less. Authors looked into the effect of "Second Step" on social, behavioral, and academic outcomes.

This study used a total of 4,613 students in "Second Step" schools and 4,523 students in control schools. The grades of students ranged from Kindergarten through 3rd grade. Students were from 41 schools across 5 districts in Washington State and 20 schools from one district in Arizona. Sample was representative of ethnicity distribution of school-age children in the United States. Schools were provided with materials and a small amount of training on "Second Step". Students were assessed by teachers completing the "Devereux Student Strengths Assessment" (DESSA) – Second Step Edition and also completing the "Strengths Difficulties Questionnaire" (SDQ). Trained graduate students performed the Behavioral Observation System, looking at time

students are engaged and time students show disruptive behavior. Aimsweb curriculum-based measures were used to assess oral reading fluency and math calculation.

The students receiving the "Second Step" curriculum did slightly better on the SDQ measures of emotional symptoms and hyperactivity. And the students whose pretests were the lowest at the start showed the most growth by the end. For the DESSA, the observations, and the curriculum-based measures the effects were similar for the "Second Step" and the control group. The authors concluded that it made sense they did not see differences in academic outcomes in this study because in their research they found that it is believed it can take 3-4 years of a new social emotional learning program to have an effect on academics. They were surprised and indicated that it was disappointing that there were no significant differences in the academic engagement and disruptions behavior observations. This was attributed to the differences that can be present in the day to day behavior in children as well as a need to observe the students in more settings than just core education times. Also, while many of the areas assessed in the SDQ and the DESSA showed growth during the school year, students would regress during the summer. Authors suggested that maybe more review should happen at the end of the year as well as creating something that parents could use at home. Authors also believed that the student scoring the lowest in the pretest showing the most improvements fits with previous literature on the subject.

Diversity Assessment in Studies

Rowe & Trickett, (2018) performed a meta-analysis of 117 studies into SEL programs with the intention of exploring how diversity was taken into account in these studies. They specifically looked at how and how often demographic data was collected, if any moderation by

diversity was used to see differences in results and if so, what the results were, and if articles mentioned diversity in their discussion of the study.

When looking at how often demographic data was collected it was found that 70% of the reviewed articles did not take data on all three major demographic categories of gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES) and instead only had data on one or two of these. In addition, 15% of the articles did not collect any demographic data. Almost half of the studies would use vague language to talk about race such as "other," "minority," or "multiethnic." When looking at data on moderation, only 41 of the reviewed articles had any moderation data. Almost all of these moderations were only moderating for gender. Finally, there was almost no discussion of diversity in these studies. Only 40% of the moderation analyses used any research to support their use, and only 13 of the moderations were even explaining in depth in the discussions of the articles.

Rowe & Trickett, (2018) found these results troubling in light of the fact while most SEL programs show many positive outcomes for students in both behaviors and academics, it is hard to generalize these outcomes to diverse groups because of the lack of data on demographics and moderation. They suggested that more research and thought needs to be placed on reporting on and moderation for demographic categories so that SEL programs can be appropriately assessed. Key limitations of this study are that only studies from the United States were used and none of the authors of the studies were contacted.

Summary

This thesis started by exploring who students with EBD are, and how the frequent presence of extreme externalizing and internalizing behavior outcomes for these students is often poor. Then the thesis author researched Social Emotional Learning as a way that educators look

at these behaviors from students, and focus on teaching skills to students instead of punishments and rewards. Next, the thesis approached the topic of how to assess students with EBD's SEL skills. Finally, the thesis took a deeper examination into specific SEL curriculum and strategies and how effective they seem to be in Center Based EBD programs. Now the author of this thesis will summarize reasons for this project, provide a summary of the literature, professional application of what has been learned, and other concluding points.

CHAPTER III: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Reason for Topic Choice

I choose the topic of what Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is most effective for students with Emotional Behavior Disorders (EBD) because of the lack of resources and guidance I had seen in my time as a paraprofessional and a teacher in the EBD field. When I received resources no training ever accompanied the resource. I found this to be ironic because of the heavy emphasis these schools put on implementing social emotional lessons into the daily curriculum. In reading, math, and other academic topics there are scope and sequences that schools and teachers follow. Schools buy comprehensive curriculum to help with this. However, when it comes to SEL, the standards are less detailed and the curriculum is less comprehensive. Few schools have specific social emotional lessons that are used by all. Even so, there is an abundance of different social emotional lessons like: Second Step, Mind Up, SuperFlex, and an endless amount of resources on places like Pinterest and Teachers Pay Teachers. How are teachers supposed to have the time to find out which are the best? Some curriculum is designed to serve students with ASD, while others work best with kids out of the special education programs as more of a behavior management tool. My goal was to find what resources were available and what research on those resources was available. To support this, I wanted to know what students with EBD were lacking socially to find out which of these SEL programs would be best for them.

Summary of Literature

Who are students in Center Based EBD programs?

As I looked at who students with EBD are, I found that most people saw two main struggles for these students: externalizing behaviors and internalizing behaviors. These problems

are not unique to students with EBD; however it seems that those labeled with EBD are those who show these behaviors most often or are unable to grow out of these behaviors as they get older. There are many diagnosable disorders connected to EBD; Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Conduct disorder, Anxiety, Depression, and schizophrenia. Students with EBD often struggle with making and keeping friends, listening to others, taking turns in conversation, greeting others, joining in ongoing activities, giving compliments, expressing anger in socially acceptable ways, offering to help others, following rules, being organized and focused, and doing quality work. The skills students with EBD struggle with can be summarized as: flexibility/adaptability skills, frustration tolerance skills, and problem-solving skills.

However, not every student with EBD has one of these and assessing for EBD is a very subjective process for many reasons, including differing expectations of behavior between people and races. Most modern research points that the reasoning for these behaviors is connected to a lack of skills in some areas, whether it is staying focused when distractions happen or how to get calm when feeling anxious.

What is SEL and What Standards Exist about SEL?

Social Emotional Learning is the process of teaching students the skills needed to live functioning lives: interacting appropriately with other people and knowing and understanding themselves and their abilities. They can be summarized into five domains: self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship, and responsible decision-making skills. Students with low skills in these domains have poor short- and long-term outcomes such as physical and verbal aggression, lower peer status, self-injury, failing courses, suspensions, dropping out of school, as well as high arrest and probation rates post high school (Wagner et al., 2005; Matson, 2009). However, when students are taught these skills, they have improved peer relationships,

less frequent and less intense conduct problems, increased emotionality stability, and improved academics. Often the theories and research about SEL come into direct contradiction with current practice about how to handle disruptive behaviors in students. SEL research says that instead of focusing on trying to punish or reward students till they do what educators want, educators need to teach them through SEL so they can do what educators want.

SEL is becoming more and more popular in recent years and because of this I assumed there would be many different standards developed to guide educators in teaching SEL. However, I was surprised to find only eight states had freestanding SEL standards for K-12, and these standards vary drastically. The most frequently talked about standards in research are CASEL's 5 domains: self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship, and responsible decision-making skills. The most common skills worked on in research based SEL programs are identifying ones' feelings, interplay of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, behavioral coping skills/relaxation, cognitive coping/self-talk, goal setting and planning, mindfulness, identifying others' feelings, perspective taking, valuing diversity, problem solving, assertiveness, and social skills.

How Do You Assess the Needs of Students in Center Based EBD programs?

The key to teaching any topic at school are assessments. Assessments allow the teacher to see where students are on a specific topic and how students are growing on a topic. When you look at academic assessments the main way to complete those is by testing student knowledge of content. However, with SEL assessment there are many more options like student self-reports, teacher and staff reports, direct observations of the student, performance measures, family reports, and peer reports. Each method has its benefits and drawbacks, so to find the best assessment for a specific student you need to decide what is best for them. Can they handle or be

trusted to honestly answer a self-questionnaire or rating scale, or is it better that just teachers and parents answer them? Are you measuring their knowledge of a SEL topic? Then a more typical student assessment is best. Are you measuring their ability to use SEL skills in different environments? The observations would be best. The important part is being thoughtful about what is best for the student and the topic assessed.

Additionally, when doing assessments where students are answering it is important to emphasize the importance and confidentiality of the assessments. If students do not feel like it is important or that their answers will not be confidential then they may not answer truthfully. The best source for assessments I found available was on the CASEL website. They developed an extensive list of assessments for whatever SEL area needs to be assessed, and it is in an easy-to-use format where you can search for assessments using different filters.

What are Effective SEL Programs for Students in Center Based EBD programs?

Many SEL programs have shown positive results. PATHS, Stop and Think, Friends, Take Charge, Social Harmony, and Second Step all showed some level of increased positive behavior and decreased negative behaviors. All of these programs worked to directly teach SEL skills to students through direct small groups or one-on-one teaching. Some studies only had three or five students assessed while others had hundreds. While all studies showed at least a little benefit, in the larger studies showed that the students with the lowest SEL skills in the initial assessments showed the most improvement where students with the highest initial scores would show the least.

One method was a little different than the other programs. The "Collaborative and Proactive Solutions" model focuses less on teaching a specific curriculum of SEL knowledge and skill and more on teaching skills related to problem solving. This method has teachers and

students pair up to talk and find solutions to unsolved problems in behavior that are challenging in a school setting. This method hopes to teach the students involved not just how to fix problems in specific situations but to give students the skills to solve all sorts of social problems.

What Role does Diversity Play in Students in Center Based EBD programs?

Diversity clearly plays a large role in EBD programs; this can be seen in the high quantity of African American and Hispanic students in EBD programs. However, based on current research, researchers know very little about why that is or how it should affect teaching methods. Almost no studies looked into the details of how students of different races respond to different types of SEL instruction. This means that while it is known that something is wrong with the high levels of African American and Hispanic students in EBD programs and with behavioral referrals, it is not known why nor how to work to change that.

Limitations for Research

There are many limitations to the many studies reviewed in this paper. First, I was able to find very little research on the racial disportionality of students with EBD. In addition, each study did very little to moderate the difference in the effects of EBD programs on students of different races; in fact, one of the studies I looked at researched SEL programs and found very few look at how diversity affects any aspect of their results. This means that even where studies showed a positive effect, schools need to be cautious when using them and not assume the program will work for everyone.

Many studies I looked at would account for student progress of the subjects taught in the study however, they did not have control groups to compare progress with. This means it is hard to tell whether the progress measured or observed in the studies was because of the SEL program or if it was just typical growth for any student with or without the specific program. Additionally,

some of the studies included in this thesis, as well as many others I considered using in this paper, were on very small groups of students. Two of the studies reviewed only had three or five students participate. While this is an acceptable first step to get some early thoughts on the program, it would not be wise to use the results of these small studies for anything other than planning for future studies.

My personal research also had many limitations. In this paper I mostly looked at SEL programs that specifically worked with students in Center based EBD programs. There are many other studies about SEL programs that work with much larger groups and have control groups, they just were in mainstream classrooms or schools. While these studies would not tell everything about their use with students in center-based EBD programs, it could give some indication. Additionally, many popular treatments for students with EBD include some form of therapy either separately from the classroom or in partnership with the classroom. These forms of therapy work that teach the same SEL skills to students in slightly different ways. However, for this paper I chose to just focus on programs that could be applied by the teacher alone.

Implications for Future Research

Many studies of SEL suggested that the most effective way for SEL to be delivered was through a modular approach. Instead of teachers needing to look through many different programs to find needed material, if programs can be combined based on core components then teachers could more easily find needed resources and more easily tailor lessons to specific student needs. Creating a modular SEL program is the next step forward, however it will take a lot of study into its effectiveness and feasibility.

Despite the work by many groups like CASEL very few stated have freestanding SEL standards. This may be primarily because of the overall lack of research into SEL. The lack of

research is a problem because it means that current and future standards may not have reasonable developmental expectations of students and may incorrectly emphasize skills based on assumptions instead of evidence-based research. Additional priorities in future research should be studies that look into the long-term effect, two years or more, of SEL programs, as well as more work into SEL developmental models and increased research-based teacher training.

Conclusion

Best practice for students with challenging behavior has clearly moved away from punishment, and even rewards, and towards a more proactive approach of teaching students the skills needed to be successful in the classroom and in life. The data reveals that for the students who are struggling the most when educators just try to change their behavior with only motivational tools like punishments and rewards educators make little to no difference. To see real change in students, educators need to, as educators, focus less on what they are "getting away" with and more on how educators can teach the skills to meet the expectations they are being asked to meet. This means thoroughly studying what students are doing and why they are doing it. It means providing time to teach SEL skills and talk with students before a negative behavior occurs, not just being reactive once the behaviors happen. While this seems like it might be more work, in reality you are already spending time on the behaviors when they are disrupting classrooms. If you're able to proactively spend the time working with the student on the skills, they need then these behaviors should stop happening as the student builds the necessary skills to function in the classroom.

In addition, while teaching SEL skills to the whole school and classroom at the same time is helpful and has shown benefits, SEL instruction is most helpful when it is specific to the students who are lacking specific skills. This is evidenced by the fact that most of the studies

indicated that the students that start with high SEL skills, do not show much growth. Reversely, where students with low skills demonstrated significant growth. Finally, one of the biggest needs shared by teachers in any of these studies is the need for adequate and regular training, as well as the support of school leadership. The most significant and helpful discovery I made while researching this paper was the CASEL SELect guide for choosing SEL programs and their assessment guide for choosing SEL assessment. These sources put together many quality resources which provides a quick and efficient way for teachers to find what they need.

Professional Application

I believe that the most applicable part of this research for me as a setting four center-based EBD teacher is the need for working with the student to find proactive solutions to classroom problems. The old maxim is that, "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime". When I just use a lot of consequences for my students, whether positive or negative, I am at best "feeding them for a day", letting them meet a small, immediate expectation. However, when I work with them to find solutions and build skills then I "feed them for a lifetime" by giving them the skills to find solutions on their own. As a caveat, I would say that especially for students with the most severe SEL needs, like those in center-based EBD programs, continuing to have a reward structure is helpful. This is because it helps ensure expectations are clear as many of these students struggle to understand expectations and where the line is. In addition, I have found that a reward system helps eliminate "junk" behavior that is not related directly to lacking skills but has developed over time as they have met failure after failure in school settings. Then once this "junk" behavior is eliminated then I can see what the lacking skills are more clearly, and choose appropriate SEL skills to teach.

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