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Social and Emotional Learning in Daily Instruction for Intermediate Elementary Students.

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SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN DAILY INSTRUCTION FOR INTERMEDIATE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS.

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THE EXAMINATION AND INTERPRETATION ON HOW TO PRIORITIZE AND EMBED ESSENTIAL SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN DAILY INSTRUCTION FOR INTERMEDIATE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS.

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Abstract

Teachers today are consumed with a vast number of responsibilities. All teachers, no matter what licensure or specialized area, have the same responsibility to ensure that students receive an equitable and quality education by providing students challenging opportunities that help them rise to their potential and be successful in life. A key challenge for 21st-century schools involves serving culturally diverse students with varied abilities and motivations for learning (Durlak, Dymnicki, Schellinger, Taylor & Weissberg, 2011). Research has encouraged new initiatives for education involving culturally responsive teaching and trauma informed practices, which address and better serve the diverse needs of our student population. To effectively address academic and nonacademic barriers that impede the ability of many children to succeed in school, all school personnel need the knowledge and skills to feel confident working with the whole child within an educational context (Kransdorf et al. as cited in Anderson, Blitz, & Saastamoinen, (2015, p.130). Teachers must see and teach the whole child, not only embracing academic standards, but also social and emotional learning needs. They must also identify more effective ways to embed what their student need with the demands that the 21st century brings within their classrooms.

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Chapter I: Introduction

History of Special Education and the Special Educator's Role

The way students with disabilities have been taught in schools across the nation has changed over time. Since the passage of Public Law 94-142 in 1975, which codified the educational rights of students with disabilities, special education has undergone several transformations (Volonino & Zigmond, 2007). Volonino and Zigmond explain that within the era of separate special education, specially trained teachers delivered instruction tailored to student needs in individual or small group settings (2007). Student learning needs were carefully diagnosed through a variety of initial and ongoing assessments followed by carefully designed instruction tailored to meet individual student learning needs. This type of instruction has been referred to as clinical teaching, diagnostic prescriptive teaching, or response contingent instruction (Zigmond, 1997). Therefore, the responsibilities of special educators were apparent and distinctive (Klingner & Vaughn, 2002). Zigmond (1997, p. 292) summarized these responsibilities: "The special educator provided instruction based on the student's individual need. Special education was intensive, urgent and goal-directed and it was delivered by a uniquely trained teacher. The role of the special education teacher was to teach what could not be learned elsewhere—it was special teaching." In 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act required schools to provide students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum and justify any special education services provided outside the general education classroom (Magiera & Zigmond, 2005.)

Prior to school reforms, the responsibility for teaching students with special needs resided primarily with the special educator. Although collaboration was integral to the assessment and Individual Education Plan (IEP) process, the delivery of instruction was a principle role of the special educator, who typically delivered instruction separately from the general education teacher, outside or in addition to general education (Volonino & Zigmond, 2007). Based on school reform and a shift in focus with how to meet the needs of those identified as at-risk and those with below-average achievement, the dynamics of special education and the role of the special education teacher has shifted.

The inclusion of students with disabilities into general education has been the subject of intense debate and much research (Volonino & Zigmond, 2007). Volonino and Zigmond collected and examined research, then concluded that recent research examining programs that employed full inclusion models that utilize special educators in either consulting or co-teaching roles produced evidenced equivocal results (Hocutt, 1996; Manset & Semmel, 1997). Volonino and Zigmund discussed studies that illustrated positive trends for students with mild or moderate disabilities educated within the general education environment, and their research indicated that inclusion programs are shown to be moderately effective for about one-half of students with disabilities.

As special education began to move into the general education setting, the main role of the special educator became that of a co-teacher within general education classrooms (Volonino & Zigmund, 2007). Volonino and Zigmond asked, “Does coteaching bring special education and other supportive practices associated with effective instruction for special learners into the general education classroom?” (2007, p. 294). Coteaching offers a

partnership between the classroom teacher and special education teacher. Co-planning is an important part of coteaching, where expertise from both parties are considered and included as part of the instruction and meeting the diverse needs of the learners. Even with the many co-teaching models that have been developed, challenges of meeting student needs still exist. In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, which highlights Response to Intervention (RTI) as a solid approach for identifying students for special education services (Zirkel & Krohn, 2008). Buffum, Mattos, and Weber (2012) cautioned that RTI should not be used solely for special education placement considerations, but that it should become the system or framework by which all students are supported with instruction that is designed to meet their needs.

RTI

Changes in IDEA led to the addition of another way to determine eligibility for Special Education and related services, specifically, the Response to Intervention (RTI) model (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Harris-Murri, King, and Rostenberg defined RTI as an inadequate change in target behaviors as a function of intervention (2006). At first, RTI was to be an alternative in identifying students with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) as one of the criteria (severe discrepancy between ability and achievement) in eligibility in this category of disability. Research has demonstrated that the use of the discrepancy model, which is characterized by using a student's intelligence quotient (IQ) and standardized academic achievement testing discrepancies for the determination of SLD contributes to the disproportionate representation of culturally

and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in special education (Donovan & Cross, 2002 as cited in Harris-Murri et al., 2006). The improvements in IDEA associated with the use of the RTI eligibility determination model have also been applied to evaluations for other eligibility categories including Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD) (Gresham, 2005; Kavale, Holdnack, & Mostert, 2005, as cited in Harris-Murri et al., 2006). Harris-Murri et al. stated that regardless of the suspected disability "category," the addition of the RTI eligibility determination model to IDEA brought the consideration of interpersonal and institutional factors which may prevent or contribute to students' academic and social/emotional problems (2006). Looking at these interpersonal and institutional factors outlined a change for educators to look at broader and more in-depth examination of daily interactions that impact student achievement and behavior. Harris-Murri et al.(2006) noted from Klingner et al. (2005), that RTI moves away from the “wait to fail” mentality that special education has historically been accused of supporting, where children have to struggle significantly before receiving specialized support. RTI supports the consideration of a child’s strengths and needs, stresses the use of evidence-based intervention practices, and assumes that the general education setting is the place where the responsibility for student progress is documented and instruction is fulfilled. The RTI approach assumes that general education has active responsibility for the delivery of rigorous instruction, research-based intervention, and prompt identification of individuals with disabilities, while collaborating with families as well as special education personnel (Harris-Murrri et al., 2006).

PBIS and Trauma Informed Teaching

With the focus on RTI in classrooms today, collaboration among general education staff and special education staff is an essential piece to academic and behavioral instructional delivery. In recent years, a focus within the RTI educational model, has looked more closely at how to address students with emotional and social needs. Crosby noted that childhood trauma affects many youths across the United States and has had a devastating impact on their functioning, well-being, and overall academic and vocational outcomes (2015). Experiences of psychological trauma can impede cognitive, social, and emotional development in childhood, which can impair a child's academic achievement, behavior, interpersonal skills, and general success in school. Trauma-informed educational practices in schools can provide the much needed support to these students, improving their projected academic success and future life outcomes (Crosby, 2015).

The Positive Behavioral Intervention Support (PBIS) models have been a part of the school RTI model to address these non-cognitive factors that impact overall student progress. PBIS is a tiered model of approaches, based on severity of behavior or social emotional need. According to PBIS.org, classroom PBIS includes preventative and responsive approaches that may be effectively implemented with all students in a classroom and intensified to support small groups or a few individual students (2017, pbis.org) PBIS strategies are essential components to help decrease undesirable behaviors and improve student social behavior and academic progress. Many schools across the nation implement school-wide PBIS models, where building-wide expectations and systems link directly into individual classrooms.

Research Questions

What is the most effective way to deliver social emotional learning to upper elementary aged students? What are the necessary social skills, or character development traits, for children in elementary school? What are the most impactful teaching practices and programs for teaching social skills? What does trauma informed teaching research say about direct instruction of social skills? Is there an effective and manageable way to track a student's attainment of explicitly taught social skills? Is there a clear scope and sequence or continuum of these social skills?

The systematic frameworks that are in place in today's schools and classrooms consider not only student's academic needs, but also their social emotional learning needs. The following literature review will focus on and reveal the necessary social skills, or character development traits for children in elementary school, along with examining effective ways to deliver social emotional learning to upper elementary aged students within the general education classroom.

Chapter II: LITERATUTRE REVIEW

Literature Search Procedures

To locate the literature for this thesis, searches of Education Journals, ERIC, Academic Search Premier, and EBSCO were conducted for publications from 1997-2017. This list was narrowed by only reviewing published empirical studies from peer-reviewed journals that focused on social emotional learning, mental health, trauma informed practices, culturally responsive teaching, and professional development found in journals that addressed the guiding questions. The key words that were used in these searches included "social skills in upper elementary," "social emotional learning in upper elementary," "history of special education, "and "trauma informed teaching practices." The structure of this chapter is to review the literature on social emotional learning in two sections in this order- Social emotional learning and Academic Achievement; SEL and best teaching practices, SEL standards and SEL Assessments.

Social Emotional Learning and Academic Achievement

In the research to practice brief by Nicholas Yoder, he identified teaching practices that promote social emotional learning and describes three teaching frameworks that embed social emotional learning practices. Yoder defined social and emotional learning (SEL) as crucial competencies that our students need to make successful choices (2015). SEL competencies are skills, behaviors, and attitudes that individuals need to make successful choices (Yoder, 2015). These competencies are critical for students living in poverty, under resourced areas, and who live with adverse childhood effects (ACES) or trauma. When students develop SEL competencies, they are more capable of managing

their emotions, seek help when needed, and problem solve in demanding situations (Yoder, 2015). Yoder identified five SEL competencies and they include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision making. For teachers to address these competencies in the classroom, Yoder explained that there needs to be access to systematic supports from the state, district, and school (2015). There are ten teaching practices that Yoder said that teachers should implement to embed SEL and each align with common core standards: student-centered discipline, teacher language, responsibility and choice, warmth and support, cooperative learning, classroom discussions, self-reflection and self-assessment, balanced instruction, academic press and expectations, and competence building-modeling-practicing-feedback-coaching (2015).

Durlak et al. said that social-emotional competencies not only prepare students to be able to participate in learning experiences, they also increase students' capacity to learn (2011). Core competencies identified by Durlak et al. include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (2011). This meta-analysis on 213 schools with 207,034 students K-12 showed that when students participate in programs with SEL embedded in instruction, they significantly improve their academic performance and achievement. Through Durlak's study he found that when SEL programs were in place, significant positive effects occurred. SEL programs increased students' prosocial behaviors and reduced conduct and internalizing problems, improved academic performance on achievement tests and grades (Durlak et al., 2011). In this study, Durlak noted that there was an 11 percentile gain in academic performance within these SEL programs (2011). Schools and educators who receive pressure from No Child Left Behind legislation may want to look at SEL programs that could increase

academic performance at this rate. Durlak et al. found that when Sequenced, Active, Focused, Explicit (SAFE) practices were part of the SEL programs, they were more effective in multiple outcome areas than others who did not follow SAFE (2011). Durlak et al. noted a report of the Surgeon General's conference on children's mental health and expresses the importance of mental health promotion through SEL programming in schools, "Mental health is a critical component of children's learning and general health. Fostering social and emotional health in children as a part of a healthy child development must therefore be a national priority" (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 420).

One study conducted by Batanova and Loukas from The University of Texas at Austin looked at how an SEL framework in schools can impact overt and invert aggression. Batanova and Loukas defined the purpose of aggression as behavior that is used to establish or maintain social status, especially during the transition to middle school (Batanova & Loukas, 2016). Overt aggression is commonly seen as hitting, yelling, or any physical means to gain control over others. Invert aggression is seen as gossiping about others to gain popularity, verbal bullying, and manipulation among students to gain control over a peer group. This study was conducted among 479 students aged 10-14 across three middle schools in Texas. They assessed the interrelated effects of empathy, effortful control, and interpersonal school climate. They used various measures including the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), Early Adolescent Temperament Questionnaire-revised (EATQ-R), My Class Inventory (MCI), and Crick's scale. All measurements were on a 0-4 or 1-5 Likert scale. Based on the results of these assessments, they concluded that individual competencies coupled with a positive learning environment helps prevent or reduce student's negative behavior such as aggression (Batanova & Loukas, 2016). Their study

resulted in the notion that empathetic concern, especially as a student transition to middle school, greatly reduces both kinds of aggression.

Learning is a social behavior. Schools must attend to including prosocial behaviors and essential SEL skills into daily interactions and instruction, which will increase academic achievement. Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg in the article titled, *The Scientific Base Linking Social and Emotional Learning to School Success*, in the Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, defined SEL as the process through which children enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaving to achieve important life tasks (2007, p.6). When people are competent in SEL, they can recognize and manage their emotions, establish healthy relationships, set positive goals, meet personal and social needs, and make responsible and ethical decisions (2007). Zins et al. promoted that social-emotional learning goals are no longer seen as a separate or disconnected part of daily instruction and curriculum, but is "parallel to the academic mission of schools; rather, it is essential and can be taught and implemented in schools in a number of ways (2007, p. 9). Different approaches were described that address social-emotional learning as part of student achievement. One approach is to include specific SEL curricula, outlined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework, which include bullying or substance abuse issues. A second approach is to infuse SEL skills into the regular education curriculum. Zins et al. said this is essential "so that academic and SEL skills are coordinated and reinforce one another. Once students possess skills such as being able to set goals and solve problems, they can apply them to enhance their study behaviors and increase their academic engagement, or these same skills can be applied to subjects such as social studies and literacy" (2007, p.9). A third approach is to develop a supportive

learning environment where students are able to learn in a caring and safe environment where high expectations and reinforcement opportunities are present. Altering the instructional process is another approach that will help foster social and emotional learning as part of the learning process, where students learn conflict resolution skills and learn from one another. This approach correlates with another approach called informal curriculum. Informal curriculum can occur during times such as morning meeting, lunchroom, recess, and extracurricular activities. A sixth approach is partnerships between parents and teachers; this kind of partnership will model prosocial relationships and make expectations clearer for the students. The last approach described by Zins et al. includes providing engaging real-life learning experiences for students that require them to apply SEL competencies, such as service learning opportunities in the community. Service learning involves "teaching and learning . . . that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (National Commission on Service Learning, 2002, p. 3, as cited in Zins et al., 2007, p.12).

Two problem behaviors for adolescents that may be impacted by service learning opportunities are teenage pregnancy and academic failure, as studied by Allen, Philliber, Herrling, and Kuperminc (1997). For the purposes of this review academic failure was the focus. The study conducted by Allen et al. (1997) included 25 high school sites nationwide, where each site was assigned to either a Teen Outreach program or control group and students were assessed at the beginning of the program and nine months later. They found that students who were part of the Teen Outreach programs showed rates of fewer teenage pregnancies, suspensions, and school failure than those students not in a Teen Outreach program. The Teen Outreach program offered three interrelated components including

supervised community volunteer experiences, classroom discussions about those experiences, and classroom based discussions and activities related to the social development tasks of adolescence. Allen et al. stated that, "one of the more striking features of the Teen Outreach program is that it does not explicitly focus on the problem behaviors it seeks to prevent but rather seeks to enhance participants' competence in decision making, in interacting with peers and adults, and in recognizing and handling their own emotions" (1997, p. 738). In other words, by creating a means for the youth involved to become more meaningful components of society, it was found that learning is social and students learn key social emotional skills from each other by participating in real authentic life experiences.

Robert E. Salvin studied and analyzed the positive long-term effects of cooperative learning in schools. In an article titled, *"Cooperative Learning and Academic Achievement: Why Does Groupwork Work?"* Salvin referred to cooperative learning as instructional methods in which students work in small groups to help each other learn (2014). He reviewed four major theoretical perspectives on the achievement effects of cooperative learning; motivational, social cohesion, developmental, and cognitive elaboration. The research he reviewed in this article focus on achievement outcomes of cooperative learning in elementary and secondary schools, and on the evidence supporting various theories to account for effects of cooperative learning on achievement. A major find is that when students work toward a consistent goal together, they develop social emotional skills that will produce the necessary work skills and prosocial behavior that is required to function effectively in today's society. Salvin said, "Group goals may also lead to group cohesiveness, increasing caring or concern among group members and making them feel responsible for

one another's achievement thereby motivating students to engage in cognitive processes which enhance learning" (2014, p. 789). Additionally, Salvin (2014) continued to outline the benefits of group goals to push students to take move sole responsibility for each other, rather than depending on the classroom teacher. This allowed for students to manage and solve classroom organization conflicts and demonstrate a higher amount of appropriate learning times (p.789).

SEL instruction in classrooms and schools, whether implemented formally or informally correlates to increased academic achievement. Research has shown multiple times that learning is a social behavior and students learn best when given authentic life experiences to practice developing their skills, socially and academically, together in a safe and supportive learning environment with common goals.

SEL Effective Teaching Practices

Schools serving communities with high rates of poverty face the challenges of meeting the needs of students who are often exposed to significant family and environmental stressors and trauma, impacting students' health and mental health (Anderson, Blitz, & Saastamoinen, 2015). Classroom teachers and staff are increasingly aware of the role these adverse factors play in a child's learning and development. Teachers yearn for effective ways to meet the needs and overcome these challenges within their classroom. Anderson conducted a study with 25 teachers, pre-kindergarten through grade five with 425 students, 50% students of color, and less than 10% met state standards (2015). The study included three parts 1) needs assessment with classroom staff to determine their learning needs 2) the development and implementation of a series of professional development workshops that incorporated the needs based on the assessment

3) post-workshop surveys and focus groups to assess the impact of the workshops and identify ongoing professional development needs (2015). Teachers went through four, 45-minute professional development sessions based on the needs assessment. Teachers were put into different focus groups and after the workshops, six themes emerged between the focus groups. Three of the themes were related to students and issues concerning learning and school climate: (1) concern about students' increased exposure to trauma and toxic stress at home; (2) students and school personnel are experiencing additional stress in the current school climate; and (3) students' unmet social–emotional needs and disruptive behaviors interfere with learning. The other three themes focused on the workplace environment and the professional needs of the classroom staff: (4) classroom staff do not get adequate professional support to work effectively with students experiencing trauma and toxic stress; (5) classroom staff feel a lack of power and authority in the school; and (6) professional development to teach classroom-based trauma-informed approaches offers many benefits. (Anderson, 2015). As a result of this study, Anderson found that teachers must have valuable professional development in SEL and trauma informed teaching practices; additionally, training from universities could help teachers implement these practices into their classrooms.

Maras, Thompson, Lewis, Thornburg, and Hawks (2015) completed a study analyzing a tiered response model for SEL as a way to address the mental health needs of our students. The researchers explored the roles of mental health professionals in schools such as the school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers. The group of researchers collected data from one elementary school where a pilot program for tiered intervention for SEL was put in place. Their results explained how a tiered response for SEL

intervention calls for collaboration between mental health professionals, the use of an evidence based SEL program, and consistent use of SEL assessment data (Maras et al., 2015).

The need for shared responsibilities and planning among professionals is an essential component for daily instruction. In a study by Warger and Rutherford (1993), the researchers concluded that when general and special education teachers co-teach, they must create plans for more than core academic lessons. The researchers found that co-teachers must design lesson plans that integrate SEL, not to isolate SEL, or use it as a form of discipline. These efforts from both the general and special education teachers would need to be carefully designed as part of that natural routine, academic subject learning, and classroom activities. “To effectively apply techniques identified as "best practices," co-teachers must consider the interaction between the student's behavior, the social environment, and the intervention approaches chosen” (Warger & Rutherford, 1993, no p. # given). Warger and Rutherford discussed a social skills program that provides a structure where co-teachers assess the effectiveness of interventions, along with guidelines that help them make data-based decisions. They outlined four steps in their Teaching Social Skills Program along with interventions to try when students cannot demonstrate prosocial behaviors and interventions for students who will not demonstrate prosocial behaviors. The first step is to select a target group of students; Co-teachers must identify students who have social behavior difficulties and identify appropriate interventions or techniques through teacher observation and student self-reports for who has problems with what kind of social interactions-peers, teachers, or other adults. The second step is to determine what type of pro-social skills are desired. Warger and Rutherford’s program address 23 specific

prosocial skills; these pro-social skills were determined through a compilation of widely used social skills programs, literature addressing student behavior in the classroom, and classroom teacher's ratings of the importance of specific learning prosocial skills. Warner and Rutherford determined that these 23 prosocial behaviors are necessary for successful for successful social interactions.

TABLE 1 The Teaching Social Skills Program

Determine what type of prosocial skills are desired.

1. Saying please and thank you
2. Dealing with fear appropriately
3. Dealing with anger appropriately
4. Rewarding oneself
5. Asking questions
6. Accepting consequences of behavior
7. Successfully coping with conflict
8. Accepting responsibility of behavior
9. Listening
10. Successfully dealing with losing
11. Responding to failure
12. Successfully dealing with mistakes
13. Building a positive self-attitude
14. Following directions
15. Making friends
16. Understanding others' feelings
17. Compromising with peers
18. Coping with aggression from others
19. Cooperating with peers
20. Accepting not getting one's own way
21. Seeking attention appropriately
22. Waiting one's turn
23. Accepting the answer "No"

The third step is to determine what "type" of inappropriate behavior the student(s) currently displays. Warger and Rutherford (1993) said that when students fail to exhibit prosocial skills, it is often because they are exhibiting inappropriate or antisocial behaviors. Co-teachers must consider inappropriate types of behaviors are demonstrated before

effective teaching of prosocial behaviors can begin. There are three categories: aggressive, withdrawn, and immature. The last step is to determine if the student cannot or will not demonstrate the prosocial skills.

> "Before teachers select interventions, they must ask the following essential questions: has the student ever demonstrated the appropriate behavior? If the answer is no; that is, if the student rarely or never demonstrates the appropriate prosocial behavior, it is assumed that the student lacks the necessary skills to perform as expected. In this case, the student cannot perform the behavior because he or she lacks the necessary skills and strategies to be socially competent. Emphasis is placed on teaching the student these skills and strategies. If the answer is yes; that is, if the student has demonstrated the prosocial behaviors in the past but does not now, it is assumed that he or she chooses not to exhibit these skills. In this case, the student will not perform the behavior, and emphasis is placed on providing motivation for the student to behave appropriately. Interventions may differ depending upon whether the student cannot or will not demonstrate prosocial behaviors" (Warger & Rutherford, 1993).

If the student cannot demonstrate prosocial behaviors, there are 5 interventions to try and implement. Intervention one is to teach the student to identify alternative prosocial behaviors and strategies. Co-teaching involves individual lessons with the student to identify necessary steps to behave appropriately in given situations.

Intervention two is to provide the student with models demonstrating prosocial behaviors and strategies. Teachers can choose one or more students to model the desired prosocial behavior to the whole class. When this happens, not only do the students who are

modeling the behavior get positive reinforcement, but the whole student body give attention and desire to demonstrate the same behavior to receive similar reinforcements.

The third intervention is to provide the student with opportunities to practice prosocial behaviors and strategies in nonthreatening role-play and real-life situations. Co-teachers in this step would closely supervise and monitor practice situations, along with ample praise, attention, and feedback for developing prosocial behaviors.

Intervention four would include direct reinforcement for the student demonstrating prosocial behaviors and strategies. Co-teachers must provide positive feedback that can include verbal feedback and attention. Feedback is necessary at all levels of intervention and will increase the likelihood of students maintaining these prosocial behaviors in class.

Intervention five includes the teaching of how to control through self-monitoring, self-evaluation and self-reinforcement, the continued use of prosocial behaviors and strategies and/or the generalization and maintenance of skills.

Warger and Rutherford also outline interventions for students who will not demonstrate prosocial behaviors. These interventions are for students who have demonstrated the behavior previously but need motivation and reinforcement to continue to demonstrate the expected behavior. They laid out two different interventions to meet these students' needs because the focus tends to be with motivation to use the prosocial skills and strategies when the situation calls for it. Intervention one is to provide the student and his or her peers with a clear set of school rules and expectations. Co-teachers must establish clear, consistent, and immediate consequences for prosocial behaviors, as well as failure to use them. Intervention two is to use the model teaching strategies (identify, model, practice, reinforce, and self-control) as review for the student the

expected behaviors and strategies for demonstrating prosocial behavior (Warner & Rutherford, 1993). Warner and Rutherford emphasized the importance of establishing co-teaching partnerships that are focused on social skills, special and general education personnel together can create a meaningful framework for addressing social skill deficits from both a preventative and corrective perspective, with the ultimate goal being the better accommodation of diverse student learning needs (1993). Social skills, or SEL is an important goal for all students, including those with and without disabilities. These skills must be addressed in the general education classroom with deliberations between practicing teachers.

Jonathan Cohen explained that the goals of education need to not only prioritize academic learning, but also social, emotional, and ethical competencies (2006). In a Harvard Educational review, Cohen surveyed the current state of research in the fields of social emotional education, character education, and school-based mental health in the United States. He suggested that "social-emotional skills, knowledge, and dispositions provide the foundation for participation in a democracy and improved quality of life" (Cohen, 2006, p. 201). He discusses best practices and policies in relation to creating safe and caring school climates, home-school partnerships, and a pedagogy that is trauma informed. In his study, Cohen used the acronym, SEEAE (social, emotional, ethical, and academic education) SEEAE is shorthand for sustained early childhood education through grade 12 programmatic efforts that integrate and coordinate these pedagogic and systemic dimensions (2006). Cohen recognized that there is no curriculum or "best package" that adequately addresses the complex issues involved in these interventions, and that few of even the best evidence-based SEEAE curricula, incorporate important mental health

guidelines and/or the systemic dimensions noted above that directly affect how safe people feel in school (2006).

Cohen outlined five major steps that are evidence based and support SEL best practices. Step one is planning, discovery, and community-building. This step recognizes the beliefs of what school should be among school staff, parents, and students. This step involves creating an action-plan with necessary steps to align with all visions in mind, which will then define goals. Step two is creating a climate for learning and safety. This step outlines the climate and structural environment, along with quality instruction and morale among students. The third step is creating long term home school partnerships to better support the accepted assumption that parent involvement is vital in student success. Parent involvement is vital in student success. This step focuses on the student's family and home base, which is the foundational place where the student learns about themselves and values. Step four focuses on pedagogic practice; Cohen explained that SEEAE programmatic efforts range from a detailed, prescriptive curriculum to a point of view about relationships, learning, and teaching (2006). Cohen identified that social emotional skills are initially taught in isolation, and that is how some children need to learn the basic skills. He goes on to explain that schools are starting to integrate SEEAE into school pedagogy, where there is a program or programs that present a detailed perspective on child development and how applicable it is to be done at school. Since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 focused attention on the importance of reading and math in our schools, Cohen found that teachers are becoming more interested in how they can integrate SEEAE work into existing curricula (2006). Teachers are increasingly aware and willing to use existing language arts, social studies, history, or arts classes to promote social and emotional

literacy. When children are part of the shared vision in discussing what kind of education and life they desire, more capacity for learning grows. Step five involves evaluation methods; according to Cohen, we have few generally accepted and scientifically sound measures of individual social, emotional, and/or ethical learning (2006). Cohen lists a few tools and self-reporting measures such as the Stewart-Brown and Edmunds (2003) recommended three: the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) for preschool settings, the Behavior and Emotion Rating Scale (BERS), and the youth version of the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i: YV) for primary, middle, and secondary schools. Cohen also shared that schools and districts are issuing report cards based on character traits and social emotional behavior targeted skills. He noted that when teachers consistently evaluate social, emotional, and ethical functioning skills, it sends a message to parents and the community that these count (2006).

The best SEL effective teaching practiced include trauma informed teaching, co-teaching practices, cooperative learning opportunities, clear and consistent expectations with the use of evidence based interventions, evaluations and assessments. There are no best packages or one curriculum that can adequately address the complexity of SEL skills in general education classrooms. Some states have adopted SEL standards that guide and help educators focus on the core competencies of SEL.

SEL Standards

Kress, Norris, Schoenholz, Elias, and Seigle in an article titled, *Bringing Together Educational Standards and Social and Emotional Learning: Making the Case for Educators*, analyzed the current reality and pressure educators feel with the increasingly accountability in regards to student achievement. While educators realize that children

need to achieve more than competence in math and social studies to negotiate successfully through life's challenges, they often feel conflicted and challenged in their efforts to address nontraditional educational concerns (Kress et al., 2004, p. 69). Since the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, accountability for the whole child, including character education and safe schools, has been a paradigm shift of focus in education. Educators are responsible to teach nontraditional skills at the same precedence as literacy and mathematics. Kress et al. addressed the compatibly of SEL and academic standards. Iowa, Wisconsin, New York, and South Carolina are states that have academic standards that include SEL competencies. Iowa's Reading Content Standards outline that students should be able to "infer traits, feelings, and motives of characters" as early as grade 3 (Kress et al., 2004, p. 74). Wisconsin and New York's Political Science and English Language Arts standards require students to identify and explain an individual's responsibilities to families, understand points of view. Kress et al. are encouraged to see an overlap between SEL and standards (2004). The authors reviewed ways to incorporate SEL competencies identified by Collaborative for Academic, social, and emotional learning (CASEL) with core academic standards. Kress et al. described two examples of how to incorporate SEL competencies with core state standards using the Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) program and the Open Circle Social Competency Program. The SDM/SPS program is a comprehensive, research-validated prevention program that provides teachers and school personnel with training and curricula to equip students with social and decision-making skills (Kress et al., 2004, p. 75). This program allows educators to grid and make connections between standards and where SEL competencies can be emerged. The Open Circle program is a comprehensive, multiyear social and emotional

learning program for elementary school (grades kindergarten–5) children, their teachers, principals, and parents (Kress et al., 2004, p.79). This program builds vocabulary from year to year, and allows a safe and supportive time and place for students and teachers to discuss and reflect upon academic and social emotional learning. Both of these programs that Kress et al. describe are avenues and tools that are designed to aide districts and educators in embedding SEL competencies within core state standards.

The state of Illinois has been a trendsetter both in creating learning standards and in addressing social and emotional learning in education settings (Zinsser & Dusenbury, 2015). Zinsser and Dusenbury explore ways to ensure quality implementation of these standards. This article presents a conversation about free-standing learning targets for SEL, and leads the discussion on the importance of other states to adopt similar standards. The authors explain how Illinois have adopted the CASEL framework and defines five interrelated competencies including: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Zinsser & Dusenbury, 2015). The authors go on to give recommendations for ensuring these SEL standards are fully implemented. They argue that SEL learning standards should be clearly written and comprehensive to include children from preschool through twelfth grade, strive for cultural and linguistic sensitivity, include guidelines for practitioners on how to form positive environments and how to support children's social and emotional development, and include discussions of strategies for enhancing implementation (Zinsser & Dusenbury, 2015). Zinsser and Dusenbury go on to share more about selecting SEL curricula and assessing for SEL. They recommend the 2013 CASEL guide, where 23 SEL programs are reviewed for preschool and elementary aged students. They also recommend states to find

or create reliable and valid methods to assess SEL. They recognize that assessments in this area of SEL is lagging, and they recommend looking at the compendium of assessment tools by Denham, Ji, & Hamre (Zinsser & Dusenbury, 2015).

SEL Assessments

The compendium of assessment tools focused on tools to assess the social and emotional learning (SEL) of preschool and elementary school students (i.e., five- to ten-year-olds), along with aspects of the contexts in which they learn and their learning behaviors (Denham et al., 2010). These assessment measures are intended for researchers and those in the applied research community for example, educators and social workers who may find them useful in their work with groups of children. The authors identified five core SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship/social skills (Denham et al., 2010). This compendium identified assessment tools that have been gathered by researchers to gauge the SEL skills of the preschool/elementary students. The tools listed are organized into three sections. Section one includes the context that includes core competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. Section two identifies academic related SEL competencies such as feelings toward school and school climate. Section three looks at academic competencies. Each review of the assessment tools talks about strengths, weaknesses, pricing, reliability, validity, scoring, a brief description of the tool, and how to administer the assessment (Denham et al., 2010).

Clark McKown (2017) recommended that educators need to be familiar with existing SEL assessment tools as well as more monetary investments with educators who

possess a certain talent for creating assessments, are exceptionally necessary today. Not only do assessments provide data on the effectiveness of SEL programming and instruction given by educators, but they also help determine a child's strengths and areas to improve. Educators and policy makers need data to make informed and evidence based decisions about the healthy development of SEL in our students. McKown concluded that the next generation of SEL assessments must be meaningful, measurable, and malleable (2017). Assessments are meaningful when they involve authentic life and academic goals. Measurable assessments must assess what they intend to and be easy to administer. Malleable assessments must determine the generalization of skills through observations or other means. SEL assessments must not only be meaningful, measurable, and malleable but also correspond to state standards. McKown recognized that there are few assessments that measure SEL thinking skills and self-control, so he studied and helped create the SELweb assessment. The SELweb was a web-based system that assessed how well children aged Kindergarten through third grade can identify the emotions of others, practice self-control, perspective take, and solve social situations. The researcher studied the reliability of the SELweb assessment over four years and with 4,462 children between Kindergarten and third grade. He found that the SELweb measured what it was designed to and then took data from another 4,419 students across six states to create aged based normative data. This process was expensive and required many resources and human hours to determine if the SELweb assessment was a meaningful, measurable, and malleable tool for SEL. McKown determined that the SELweb is an assessment designed to measure SEL thinking skills, not behavioral skills (McKown, 2017, p. 171). SEL assessments will require a large amount of

time, resources, and financial investments, similar to how high stakes standardized achievement tests have been developed.

Chapter III: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Literature

SEL competencies are essential skills that students in the 21st century must have in order to make informed and healthy decisions and choices in adulthood. Yoder (2015) argued that these competencies are crucial for students living in poverty, those who live with ACES, and those with trauma. There are five core competencies that include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision making. Educators must find ways to embed SEL competencies as part of the core curriculum by creating opportunities for cooperative learning, engaging students in discussions, giving students responsibility and choices, allowing students to self-reflect and self-assess, providing balanced instruction, hold high academic expectations, and provide scaffolded instruction with ample feedback. Teachers must also offer a warm, caring and supportive classroom environment, use common language, discipline students individually, and build relationships with every student. Implementing these teaching practices will improve the alignment among SEL and common core standards.

Embedding SEL competencies in core instruction benefits students and increases academic achievement for students who have ACES and emotional behavioral disabilities. Trauma informed education practices in schools provide support and services that students need to improve their academic trajectory and future outcomes (Crosby, 2015). Durlak et al. (2011) stated that SEL competencies prepare students to participate in learning experiences and also increases their capacity for learning. In the study conducted by Durlak et al. it was found that there was an 11 percentile gain seen in schools where SEL programs were implemented. SAFE practices were part of those SEL programs and were

found to be more effective than schools who did not use SAFE practices. The mental and general health in children is a critical component in learning. Batanova and Loukas (2014) found that when SEL frameworks in schools are implemented, overt and invert aggression were prevented and decreased.

Learning is a social behavior. Zins et al. (2007) noted that SEL goals should not be separate from daily instruction or curriculum but instead a key component. The researchers found that when people are competent socially and emotionally, they recognize and manage their emotions, establish healthy relationships, set positive goals, meet their personal and social needs, and make responsible and ethical decisions (Zins et al., 2007, p.6). The CASEL framework, infusing SEL into core curriculum, and providing supportive learning environments were frameworks or ways that Zins et al identified as ways to address and embed SEL into daily instruction. Allen et al. (1997) studied the effects of service learning opportunities. The researchers found that when youth were assigned to teen outreach programs where service learning opportunities were offered at schools, fewer at risk behaviors occurred such as teen pregnancy, school failure, and suspensions. Salvin also studied the impact and long term effects of cooperative learning or service learning. He found that when students work toward a common goal an increase in caring and responsibility for group members increased, and therefore motivated students to engage in cognitive processes and resulted in enhanced learning (Salvin, 2014, p.789).

With the many challenges that come with serving communities and children with ACES and emotional and behavioral disabilities, Anderson et al conducted a study that found that, despite these challenges, teachers are becoming more aware of how these factors impact the learning of their students and are seeking out more professional

development opportunities (2015). Maras et al found in the study they conducted around a tired response for SEL as a way to address the mental health needs of students, that the roles of social workers, school psychologists, school counselors are valuable in connecting SEL programs to classrooms and daily instruction. Shared responsibility among mental health professionals, classroom teachers, and special education teachers are essential in the delivery of SEL.

Warger and Rutherford (1993) are proponents of co-teaching and recognize that co-teaching should be done between classroom teacher and special education teacher or other educational professional, with clear roles and responsibilities in providing SEL intervention and instruction in the classroom. The two researchers identified 23 specific prosocial skills that were compiled from various social skills programs, literature, and teacher ratings of importance of certain skills. These social skills were found to be important goals for all students, with and without disabilities and/or ACES. Cohen (2006) agreed with Warner and Rutherford that SEL skills are just as important as academic goals and skills. Cohen studied SEEAE efforts in schools that integrate SEL into schools. He recognized that there is no curriculum or best package that adequately addresses the complex issues involved in these SEL interventions that also meets SEEAE and mental health guidelines (Cohen, 2006). Kress et al. (2004) explored two ways that help incorporate SEL competencies with common core standards, and concluded that the SDM/SPS program and the Open Circle Social Competency Programs are hands on ways teachers can deliver SEL into their classrooms in a natural part of instruction. These programs are designed to help schools embed SEL with academic standards.

Zinsser and Dusenbury (2015) explored ways to ensure that SEL competencies are embedded, and in some states implemented as their own stand-alone standards. The state of Illinois adopted the CASEL framework and defines the same five core competencies as Yoder for SEL skills. The CASEL guide identified 23 programs that can be used to teach SEL skills for preschool and elementary aged students. CASEL recommends states to find and/or create reliable and valid methods to assess SEL. After core SEL skills have been identified, teaching practices and instruction that embed SEL skills have been delivered, the next step is to assess the effectiveness of such methods and programs used by teachers and schools. Clark McKown (2017) recommends that teachers need to be knowledgeable about existing assessment tools and they must be meaningful, measurable, and malleable. Denham Ji and Hamre (2010) compiled the compendium of SEL assessment tools. The list organizes the assessment tools in sections according to the five core competencies. This compendium offers brief descriptions of the assessment tools, strengths and weaknesses of each tool, pricing, validity and reliability, scoring, and how to administer each assessment.

Limitations of the Research

The definition of SEL is widely agreed upon by researchers in the field, particularly by Yoder and Durlak. In addition, the importance of embedding SEL in daily instruction that aligns with common core standards is also vastly recognized among researchers. SEL programs and their effectiveness have been studied by several researchers, including Kress, Cohen, Warner and Rutherford, Durlak, and Anderson.

The pool of research around SEL standards and available assessment out in the world today was limited. The compendium of assessment tools compiled by Denjam Ji and Hamre are the only applicable list of tools available to educators today. The state of Illinois

is a leader in the United States in implementing state standards around SEL competencies. McKown identified the need for professionals with the knowledge and expertise around assessments to create more valid and reliable tools that can be used to measure SEL program effectiveness.

I limited research around the CASEL framework, SAFE practices, and SEEAE curricula because I wanted this literature review to provide a reference about these frameworks and practices, rather than a descriptive and prescriptive review on what educators should use in their SEL programming efforts.

Implications for Future Research

The majority of the research on SEL is around the definition, importance, and best teaching practices that embed SEL competencies in daily instruction. Landmark studies such as Durlak have been referenced in literature around SEL definition, importance, effectiveness, and how to address it in schools. There is a need for more research around specific SEL interventions used primarily for students with EBD at the elementary level.

For future studies, researchers should focus studies around SEL standards and appropriate assessment tools that measure effectiveness of SEL programs and teaching interventions. Before these studies can be conducted, more assessment tools must be available and created.

Implications for Professional Application

This research applies to special education and general education teachers, as well as mental health professionals in schools. As education professionals, our responsibilities are vast and continue to grow. More and more research is available that inform educators of how to best meet the challenging and diverse needs of our students. Educational efforts

have shifted from traditional educational practices to involving the whole child. Many studies have proven that SEL competencies are an essential part of education. When students are part of a safe, caring, and supportive community with clear SEL goals the students' capacity to learn expands and academic achievement increases.

Special educators can apply this research when planning and serving students with EBD as well as to those identified as low-cognitive or severe SLD, as many SEL practices aide in their application of learning which impacts their long-term outcomes. SEL core competencies can be used as a basis for goals and objectives on Individual Education Plans (IEP). The need for more states to adopt SEL standards is necessary because it will help all teachers identify common goals, teach accordingly, and be accountable in all aspects in the education of a child.

General education teachers, or classroom teachers, can apply this research to help them identify what SEL skills to embed as part of the daily instruction. In addition, this research also provides ways to do so such as the Open Circle and SDM/SPS program. This research also highlights the value of co-teaching with other educators or mental health professionals, as well as applicable ways to implement co-teaching practices.

Mental health professionals in schools can use this research to help identify outreach programs and service learning opportunities in the community for students to apply their SEL skills. This research also provides reference and description of available SEL assessment tools available today, as well as the noting the importance to create more assessments that are measurable, meaningful, and malleable.

Special educators and general educators can use this research to improve their craft of teaching. This research provides clear competencies in relation to SEL skills, which offers

clear and common goals among educators. My research also discusses the importance of embedding SEL into daily instruction, which will benefit all students, especially for those with ACES and EBD. With that importance comes what every educator desires, hands on applicable ways to do the work. This research provides ideas for co-teaching, SEL programs available, student centered SEL goals, planning and delivering high quality SEL instruction that align to common core standards.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research reviewed so far points to the conclusion that SEL is a critical part to any classroom curriculum. There are several frameworks that education systems and schools adopted to improve the level of SEL instruction, trauma informed teaching practices, and equitable education, such as the PBIS model and RTI model. These models consider the whole child and systematically create a culture that focuses on the development of prosocial behaviors in schools. SEL can be embedded in core content areas within classrooms daily. There are five SEL core competencies; self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision making. Very few states have adopted SEL learning standards, and there is more work to be done in finding reliable and valid SEL assessment tools.

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