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**Social-Emotional Learning and Teachers' Cultural Competency: The Relationship  
Between Implementation Practices and Student Outcomes**

by  
Sarah Lynn Skytte Rothstein

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of Bethel University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

St. Paul, MN  
2023

Approved by:  
Advisor: Dr. Judith Nagel  
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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine (1) the relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of culturally responsive Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) practices, conditional on teachers' race, and (2) the relationship between teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts, conditional on students' race. A survey was emailed to all licensed teachers in the state of Minnesota; 1,348 teachers participated in the survey. Qualtrics was used to obtain the teacher survey data. Teachers' cultural competence was measured using the Educators Scale of Student Diversity survey (ESSD; Patel, 2017). Teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices was measured by teachers' perception of their implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. Student data were collected through the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey that is publicly available online. The survey items included seven areas which reflect the CASEL framework's five core competencies and positive outcomes of SEL implementation: academic achievement, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building, responsible decision-making, and school connectedness. In order to analyze the hypotheses, a bivariate correlation was used to measure a statistically significant relationship within each racial/ethnic group. The findings suggest a positive relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices; however, these practices are not positively impacting students' SEL competency outcomes across all students' race/ethnic groups. Future research examining culturally responsive practices and teacher implementation would benefit all students' social and emotional wellbeing and academic development.

To my girls, Brooklyn and Michelle, may you always follow your dreams and know that you are brave and can do anything that you set your mind to.

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**List of Abbreviations**

BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
CASEL	Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
CRT	Culturally Responsive Teaching
ESSD	Educators Scale of Student Diversity
MDE	Minnesota Department of Education
MSS	Minnesota Student Survey
SEC	Social-Emotional Competency
SEL	Social-Emotional Learning

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Children begin their social and emotional development in early childhood with the ability to communicate with adults and peers and learn how to understand the feelings of others (Alzahrani et al., 2019). Children's social and emotional skills determine their ability to interact with others, handle emotions, and respond to situations as they happen around them. Their development is shaped by a combination of genetics and experiences, including "individual, situational and cultural factors" (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2018, p. 610). In other words, children may have a predisposition to mental health problems; however, the likelihood that a child is impacted by a predisposition is influenced by childhood experiences (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2020). In this way, schools must create an environment where children can experience growth in their social and emotional development.

One way schools can foster the social and emotional development of children is through social-emotional learning (SEL). SEL is a process where "young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes" to create positive self-identities, understand emotions, set and achieve personal goals, develop and maintain relationships, and make good decisions (CASEL, 2023b, para. 1). Before implementing SEL programming in schools, it is essential that school personnel understand that the development of social and emotional skills is an ongoing development process that differs among culture, age, and gender (Saavedra & Nolan, 2018). Furthermore, people learn social and emotional skills from those they interact with in their school and home communities. In schools, SEL is a systemic approach to proactively enhance the social and emotional health and well-being of students. As a systemic approach, SEL seeks to create equitable learning experiences that include competencies for social, emotional, and academic development for students in preschool through grade 12 (Schlund et al., 2020).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) sets the standard for SEL competencies that the majority of research-based SEL programs utilize (El Mallah, 2020). In general, the CASEL framework identifies five intrapersonal and interpersonal core competencies including relationship skills, social awareness, self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making (Schlund et al., 2020). Proficiency in the five SEL core competencies of the CASEL model show positive academic and behavioral student outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Ross & Tolan, 2018). However, researchers should use caution when generalizing positive SEL student outcomes due to the lack of research focusing on diversity (Rowe & Trickett, 2018). In fact, many scholars researching the impact of SEL do not report race or ethnicity of participants.

There are decades of research on the positive impact of SEL; however, very few researchers have looked at culturally responsive SEL practices (McCallops et al., 2019). McCallops et al. (2019) reviewed studies in the past 10 years, specifically looking at current SEL practices within urban settings internationally. Out of 51 studies, only five studies (four in the United States, one in Vietnam) used culturally responsive SEL practices. According to Barnes and McCallops (2019), "Culturally responsive SEL uses the lived experiences and frames of reference of students to reinforce and teach SEL competencies" (p. 71). Examples of culturally responsive SEL practices include increasing relevance by using the lived experiences of students within the classroom (Graves et al., 2017; Montañez et al., 2015), focusing on student strengths and differences as assets (Marsiglia et al., 2016), using interpreters (Marsiglia et al., 2016; Montañez et al., 2015), and bringing literature into the classroom that represents students' cultural background (Polleck, 2011).

## Statement of the Problem

Social-emotional learning (SEL) plays an important role in overall student success. SEL instruction is linked to improvement in students' grades, standardized test scores, and engagement, as well as a decrease in conduct behaviors (e.g., aggression, non-compliance, bullying), substance use, and mental health problems such as depression and anxiety (Durlak et al., 2011; Nix et al., 2013; Ross & Tolan, 2018; Taylor et al., 2017). One explanation for the success of SEL is that when students feel valued, loved, safe, and heard by their teachers, they are more likely to perform better academically in school (Alzahrani et al., 2019). Likewise, children who are able to foster good relationships with their peers are more likely to be motivated, persevere, and show increased attention (Cohen & Mendez, 2009).

There are gaps between students of color and White students' outcomes in areas such as achievement and mental health. Students of color are more likely to be academically disadvantaged than their White peers. The percentage of White students (42%) in eighth-grade who performed at or above the NAEP standards in reading was significantly higher than Black students (15%) and Hispanic students (22%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019d). Similarly, the percentage of White students (44%) in eighth grade who performed at or above the NAEP standards in mathematics was significantly higher than Black students (14%) and Hispanic students (20%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019c). White students do not outperform all students of color: Asian students outperform White students in both reading (57%) and mathematics (64%). Additionally, researchers suggest that racial minority youth experience mental health challenges at a higher rate than their White peers (American Psychological Association, 2017; National Institute of Mental Health, 2019). For example, 13.3% of adolescents aged 12-17 had at least one major depressive episode in 2017. Within that



group, adolescents who reported two or more races had the highest percentage of adolescents who had at least one major depressive episode (National Institute of Mental Health, 2019).

Although students of color are less likely to feel a strong sense of safety and connectedness to school as their White peers (Voight et al., 2015), when focusing on community-building, SEL shows positive results for increasing students' engagement and influencing identity development among students of color (Rivas-Drake et al., 2020). An increased sense of belonging is related to increased engagement and academic achievement among African American students (Gray et al., 2018) and increased "academic adjustment" for Latinx students (Sánchez et al., 2005). How students adapt to school is heavily influenced by teachers' perceptions and the student-teacher relationships formed (Alzahrani et al., 2019). Teachers have the ability to create students' love or dislike for school. Culturally competent educators are essential to students' success (Ursache et al., 2012). Without culturally competent teachers, students of color are more likely to have negative experiences in school, which can lead to a lack of engagement, decreased motivation, and an increase in the achievement gap.

Increasing students' sense of belonging to school and the classroom (e.g., the student-teacher relationship) is essential to the social-emotional development and mental health of students of color (Rivas-Drake et al., 2020; Voight et al., 2015). While this is critically important, there is a disconnection between an increasingly diverse student population and a population of teachers who remain mostly White (Creasey et al., 2016). In addition, many teacher education programs are unprepared for educating teachers to teach students who are culturally different from themselves. During the 2011-2012 school year, 48.3% of the K-12 student population identified as a student of color, 49.6% during the 2013-2014 school year, and 51.1% during the 2015-2016 school year (U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data

Collection, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c). Further, between the fall of 2000 and the fall of 2017, the percentage of White students in elementary and secondary public schools dropped from 61% to 48% of the total student population and is predicted to drop to 44% by the fall of 2029 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020b). While the percentage of students of color is increasing, the percentage of teachers of color only grew from 15% to 21% during 2017-2020 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020a).

As the student population becomes increasingly diverse, and the number of White teachers remains mostly the same, combating inequities in the classroom is imperative to close the achievement gap (The Pennsylvania State University, 2018). Teachers must first acknowledge that culture plays a large role in how students view and interact with the world (Green, 2019). When looking at the communication patterns between diverse faculty, researchers have found that there are often breakdowns in communication between diverse groups. For example, there are cultural differences in emotional expression which often lead to miscommunication between teachers and students resulting in things such as exclusionary discipline and student disengagement (The Pennsylvania State University, 2018). Due to the cultural mismatch between teachers and students, communication barriers exist which can lead to a lack of trust in the school's ability to meet students' social and emotional needs (The Education Trust, 2020). Although families see value in developing social and emotional skills (e.g., identity development, belief in self), due to negative past experiences, they are concerned "that educators too often don't have the right mindset to even broach these topics with students of color" (The Education Trust, 2020, p. 20).

These experiences, often differing based on students' race and culture, impact how students communicate and form their social and emotional skills (CASEL, 2018; Durlak et al.,

2011; The Pennsylvania State University, 2018). Further, parents of students of color know that White teachers have very little understanding of the background and culture of students of color and possess implicit biases toward non-White students (DiAngelo, 2018). These implicit biases impact the effectiveness of teaching and relationship-building, leading to a decrease in student learning (The Pennsylvania State University, 2018). The student-teacher relationship is essential to building social and emotional skills (Rivas-Drake et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2018), yet students of color feel that this component is often missing in schools (The Education Trust, 2020). Without culturally competent teachers to develop a strong student-teacher relationship, student SEL skills cannot be built.

Teachers with higher levels of social and emotional competence are more likely to show empathy and build strong relationships with students which positively influence the academic, social, and emotional development of students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Palomera et al., 2008). A vital component of teachers' social and emotional competency is cultural competence (Schlund et al., 2020). Cultural competence is defined as “the ability to critically examine the social and cultural identities of oneself and others, understand and appreciate diversity from a historically grounded and strengths-focused lens, recognize and respond to cultural demands and opportunities, and build relationships across cultural backgrounds” (Schlund et al., 2020, p. 10). Educators who are strong in social awareness are more likely to empathize and take the perspective of others from a different cultural background (Jagers et al., 2018). Without cultural competence, stereotypes and biases held by White teachers of non-White students often contribute to inequities, such as academic performance (Weinstein, 2002). Human experiences often shape expectations and preferences which come from their own cultural background (Schlund et al., 2020).

These differences, along with a diversity gap between students and teachers, also exist in the state of Minnesota. In Minnesota, only 4.3% of all teachers are teachers of color whereas 33.5% of students are students of color (Wilder Research, 2019). Students of color in Minnesota tend to be more academically disadvantaged than their White peers. In 2019, the percentage of White students (41%) in eighth grade who performed at or above the NAEP standards in reading was higher than Black students (11%), Hispanic students (18%), and Asian students (37%; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019b). Similarly, the percentage of White students (53%) in eighth grade who performed at or above the NAEP standards in mathematics was higher than Black students (14%), Hispanic students (21%), and Asian students (47%; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019a). In addition to the achievement gap, research suggests that racial minority youth experience mental health challenges at a higher rate than their White peers (American Psychological Association, 2017; National Institute of Mental Health, 2019). In Minnesota, when responding to the prompt, “Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless?,” 12.9% of eighth-grade Hispanic students, 9.8% of African American students, and 8.8% of White students responded, “nearly every day” (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.c.).

Teachers struggle to find culturally responsive ways of meeting the social and emotional needs of students in the classroom even when the benefits of SEL are clear from past research (Barnes & McCallops, 2019). In this way, it is likely that the traditional American classroom is not equipped for supporting the academic and social-emotional needs of students. Although there is a mismatch between the number of students of color in comparison to teachers of color (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020a, 2020b; U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c), and teachers are not prepared to implement culturally

responsive practices, the implementation of SEL may indicate to students of color that the school is seeking positive student-teacher relationships in “a setting that otherwise would be marginalizing” (Rivas-Drake et al., 2020, p. 1348). Given the positive impact of SEL on students’ academic and social-emotional outcomes, and the importance of teachers’ cultural competency in fostering these positive outcomes with students of color during an impressionable developmental stage, there is a need to examine teachers’ use of culturally responsive SEL practices and its impact on students’ SEL outcomes in Minnesota.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The first purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship between teachers’ perceived cultural competency and the self-reported use of culturally responsive social-emotional learning (SEL) practices in classrooms. The second purpose was to learn if there is a relationship between perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students’ SEL outcomes.

### **Research Questions**

This study addressed the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between teachers’ perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices, conditional on teachers’ race?
2. Is there a relationship between teachers’ perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students’ SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts, conditional on students’ race?

### **Significance of the Study**

As more schools incorporate social-emotional learning into their curriculum, it is essential that educators use practices that meet the needs of a growing diverse population to

improve the wellbeing of all students (McCallops et al., 2019; The Pennsylvania State University, 2018). In order to meet the needs of all students, SEL practices must be effective and sustainable, meaning that not only should students learn new skills but these skills must continue to be implemented over time (McCallops et al., 2019). Although the popularity of SEL has continued to rise, there has not been adequate research focused on grounding SEL in equity (The Pennsylvania State University, 2018).

There is a significant gap between the diversity of students and educators (Creasey et al., 2016; Wilder Research, 2019). Further, White teachers are not prepared to meet the social and emotional needs of students of color (Osher et al., 2018). Since past SEL research lacks a focus on racial, ethnic, and cultural differences among positive student outcomes, the benefits of SEL cannot be generalized to students of color (Rowe & Trickett, 2018). CASEL provides tools for systemic SEL; however, researchers agree that there is a lot to learn regarding transformative SEL and how culturally responsive teaching practices can support the growth of SEL competencies for students from diverse backgrounds (Barnes & McCallops, 2019; McCallops et al., 2019; Williams & Jagers, 2020). Researchers must explore the use of culturally responsive SEL practices and the influence on students' health and well-being.

The current study is intended to inform SEL practices in schools. Administrators and school counselors, those who lead the implementation of SEL at the school level as well as professional development efforts, may benefit from this research by understanding how teachers' perceived cultural competence influences the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and the relationship between culturally responsive SEL practices and students' school experience. In addition, teachers may benefit from this research by gaining an understanding of how their own work devoted to cultural competence influences their implementation of culturally

responsive SEL practices such as level of relationship-building with students, and its influence on student growth and development.

## **Definition of Terms**

### ***Cultural Background***

Cultural background is “the context of one’s life experience as shaped by membership in groups based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area” (Thomas, 2015, para. 5).

### ***Cultural Competence***

Cultural competence is “the ability to critically examine the social and cultural identities of oneself and others, understand and appreciate diversity from a historically grounded and strengths-focused lens, recognize and respond to cultural demands and opportunities, and build relationships across cultural backgrounds” (Schlund et al., 2020, p. 10).

### ***Culturally Responsive Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)***

Culturally responsive SEL “uses the lived experiences and frames of reference of students to reinforce and teach SEL competencies” (Barnes & McCallops, 2019, p. 71).

### ***Diversity***

Diversity is:

Any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another. It means respect for and appreciation of differences...Diversity encompasses the range of similarities and differences each individual brings to the workplace, including but not limited to national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures. (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d., para. 1)

### ***Educational Equity***

Educational equity is a system in which “all students have access to the same resources and educational rigor despite race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background, or family income” (Saavedra & Nolan, 2018, p. 4).

### ***Empathy***

Empathy is “identifying with the feelings or thoughts of another person...the product of a nonjudgmental attitude and shows respect and concern for another person’s emotions or plight” (Dietz et al., 2006, p. 217).

### ***Implicit Bias***

Implicit bias is “the unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that shape our responses to certain groups especially around race, class, and language. Implicit bias operates involuntarily, often without one’s awareness or intentional control” (Hammond, 2015, p. 156).

### ***Mental Health***

Mental health is “our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2022).

### ***Microaggressions***

Microaggressions are:

Small, subtle verbal insults or nonverbal actions directed at people of color that intentionally or unintentionally communicate distrust or hostility, such as clutching one’s purse if a person of color gets into an elevator or when store personnel follow a person of color around a store while he is shopping. (Hammond, 2015, p. 157)

### ***Public School***



Public schools are “free tax-supported schools controlled by a local governmental authority” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

### ***Schema***

A schema is “a cognitive framework or concept that helps organize and interpret information” (Hammond, 2015, p. 159).

### ***Social-Emotional Competency***

Social-emotional competency (SEC) is viewed in relation to CASEL’s five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). A teacher with a strong SEC “recognizes an individual student’s emotions, understands the cognitive appraisals that may be associated with these emotions, and how these cognitions and emotions motivate the student’s behavior” in order to respond to students’ needs (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 493).

### ***Social-Emotional Learning***

Social-emotional learning is a process where “young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (CASEL, 2023b, para. 1) to create positive self-identities, understand emotions, set and achieve personal goals, develop and maintain relationships, and make good decisions.

### ***Social-Emotional Outcomes***

Social-emotional outcomes are the results of the implementation of social-emotional learning, in which students learn interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (CASEL, 2023b).

### ***Social Justice***

Social justice is the process “of creating a fair and equal society in which each individual matters, their rights are recognized and protected, and decisions are made in ways that are fair and honest” (Oxford Reference, n.d.).

### ***Stereotype***

A stereotype is “a cognitive structure that contains the perceiver’s knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about a human group” (Hamilton & Trolier, 1986, p. 133).

### ***Students of Color***

A student of color is:

A student who meets the definition under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act...[which] includes students in the following student groups:

Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, black/African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and two or more races. (Minnesota Department of Education, 2021, p. 3)

### ***Systemic Social-Emotional Learning***

Systemic social-emotional learning is “an approach to creating equitable learning conditions that actively involve all PreK-12 students in learning and practicing social, emotional, and academic competencies” (Schlund et al., 2020, p. 3).

### ***Transformative Social-Emotional Learning***

Transformative social-emotional learning is a “process whereby students and teachers build strong, respectful relationships founded on an appreciation of similarities and differences, learn to critically examine root causes of inequity, and develop collaborative solutions to community and societal problems” (Jagers et al., 2018, p. 3).

## **Organization of the Study**

A review of the literature is presented in Chapter 2. An overview of the methodology, including the research design, methods, limitations and delimitations, and ethical consideration, is presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 will present the results of the study. Finally, Chapter 5 will give an analysis of the results and will discuss implications and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

### History of Social-Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning can be seen throughout history in the collaborative partnerships and relationships between students, families, schools, and communities (CASEL, 2023c). The modern roots of SEL began in 1968 at Yale University's Child Study Center (CASEL, 2023c; Comer, 1988). Comer and a group of researchers from Yale started an intervention project in two elementary schools in New Haven, Connecticut, founded on the belief that student achievement could be improved with increased relationships between families and the school (CASEL, 2023c; Comer, 1988, 2013; Coulter, 1993). Beginning in the 1960s, Comer wondered if the differences between children's experiences at home and in school, including cultural differences, negatively impacted their mental health, leading to a decline in academic achievement (Comer, 1988). At the time, many educational reforms focused on curriculum and academic instructional practices rather than a focus on a child's psychological well-being. Unfortunately, the disconnection between the home and school occurred disproportionately often among children who have "the most traumatic experiences in this society," including Native American, Hispanic, and Black students (Comer, 1988, p. 45).

The results of Yale University's longitudinal study of the two New Haven schools suggested that the key to student academic success was the promotion of mental health, which ultimately encourages a bond between the students, families, and the school (Comer, 1988; Coulter, 1993). In 1975, Comer and the team officially created the School Development Program, or the Comer Process, which includes school administrators, various teachers, mental health professionals, special education teachers, and parents in the planning and implementation process (Comer, 1988; Coulter, 1993). Eventually, the team worked together in order to create a

social skills curriculum that would be woven into the mainstream curriculum which was shown to be successful (Comer, 1988). By the 1980s, the two New Haven schools saw increased reading and math test scores, increased school attendance, and decreased behavioral problems (CASEL, 2023c; Comer, 1988; Coulter, 1993).

Between 1987 and 1992, Weissberg and Shriver developed the New Haven Social Development program for K-12 districts (CASEL, 2023c; Weissberg et al., 1997). This project was designed based on results of a New Haven survey. The results suggested that students at the high school were engaging in behaviors that affect academic performance, safety, and student health (Weissberg et al., 1997). Many problems students experienced were rooted in things such as the lack of communication skills, attitudes toward fighting, lack of positive role models or adult guidance, and a negative view of education. The program was implemented in order to address these social and emotional student needs.

Around the same time as the Social Development Program was being implemented, Weissberg and Elias led the W. T. Grant Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence in order to promote integrating social and emotional learning into the classroom (CASEL, 2023c). One approach to integrating SEL strategies was called *Raising Healthy Children* (Cummings & Haggerty, 1997), which focused on the long-term impact of consistent SEL in the context of the classroom along with teacher professional development. In collaboration with teachers, SEL units were created that focused on topics such as problem solving, listening skills, and good manners. Teachers were trained on how to implement these lessons in the classroom through “direct instruction, practice, reinforcement, and generalization of skills” (Cummings & Haggerty, 1997, p. 29). Examples of implementation included having students practice giving compliments to each other during morning meetings and reading a story

in class while having students identify the social skills and character qualities, discussing which are qualities of a good friend (Cummings & Haggerty, 1997). Teachers who used this approach reported a decrease in students' problem behaviors (e.g., stealing, fighting). Teachers have the ability to increase students' social and emotional skills when they model prosocial behaviors, give feedback and a chance to practice, and give reinforcement (Cummings & Haggerty, 1997). Overall, the W.T. Grant Consortium brought passionate experts in the field together to create a framework for social and emotional learning (CASEL, 2023c).

In 1994, a group of people, including educators, researchers, and practitioners, met at the Fetzer Institute in order to discuss effective ways to meet the academic, mental health, and behavioral needs of students (CASEL, 2023c; Weissberg et al., 2015). From this meeting, the team created the term “social and emotional learning” and launched the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2023c; Payton et al., 2000; Weissberg et al., 2015). The team believed that social and emotional learning could address the underlying causes of students' behavioral problems while also supporting the academic growth and achievement of all students in kindergarten through grade 12 (Greenberg et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2000).

### **Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning**

According to CASEL (2023a), SEL is an essential part of children's education and development. CASEL defined SEL as:

The process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. (CASEL, 2023b, para. 1)

To have the greatest impact, SEL instruction should be implemented in classrooms through direct instruction woven into the academic curriculum and culture of the classroom and school, into discipline practices, and into schoolwide policies (CASEL, 2023l). Additionally, CASEL believed that collaboration with parents and the school community is essential to the social and emotional development of students.

Founded in 1994, CASEL's mission is to promote research-based SEL programming for students in early childhood through high school (Elias et al., 1997). From CASEL's dedication to SEL research and legislation, SEL started as a theory but has since grown into an important part of a student's education (CASEL, 2023d). In order to implement systemic SEL programming in schools, the CASEL framework was created from 25 years of SEL research (Mahoney et al., 2021). The framework sought to enhance students' social, emotional, and academic development across settings (e.g., classrooms, schools, home, the community) as well as create an equitable environment for all students (CASEL, 2020).

CASEL's (2023d) vision is that "all children and adults [are] self-aware, caring, responsible, engaged, and lifelong learners who work together to achieve their goals and create a more inclusive, just, and equitable world" (para. 5). CASEL began with a "C" (i.e., collaborative) because it believed in the power of collaboration, from classroom teachers, to families, to the community (2023d). The greatest impact of SEL happened when all stakeholders collaboratively implement and support SEL (CASEL, 2020). CASEL also sought to reach all students, especially those from underserved communities, including those from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. There is currently an increased research focus on reaching all learners in order for everyone to develop the academic and social-emotional skills needed to be successful in the twenty-first century (CASEL, 2023d).

### *The CASEL Framework*

The CASEL Framework provided a basis for systemic implementation of SEL in PreK-12 education. Whether systemic SEL is implemented at the state, district, or school level, the process began with four interrelated practices. First, schools must build foundational support and plan (CASEL, 2023g; Mahoney et al., 2021), which included creating an SEL team, creating awareness about SEL and engaging key stakeholders, and developing a vision for the program. Second, schools must strengthen adults' SEL competencies and capacity by providing professional development, modeling SEL competencies, encouraging and providing opportunities for adults to participate in SEL activities, and building relationships (CASEL, 2023g; Mahoney et al., 2021). Third, schools must promote SEL for students by creating an approach that engages classrooms, schools, homes, and the larger community (CASEL, 2023g; Mahoney et al., 2021). Finally, schools must practice continuous improvement by establishing a plan to collect and use data, including student outcome data and implementation data, multi-tiered supports, discipline policies, and general schoolwide practices to improve the implementation of SEL (CASEL, 2023g; Mahoney et al., 2021; Schlund et al., 2020).

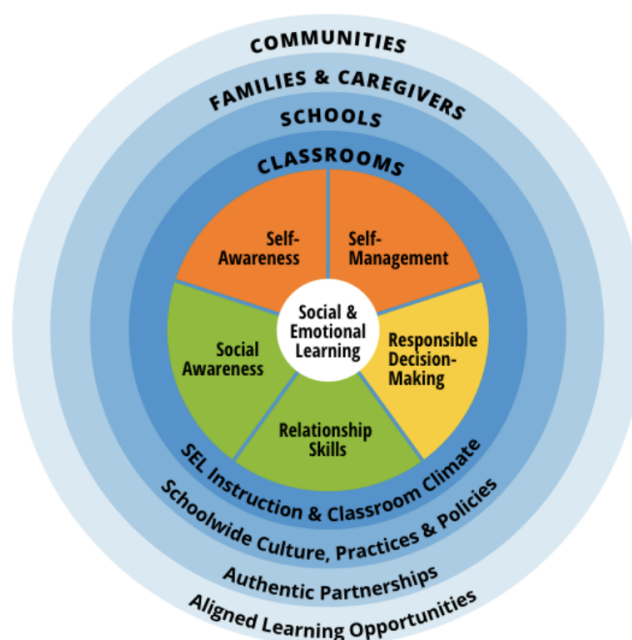
Next, the CASEL framework included five interrelated core competencies that provided a foundation and the tools for students to use throughout their schooling and life (Weissberg et al., 2015). These competencies included self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Mahoney et al., 2021). In addition to the core competencies implemented at the classroom level, CASEL's framework included a collaboration between the classroom, school, parents, and the community in order to enhance student's social, emotional, and academic development which are best explained through CASEL's "ten indicators of schoolwide SEL that outline components of systemic implementation



to promote equitable learning conditions” (Schlund et al., 2020, p. 4; Figure 1). Finally, these efforts should be supported by districtwide SEL goals and supports which then hope to lead to both short- and long-term student outcomes (Weissberg et al., 2015).

### Figure 1

#### *CASEL’s Framework For Social-Emotional Learning*



*Note.* Adapted from CASEL’s SEL framework: *What are the core competence areas and where are they promoted?*, by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2020 (<https://casel.org/casel-sel-framework-11-2020/>).

**SEL Core Competencies.** The five core competencies included self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2023; Weissberg et al., 2015).

***Self-Awareness.*** Self-awareness is the ability to understand how emotions, strengths, and personal values influence a person’s behavior in different situations and it involves

understanding one's own personal strengths and weaknesses, setting goals, having a strong emotional vocabulary, and developing a growth mindset (CASEL, 2023l; Weissberg et al, 2015).

***Self-Management.*** Self-management is the ability to regulate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in order to achieve individual goals and it involves having an understanding of how to manage stress, motivating self, taking initiative, and persevering during difficult situations (CASEL, 2023l; Weissberg et al., 2015). .

***Social Awareness.*** Social awareness is the ability for people to understand or take the perspective of others from different backgrounds and cultures and to be able to empathize with others (CASEL, 2023l; Weissberg et al., 2015). Social awareness includes things such as looking for the strengths of others, empathizing with the feelings of others, and understanding social norms for others from different backgrounds.

***Relationship Skills.*** Relationship skills are the ability for children to develop and maintain positive relationships with others. It also involves teaching students how to navigate relationships with those from diverse backgrounds and maintain situational social norms (CASEL, 2023l; Weissberg et al., 2015). Relationship skills include aspects such as effective communication, strong cultural competency, problem solving, conflict resolution, listening, and resisting peer pressure.

***Responsible Decision-Making.*** Responsible decision-making is the ability for students to make positive choices for both individual and diverse social situations (CASEL, 2023l; Weissberg et al., 2015). Responsible decision-making includes aspects such as weighing the pros and cons of a situation, determining the consequences and impact of actions, and aligning personal ethics and values with decision-making.

**Classroom Instruction and Culture.** Students' social and emotional competence is improved through classroom instruction and curriculum approaches (CASEL, 2023i; Schlund et al., 2020). One approach involved explicit classroom instruction (CASEL, 2023h). In this way, SEL should be explicitly taught in developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive ways through modeling and giving students an opportunity to practice and apply skills (CASEL, 2023i; CASEL, 2023h; Schlund et al., 2020; Weissberg et al., 2015). The success of a classroom environment depends on adults' SEL competence and their ability to successfully teach and model appropriate behaviors (Mahoney et al., 2021). For example, teachers must be able to model how to show empathy, problem-solve, and cooperate, along with managing conflict, frustration, and stress. When these behaviors are modeled, students are more likely to display these behaviors to their peers and others around them (Mahoney et al., 2021).

Explicit SEL instruction also included focused curriculum which oftentimes is delivered through advisory time or morning meetings. Quality SEL curriculum contained features of the acronym SAFE (CASEL, 2023h; Mahoney et al., 2021). The program should be *sequenced* in which competencies are delivered in a coordinated and step-by-step manner. Next, students should participate in *active* forms of learning in which skills are practiced (CASEL, 2023h; Mahoney et al., 2021). The program must be intentionally *focused* on developing SEL skills. Finally, the program must have *explicit* SEL goals that target the development of SEL competencies and skills (CASEL, 2023h; Mahoney et al., 2021). CASEL provided a list of research-based SEL programs which included programs such as Second-Step, the RULER Approach, and English learner (EL) education (CASEL, 2023k).

Another classroom approach involved the integration of SEL into academic instruction (CASEL, 2023h). SEL should be incorporated into academic subject areas and elective courses

rather than solely taught as an independent subject (CASEL, 2023i; Schlund et al., 2020). Students benefited from teaching strategies such as cooperative learning and project-based learning as they can enhance SEL competencies (CASEL, 2020). In addition, teachers can incorporate group or partner activities that encourage the growth of communication skills, teamwork, and relationships (CASEL, 2023h).

Lastly, a positive classroom climate is essential to enhancing students' social and emotional competence (CASEL, 2023i; CASEL, 2023h; Schlund et al., 2020). In other words, the classroom environment must be culturally responsive, safe, supportive, and focused on relationship building between students and teachers (CASEL, 2023i; CASEL, 2023h; Mahoney et al., 2021; Schlund et al., 2020; Weissberg et al., 2015). Not only should SEL competencies be modeled to students, but teachers must know their students' backgrounds, strengths, weaknesses, and interests. With a supportive classroom environment, students are more likely to be academically engaged (CASEL, 2023h).

**Schoolwide Culture, Practices, and Policies.** The outcomes produced by SEL implementation are, in part, due to the school's culture (CASEL, 2023i). Since the school includes many areas, including the classroom, cafeteria, school bus, hallways, and the playground, schoolwide SEL programs should be supported by all teachers and staff (CASEL, 2020; Mahoney et al., 2021). As students move throughout the school, students must feel a sense of belonging, and the school's culture should be one where all students and adults in the school feel supported (CASEL, 2023i; Schlund et al., 2020). As part of the school's culture, students must feel as though their voice is heard, their leadership is valued, and their experiences and perspective matter (Schlund et al., 2020).

The success of SEL required the implementation of SEL within the school's policies and practices (CASEL, 2023i). In this way, a strong SEL program integrated SEL practices into all parts of the educational experience. SEL at the school level typically looks like things such as developing school norms and values, discipline policies that are equitable for all students and restorative in nature, clear bullying prevention practices and policies, and a focus on conflict resolution (Schlund et al., 2020; Weissberg et al., 2015). In addition, SEL should be part of a behavioral and academic management system in which schools are able to meet the needs of all students in a tiered and systematic manner (CASEL, 2020; Schlund et al., 2020). Finally, schools should have a clear focus on developing teachers' SEL skills through professional development, collaboration, and relationship-building (Schlund et al., 2020; Weissberg et al., 2015).

**Partnerships with Parents and Caregivers.** Students' parents and caregivers bring an important element to their social and emotional development because SEL begins at home, and parents begin teaching their children before anyone else teaches them (CASEL, 2023i; CASEL, 2023i; Mahoney et al., 2021). Families know their students the best and have important insights into students' experiences, cultural background, and educational needs (CASEL, 2023i; CASEL, 2023i). In this way, parents and caregivers can act as advocates for the social and emotional needs of students (CASEL, 2023i). Bringing families into the decision-making process regarding SEL practices strengthened the impact on students and the school-to-home relationship (CASEL, 2023i).

Families and the school need to share the same vision and goals for SEL development, along with a shared responsibility, for students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to be productive citizens (Mahoney et al., 2021). The partnership began by educating parents on what SEL is and the importance of SEL (CASEL, 2023j). There should be a priority on two-way

communication, engaging families through volunteer opportunities (e.g, field trips, classrooms), enhancing family SEL through workshops and parent education opportunities that offer flexible scheduling and translators, involving parents in decision-making (e.g., inviting parents to attend SEL team meetings), and creating extensions of SEL lessons for students to bring home (CASEL, 2020; CASEL, 2023i; CASEL, 2023j). With a partnership between the school and home, parents and family members can enhance SEL development by modeling the skills and helping students practice while at home (CASEL, 2023i). Ultimately, the goal is to build relationships and create family partnerships through collaboration in order to meet student needs (Schlund et al., 2020).

**Community Partnerships.** The community refers to organizations and individuals within the local school district that work with youth and value the development of social and emotional skills (Mahoney et al., 2021). Partnerships in the community promote an understanding of family and students’ needs and often are trusted by community members (CASEL, 2020; CASEL, 2023i). They also provided schools with additional resources and services for educational and psychological needs (CASEL, 2023i; CASEL, 2023f). When students attend extracurriculars such as after school programs or recreational activities within the community, they provided opportunities for students to practice their social and emotional skills with peers and adults (CASEL, 2023i; Mahoney et al., 2021; Weissberg et al., 2015). Other community opportunities that focused on youth include “leadership initiatives, mental and behavioral health, [and] community sports and arts” (CASEL, 2023f, para. 3). These activities naturally enhanced SEL skills such as teamwork, conflict resolution, collaboration, goal-setting, and relationship-building (CASEL, 2023f). It is important for schools to collaborate with partners in the community on common language and other helpful SEL strategies in order to

strengthen students' SEL skills (CASEL, 2020; CASEL, 2023i; Mahoney et al., 2021; Schlund et al., 2020).

CASEL (2023i) provided a roadmap for schools to coordinate SEL efforts with local community partners. In order to strengthen students' SEL skills, it is important that all partnerships and learning environments (i.e., school, home) align “in language, in strategies, in practice and in communication around SEL” (CASEL, 2023j, p. 54). The collaboration with community partners can begin by intentionally developing a comprehensive list of all partnerships along with their mission, goals, and available support personnel and programs (CASEL, 2023j). After sharing the mission and vision of the school district's SEL program, the SEL team should identify the partnerships that most align with the SEL program and identify opportunities to strengthen the relationship and to collaborate. Finally, schools and community partners should discuss how best to communicate as well as use data for continuous improvement (CASEL, 2023j).

**Districtwide SEL.** The school district includes the broader school community including the school board or board of trustees, central office staff, school leaders, teachers, students, and families (CASEL, 2023g). Schoolwide SEL programming is more likely to be successful and have sustained impact with the support and alignment with district-wide goals (CASEL, 2017; Weissberg et al., 2015). Alignment with the school district can include the strategic plan, budget development for SEL resources, professional development opportunities, and general operations of the school district (CASEL, 2017; CASEL, 2023g; Weissberg et al., 2015). In addition, the school district can support SEL implementation by establishing SEL programming at the school level as well as with community partners and establishing a system for data collection and

making improvements based on student data and needs (Weissberg et al., 2015). The school district and school administrators must support SEL program initiatives (CASEL, 2017).

Implementing SEL at the district level produced positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes for students (CASEL, 2023g). For example, the Collaborating District Initiative (CDI) found that with increased district-level SEL support, school districts were more likely to experience higher levels of commitment to SEL programming and a positive working climate (American Institutes for Research, 2015). In the same way, schools were more likely to experience fewer referrals for behavior and see an increase in student attendance and academic achievement (American Institutes for Research, 2015; CASEL, 2023g). A focus on CASEL's theory of action is likely a contributing factor for school districts to produce these outcomes, including building a foundational plan, strengthening adults' SEL competence, promoting students' SEL, and focusing on improvement (CASEL, 2023g).

### **Transformative Social-Emotional Learning**

Although the field of SEL has grown over the last three decades, researchers (Jagers, 2016; Rivas-Drake et al., 2019; Schlund et al., 2020) have begun to question whether the SEL framework and programs “adequately reflect, cultivate, and leverage cultural assets and promote optimal well-being” of students of color (Jagers et al., 2019, p. 162). In order to address the issue of equity and better serve a diverse student population, CASEL created the term *transformative SEL* (Jagers et al., 2018; Jagers et al., 2019; Saavedra & Nolan, 2018; Williams & Jagers, 2020). Transformative SEL is a “process whereby students and teachers build strong, respectful relationships founded on an appreciation of similarities and differences, learn to critically examine root causes of inequity, and develop collaborative solutions to community and societal problems” (Saavedra & Nolan, 2018; p. 2). The purpose of transformative SEL is to promote



equitable classrooms and environments which foster learning for all students (Jagers et al., 2019; Saavedra & Nolan, 2018).

One of the long-term goals of SEL is engaged citizenship (Jagers et al., 2019; Williams & Jagers, 2020). Anchored in this long-term goal, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) offered three types of citizenship: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. Justice-oriented, or transformative, citizenship emphasizes systemic change to rid inequities and encourages social justice (Jagers et al., 2019; Williams & Jagers, 2020). In this way, transformative SEL sought to encourage students and educators to go beyond being prosocial, but to also speak out against inequities that exist in schools (Williams & Jagers, 2020).

Through transformative SEL efforts, CASEL created description revisions, referred to as “equity elaborations,” to the five SEL competencies within their framework for systemic SEL in order to provide an equity lens (Jagers et al., 2018; Jagers et al., 2019; Schlund et al., 2020). The core competencies are viewed as interrelated and imperative “to the growth and development of justice-oriented, global citizens” (Jagers et al., 2018, p. 3). These revisions are included above in the description of each competency (e.g., perspective taking, understanding social norms, and communicating with others from diverse cultural backgrounds).

### ***Historical Context for Transformative SEL***

Inequities in society such as the decreasing middle class and wealth in the hands of few, which are seen in the U.S. and other Western countries that value individualism, impact a person’s social and emotional well-being (Jagers et al., 2019). Inequity negatively impacts things such as mental health, the threat of violence, and substance abuse. The impacts are seen more often in men of color that are living in under-resourced communities, and this fact “helped

launch, sustain, and exacerbate long-standing racial, class, and gender stereotypes that define prevailing notions of ingroup/outgroup relations” (Jagers et al., 2019, p. 164).

American schools tend to perpetuate American middle-class cultural ideals which, in turn, are only culturally relevant to White middle to upper-class students (Jagers et al., 2019). Typically, deviations from the traditional educational norms are met with low academic expectations, microaggressions, and implicit biases from both teachers and peers (Allen et al., 2013). In this way, students of color often receive an education that is less challenging, less engaging, and does not reflect their cultural background (Osher et al., 2018), leading to heightened stress, mistrust, and less participation which can negatively impact academic achievement and social-emotional development (Allen et al., 2013; Hammond, 2015).

### ***Promoting Educational Equity***

Although transformative SEL by itself is not enough, it does help to resolve the long-standing inequities in the American educational system (CASEL, 2023a; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021). Transformative SEL can help “promote understanding, examine biases, reflect on and address the impact of racism, build cross-cultural relationships” and help to foster an inclusive school community (CASEL, 2023a, para. 4) to provide students with a high-quality education through educational equity (CASEL, 2023a; Saavedra & Nolan, 2018).

According to CASEL (2023k), SEL promoted educational equity in several ways. First, all students’ cultures and backgrounds must be represented in the SEL curriculum (CASEL, 2023a; Jagers et al., 2019). Students bring their own lived experiences, cultures, and strengths to school (CASEL, 2023a). Instead of encouraging students to conform to the majority culture, SEL desired to promote all students’ culture and backgrounds in the classroom (CASEL, 2023a; Jagers et al., 2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2018). One way schools can

promote student diversity is through adopting an evidence-based SEL program that affirms the cultural diversity of students and is relevant to students' experiences, backgrounds, and communities (CASEL, 2023a; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021).

Second, SEL must be utilized for systemic improvement (e.g., student-teacher relationship, improving student engagement) rather than simply for an at-risk intervention (CASEL, 2023a). Although SEL can help to improve mental health and academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Jagers et al., 2019; Ross & Tolan, 2018), the impact of SEL is increased when “systemic SEL becomes a coordinated framework that transforms all aspects of schooling” (CASEL, 2023a, para. 7). A systemic framework targeted teacher and staff collaboration, promoted engaging instructional delivery of academic and social-emotional curriculum, provided consistent routines, and built trusting relationships between students, teachers, staff, parents, and the community (CASEL, 2023a; Jagers et al., 2019; The Aspen Education & Society Program, 2018).

Third, SEL should promote student voice and be justice oriented. Ultimately, SEL sought to help students learn how to successfully engage in and contribute to their school, future career, family and relationships, and community (CASEL, 2023a). Students should be given the opportunity to challenge inequities and participate in leadership roles (CASEL, 2023a; Jagers et al., 2018; Jagers et al., 2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021; Schlund et al., 2020). In addition, schools can give students the opportunity to participate in discussions with one another, problem-solve about school and community issues, and have the opportunity to have a voice in school and classroom rules and operations (CASEL, 2023a; Jagers et al., 2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021; Schlund et al., 2020).

Fourth, SEL should strengthen adult equity practices by helping educators examine their own social-emotional competence, practices, and policies that impact educational equity (CASEL, 2023a; Jagers et al., 2018; Schlund et al., 2020). By promoting equity, teachers are encouraged to examine their own implicit biases and how it impacts their students (CASEL, 2023a; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2018; Schlund et al., 2020). School-wide, teachers and administrators should analyze data and problem-solve the root cause of any disparities within the data, and collaborate with stakeholders to develop equity-based policies (CASEL, 2023a; Jagers et al., 2019; Schlund et al., 2020).

Finally, the CASEL framework promoted the collaboration between students, families, teachers, and communities in student social and emotional development (CASEL, 2023a; Schlund et al., 2020). In this way, schools can affirm students and encourage them to take ownership of their social and emotional development by promoting and having an understanding of students' values, cultural backgrounds, and the communities in which they live (CASEL, 2023a). Schools are encouraged to collaborate with students, families, and community members in the creation of an SEL program and seek consistent feedback (CASEL, 2023a; Schlund et al., 2020; The Aspen Education & Society Program, 2018).

### ***Transformative Educational Practices***

Culturally responsive instructional practices “reflect the best of the science of learning and development as they can afford cultural well-being, identity, and safe learning environments that can result in optimal opportunities for academic, social, and emotional learning” (Jagers et al., 2019, p. 173). In this way, not only can SEL help to reduce negative behaviors and improve mental health, it can also be leveraged through transformative SEL in order to support equity efforts. The following educational practices are key examples of how schools can leverage SEL

to improve equity: focusing on students' lived experiences, encouraging students' voice, building classroom community, and developing teacher's cultural competency (CASEL, 2023a; Jagers et al., 2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2018).

First, it is essential that teachers use the lived experiences and prior knowledge of their students during instruction in order to increase engagement and learning (CASEL, 2023a; Jagers et al., 2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021). Educators must view the experiences of students as assets (Saavedra & Nolan, 2018). A few key ways teachers can include students' lived experiences are through choosing books that represent students' diverse backgrounds (e.g., authors from diverse backgrounds, non-fiction books that represent similar backgrounds of students in the classroom), talking about current events that students are more likely to know about, having students reflect on their own cultural background and learning about the cultural backgrounds of others, and being comfortable putting curriculum aside if there is an emotional need that needs to be addressed (Jagers et al., 2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2018; Saavedra & Nolan, 2018; The Aspen Education & Society Program, 2018).

Next, SEL sought to teach students how to participate and contribute to their school, community, future career path, and families (CASEL, 2023a). By encouraging students' voices, teachers viewed students "as experts in understanding and fashioning a world that is more just and equitable" (Jagers, 2016, p. 3). Teachers can encourage students' voices by allowing students to share their opinion and dialogue with teachers and peers, advocate for systemic change, challenge inequitable rules, and collaborate and solve problems they see in the school and community (CASEL, 2023a; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021).

Third, SEL sought to go beyond an intervention for at-risk students and instead, through systemic implementation, to improve learning environments and student outcomes (CASEL,

2023a). One way to do this is through classroom community building and building trusting relationships (CASEL, 2023a; Saavedra & Nolan, 2018). In order for the most learning to occur, not only do students need to feel valued and known, they also need to have a positive relationship built on truth with their teachers (Jagers et al., 2019). Teachers can focus on classroom community building through things like morning meetings, setting classroom and individual goals, and encouraging collaboration (Saavedra & Nolan, 2018).

Finally, SEL sought to help adults understand how their own SEL competencies, biases, and classroom practices impact equity and their students (CASEL, 2023a). Schools can help teachers develop cultural competency through self-reflection, professional development centered around culturally responsive teaching practices, and encourage teachers to engage in conversations around equity (CASEL, 2023a; The Aspen Education & Society Program, 2018). Developing educator cultural competency is essential in order to reduce biases and prejudice toward students from different cultural backgrounds (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2018; The Aspen Education & Society Program, 2018). In addition, teachers with increased cultural competency are more likely to have higher levels of empathy (REL Midwest, n.d.).

### **Teachers' Cultural Competence**

According to Gershenson et al. (2017), the high school dropout rate can be cut by an estimated 39% for disadvantaged Black males when they are exposed to a same-race teacher in elementary school. In addition, students are more likely to want to take a college admission test with exposure to a same-race teacher, and this exposure helps close the achievement gap. Unfortunately, as the number of students of color continues to increase, while the number of teachers of color continues to decrease, this educational gap continues to grow (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020a, 2020b; U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data

Collection, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c). These differences between teachers' and students' cultural backgrounds have important implications for SEL (Barnes & McCallops, 2019). Different cultures view and define competencies differently and place varying levels of importance on the SEL competencies (Hecht & Shin, 2015). In this way, teachers' cultural competency is imperative to SEL instruction (Barnes & McCallops, 2019).

People cannot understand another person's culture by simply coming into contact with someone from a different cultural background (Green, 2019). Multicultural understanding requires time and effort, especially from those possessing a Eurocentric worldview (Green, 2019). Teachers do not have control over biases that people hold toward certain groups of people, however, they can control how they view their students and the steps they take to overcome ingrained biases and perspectives (Saavedra & Nolan, 2018). These ingrained biases and perspectives are called implicit biases, or "the unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that shape our responses to certain groups especially around race, class, and language" (Hammond, 2015, p. 156).

In order to dismantle implicit biases, teachers must first be willing to step outside their comfort zone; however, the human brain is not designed to easily step into the unknown (Hammond, 2015). The job of the amygdala and reticular activating system in the brain is to help keep people safe. These areas of the brain are provoked by people going outside of their comfort zone and are in control of flight, fight, or freeze, which will activate naturally during periods of high stress or danger and will send stress hormones to the brain (Hammond, 2015). Essentially, this part of the human brain works against efforts to dismantle implicit biases because in order to do so, people have to step out of their comfort zone.

After understanding how the brain works and committing to the process (Hammond, 2015), the next step for teachers seeking to increase their cultural competence for greater student impact is self-reflection. The more teachers are aware of their own cultural values and norms, the more they can be aware of how those values and norms shape their classroom. In order to increase self-awareness, Hammond encouraged teachers to reflect on their culture, such as family traditions, expectations for college, stories told about people while growing up, the nature of praise and disrespect, and acceptable ways to display emotion.

Next, teachers can increase their cultural competency by acknowledging the importance of culture in the way others interact with each other and view the world (Green, 2019). This step is essential for educational equity because it gives teachers the opportunity to take the perspective of people who are different from them (Saavedra & Nolan, 2018). When people engage in perspective-taking, they are able to see a different view of the world and it often leads to positive change.

Teachers' social-emotional competency (SEC) is an important part of building strong teacher-student relationships and furthering transformative SEL (Jagers et al., 2018; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers who possess a strong SEC have the ability to recognize students' emotions and can understand the effect that emotions have on student behavior to be able to respond appropriately to student needs (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers impact their students not only by what they teach but also by how they relate to and manage their students' social and emotional needs. Although many studies have shown the effectiveness of SEL (Durlak et al., 2011; Ross and Tolan, 2018), Jennings and Greenberg (2009) believed that in order for implementation to be effective, teachers must possess a strong SEC to create an environment where students can resolve conflicts and create strong relationships with teachers and classmates.



Other factors also impact SEL implementation such as school culture, school leadership, and SEL coaching (Domitrovich & Greenberg, 2000; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Ransford, 2007; Ransford et al., 2009). Unfortunately, teachers often have stronger relationships with White students than with students of color which may be due to biases and preferences that teachers hold regardless of cultural background (Allen et al., 2013; Yeager et al., 2017).

With the increased focus on culturally responsive teaching practices, several researchers have outlined culturally responsive practices in order to advance students' social-emotional learning. These practices include aspects such as incorporating students' cultural backgrounds and belief systems into instruction, giving students an opportunity to share information about their backgrounds, practicing taking the perspective of others, and reflecting on their personal biases (Barnes & McCallops, 2019). Buy-in is gained from students when teachers allow students to express their interests and points-of-view (Barrera et al., 2011). Students need to feel valued and known in order to learn and feel safe (Jagers et al., 2019).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The current study focused on social-emotional learning, cultural competency, culturally responsive teaching practices, and the relationship these have on student outcomes. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT; Vavrus, 2008) provided the theoretical framework for the possible role that teachers' cultural competency plays in the implementation of culturally responsive SEL strategies. In addition, CRT and the stage model of information processing theory (Atkinson and Shiffrin's, 1968) provided theories for investigating the effect that culturally responsive SEL has on students' SEL outcomes.

### ***Culturally Responsive Teaching***

According to Hammond (2015), CRT is:

An educator's ability to recognize students' cultural displays of learning and meaning making and responding positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing. All the while, the educator understands the importance of being in a relationship and having a social-emotional connection to the student in order to create a safe space for learning. (p. 15)

The historical roots of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) date back to the 1950s with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling to end segregation in public schools (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954) and the signing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 (Vavrus, 2008). The civil rights movement led to a multicultural education reform movement in order to create inclusive schools and increase educators' cultural competency (Vavrus, 2008). Further, the civil rights movement showcased "the need for a teaching force that can understand and interact effectively with diverse cultural groups outside the standard school boundaries and is able to provide curricular opportunities reflective of this diversity within schools" (Vavrus, 2008, p. 51). CRT officially emerged in the 1990s as a way to meet the needs of students of color.

All students should have access and the chance to learn (Vavrus, 2008). The theory behind CRT is in line with the purpose of education as outlined by Dewey (1916), who believed that good can come from people seeing beyond their own "self-interests and biases" by working toward understanding and learning about those who are culturally and racially different from themselves (Vavrus, 2008, p. 51). Hammond (2015) outlined four practice areas that must be used together in order for CRT to be effective: awareness, learning partnerships, information processing, and community building.

First, awareness involves teachers' awareness of their own social and political lens as well as relating instruction to the current social and political context in which their students live (Hammond, 2015). In line with Dewey (1916), CRT encourages individuals to integrate the cultural background and perspectives of others rather than defaulting to the views of the dominant group (i.e., Euro-Americanism; Gay, 2018; Vavrus, 2008). Next, learning partnerships involve teachers building authentic relationships with students from all cultural backgrounds (Hammond, 2015). Third, information processing focuses on the way that culture influences how the brain learns and processes information (Hammond, 2015). In this way, teachers must acknowledge the role that the school environment plays in students' learning process and must include personal experiences and prior knowledge within the curriculum in order for students to learn and have a long-term impact (Gay, 2018; Vavrus, 2008).

According to Vavrus (2008), "from a Deweyian standpoint, CRT as a learner-centered pedagogy acknowledges the importance of student's prior and current experiences for the long-range goal of the development of citizenship competencies" (p. 51). Finally, community building focuses on the idea that classrooms need to feel safe to students in order to learn (Hammond, 2015). Although teachers strive to create a safe space for students, oftentimes classrooms are reflective of the teacher's cultural background or a Eurocentric worldview which does not communicate a safe community to students from the minority. When implemented together, these four practice areas "create the social, emotional, and cognitive conditions that allow students to more actively engage and take ownership of their learning process" (Hammond, 2015, p. 18).

Culturally responsive teaching was proposed out of the assumption that cultural background, ethnic identity, and academic achievement are closely related (Gay, 2018). The

more educators ignore this relationship, the more schools will continue to see the underachievement of students of color. Another important aspect of CRT is the need for teachers to “analyze their own cultural attitudes, assumptions, mechanisms, rules, and regulations that have made it difficult for them to teach these students successfully” (Gay, 2018, p. 33). One aspect of cultural competency is an awareness of individual beliefs and attitudes toward other cultures in order to refrain from cultural bias (Patel, 2017).

Culture is a dynamic system which includes things such as worldview, belief systems, and codes for proper behavior which impact how people live and view the world (Hammond, 2015). Culture impacts how people behave, think, and communicate with others which ultimately impacts how educators teach and students learn (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015). In this way, the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices (e.g., cultural background, personal experiences, prior knowledge) is essential in order to increase academic achievement and SEL student competencies.

For the current study, CRT offers a useful way to investigate the relationship between teachers’ cultural competency and the implementation of transformative SEL. In addition, it is important to understand how the use of culturally responsive teaching practices can encourage student learning. In order to explain this relationship, the stage model of information processing theory will be used as it relates to human memory. In essence, the more teachers can connect curriculum to students’ prior knowledge and experiences, the more likely the information will be attended to and moved into long-term memory.

### ***Stage Model of Information Processing Theory***

The limbic layer of the brain connects “emotions, behaviors, and cognition” (Hammond, 2015, p. 38). The role of the limbic layer of the brain is to help people with their memory, control

and manage emotions, and learn. Based on the positive and negative results of experiences, people learn things to stay away from and things to continue pursuing (Hammond, 2015).

Experiences also form a person's schema which translates to existing knowledge.

According to Atkinson and Shiffrin's (1968) information processing theory, there are three phases of learning. These include sensory memory, working memory (i.e., short-term memory), and long-term memory. First, stimuli (e.g., sights, sounds, smells) enter into sensory memory which then becomes information (Brown, 2015; Huitt, 2003). In order for this information to transfer to short-term memory, the information must be perceived and attended to. There are two roadblocks to learning in the classroom. When information is unattended, it is forgotten. Perception refers to students seeing the stimuli and giving the stimuli meaning (Brown, 2015). People are more likely to perceive and attend to stimuli that are interesting and a known pattern (Huitt, 2003). In this way, using students' prior knowledge is essential in order for information to move from sensory memory to short-term memory.

If the stimuli moves past the two roadblocks, the information moves into short-term memory (Brown, 2015), which can last for 15 to 20 seconds unless the information is rehearsed, or repeated (Hammond, 2015; Huitt, 2003). If students repeat the information, it will stay in short-term memory for up to 20 minutes. During this stage of memory, the brain is trying to connect the new information to old knowledge in order for the information to be relevant (Hammond, 2015).

Information that reaches long-term memory is stored for a lifetime and is permanent (Brown, 2015; Öğmen & Herzog, 2016). Although short-term memory has a really small capacity, long-term memory's capacity is very large. A person's background knowledge is held in long-term memory which assists in making meaning of the world (Hammond, 2015).

## **Conclusion**

Over the course of the last three decades, CASEL has strived to expand education in an effort to focus on the whole child, increasing not only academic achievement but also students' emotional well-being. In a world that is becoming increasingly diverse, culturally responsive educators are essential to promote students' learning as they are able to step outside of their Eurocentric worldview and understand how culture impacts teaching, student learning, and well-being (Vavrus, 2008). With understanding and self-awareness, teachers may be better equipped to implement culturally responsive teaching practices in order to ensure that all students benefit from SEL.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The first purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competency and the self-reported use of culturally responsive social-emotional learning (SEL) practices in classrooms. The second purpose was to learn if there was a relationship between perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes.

#### **Research Design**

The research method for this study was a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine 1) whether there was a significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices, conditional on teachers' race; and 2) whether there was a significant relationship between teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts, conditional on students' race.

Teachers' perception of cultural competence and implementation of culturally responsive SEL teaching practices were measured through a descriptive survey using 1) the Educators Scale of Student Diversity survey (ESSD; Patel, 2017), and 2) questions relating to teachers' use of specific culturally responsive SEL strategies. Students' data were gathered using secondary data analysis of the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS; Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.b.). The MSS is given every three years to students in grades five, eight, nine, and eleven. This study focused on self-reported students' data in the areas of educational engagement, mental health self-description, and teacher-student relationships. The areas chosen from the survey are aligned with the five core competencies of the CASEL framework (i.e., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building, responsible decision-making) and

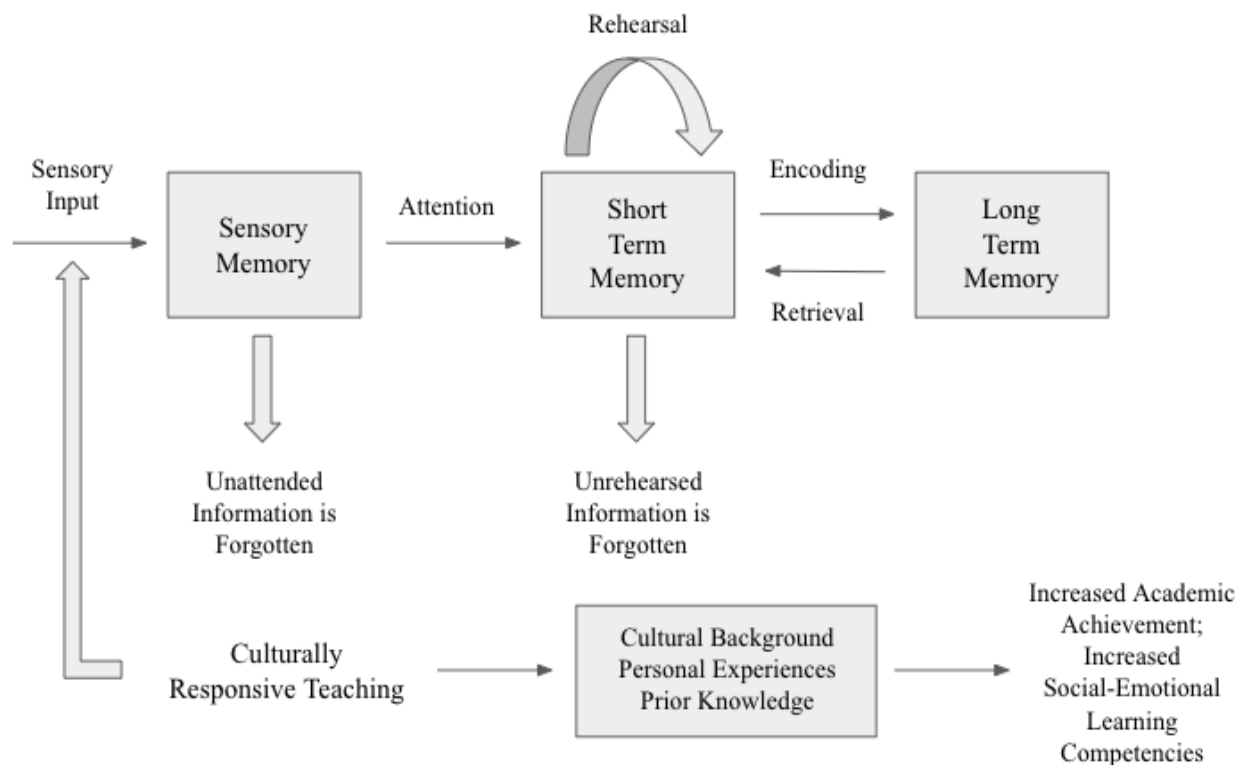
research-based student outcomes from SEL implementation in schools (i.e., academic achievement, school connectedness). The survey results were disaggregated by race/ethnicity for both teachers and students. A bivariate correlation was used to measure a statistically significant relationship.

### Application of the Theoretical Framework

For this study, culturally responsive teaching (CRT) provided the theoretical framework for the possible role that teachers' cultural competency plays in the implementation of culturally responsive SEL strategies. In addition, CRT and the stage model of information processing theory provided a theory for investigating the influence that culturally responsive SEL has on students' SEL outcomes (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Theoretical Framework*





## **Research Questions**

1. Is there a relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices, conditional on teachers' race?
2. Is there a relationship between teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts, conditional on students' race?

## **Hypotheses**

### *Null Hypotheses*

1. (H<sub>0</sub>1) There is no significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers' race.
2. (H<sub>0</sub>2) There is no significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts conditional on students' race.

### *Alternative Hypotheses*

1. (H<sub>a</sub>1) There is a significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers' race.
2. (H<sub>a</sub>2) There is a significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts conditional on students' race.

## **Variables**

Survey participants provided several demographic variables, including type of school, employment status, role in the school, grade level(s) currently teaching, total years in current

position, total years as a teacher, highest level of education, ethnicity, race, and school district of employment.

The first alternate hypothesis was that there is a significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers' race. In this hypothesis, the dependent variable was teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices, as perceived and rated by teachers. Culturally responsive SEL teaching practices were measured by a descriptive survey which included questions relating to teachers' use of specific culturally responsive SEL strategies. The independent variables were 1) teachers' cultural competence and 2) teachers' race or ethnicity.

The second alternate hypothesis was that there is a significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes. In this hypothesis, the dependent variable was students' SEL outcomes as measured by the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS; MDE, n.d.a.). The independent variables were 1) teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and 2) students' race or ethnicity.

### **Sample**

The population for research question 1 included current teachers employed in the state of Minnesota. After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a list of teachers was requested from Minnesota's Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) and then contacted to participate in the study. From the requested list that PELSB sent, there were approximately 200,007 licensed educators in the state of Minnesota. After filtering for non-classroom licenses (e.g., Principal K-12, School Nurse, Short Call Substitute Teacher), and teachers who hold multiple licenses, the survey was sent to 97,352 (48.7%) educators.

For research question 2, participation was limited to teachers employed by public school districts with larger groups of diverse students. In order to analyze the data at a 95% confidence level, a minimum of 30 teachers were required for each school district. In addition, in order to disaggregate MDE student survey data by race and ethnicity, there must have been a minimum of 25 students in each demographic category (e.g., 25 African American students, 25 Asian students). There were five school districts which met the above criteria, including Anoka-Hennepin Public School District, Minneapolis Public School District, Osseo Public School District, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public School District, and South Washington County Schools.

Every three years, students in grades five, eight, nine, and eleven participate in the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS). Fifth-, eighth-, ninth-, and eleventh-grade students during the 2021-2022 school year who were enrolled in one of the five districts identified above were included in the research sample for Research Question 2. The student population of this study included the mean responses from 5,360 fifth-grade students, 7,745 eighth grade students, 6,039 ninth-grade students, and 5,161 eleventh-grade students.

### **Setting**

The survey was emailed to all current teachers in the state of Minnesota. All survey responses were used for research question 1. For research question 2, the same survey data was used; however, the data was disaggregated to only include responses from teachers who were currently employed by (1) public school districts large enough to break down the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) data by race and ethnicity and (2) districts with a minimum of 30 teachers who completed the teacher survey.

## Data Collection

For this study, there are two sources of data that were collected. First, a survey was emailed to teacher participants using Qualtrics. A list of licensed teachers was requested from Minnesota's Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), and these teachers were contacted to participate in the study. The survey contained three parts. Part one asked demographic information such as school district, highest level of education, years of experience, ethnicity and race, and whether their school district implements an SEL program. Part two measured teachers' cultural competence through the Educators Scale of Student Diversity survey (ESSD; Patel, 2017). Finally, part three measured teachers' perception of their implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. The second source of data included the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS). The MSS data is publicly available on the Minnesota Department of Education website (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.b.; Appendix D).

The survey was administered through Qualtrics, and one subsequent reminder was sent in order to increase participation (Appendix B). It was essential that all teacher participants were currently working in a school in the state of Minnesota. Since PELSB included all licensed teachers in the state of Minnesota, this included educators licensed who are now retired or who work in another state. In order to ensure participants were currently employed in the state of Minnesota, the first survey question asked, "Are you currently employed as a teacher/educator in Minnesota?" If "No" is selected, the survey automatically skipped to the end of the survey. Additionally, it was essential that all teacher participants were employed as a teacher in the state of Minnesota during the 2021-2022 school year. In order to ensure this requirement was met, the second survey question asked, "Were you employed as a teacher/educator in Minnesota during

the 2021-2022 school year?” If “No” is selected, the survey automatically skipped to the end of the survey.

Once data was collected, the confidentiality of all participants was maintained. Qualtrics was used in order to keep teacher participants’ identities confidential, and all data was stored on a password-protected computer. In addition, since students’ data is reported by individual districts, teachers’ district of employment was needed to compare the data. Although the school district was known, participants did not reveal the individual school of employment.

### **Instrumentation and Measures**

Teachers completed a survey which included 11 demographic questions, one question related to the level of perceived SEL implementation at the district level, and two instruments. The demographic questions included type of school, employment status, role in the school, grade level(s) currently teaching, total years in current position, total years as a teacher, highest level of education, ethnicity, race, and school district of employment. The survey item (question 11; Appendix A) related to the level of perceived SEL implementation was taken from CASEL’s worksheet, *SEL and Equity: Leadership Beliefs and Actions*, that is available to the public in order for educators to reflect on implementation of equitable district-wide SEL practices (CASEL, n.d.a.).

The two instruments included the Educators Scale of Student Diversity (ESSD; Patel, 2017) and questions regarding teachers’ perception of implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices (CASEL, 2023a; CASEL, 2023e; Saavedra & Nolan, 2018). The survey was a total of 43 questions and took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Teachers’ cultural competence was measured using the ESSD (Patel, 2017). The researcher secured permission to use the survey (Appendix E). The ESSD is a five-point

response scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) with 22 survey items (part two of Appendix A). Although not distinctive subscales, the framework for this survey includes four theoretical constructs: cultural awareness (CA; e.g., “The primary religions of a district’s families should have their holidays represented in the school calendar”), culturally responsive instruction (CRI; e.g., “Teachers should take students’ cultural backgrounds into account when planning instruction”), multicultural education (ME; e.g., “Teachers should be responsible for helping students develop positive attitudes towards different ethnic and cultural groups”), and critical race theory (CRT; e.g., “All teachers, including myself, have implicit bias that negatively affects their interactions with some students”). The survey includes 2 CA items, 6 CRI items, 7 ME items, and 7 CRT items. The mean for the entire 22-question inventory was used to measure teachers’ cultural competence rather than the subscales. The ESSD has been shown to have high reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.88 for the entire scale. There is initial evidence of convergent and construct validity (Patel, 2017).

CASEL identifies practices for *Equity and SEL* along with practices that advance transformative SEL that teachers should use in the classroom (CASEL, 2023a; Saavedra & Nolan, 2018). The survey items for teachers’ implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were taken from CASEL’s Guide to Schoolwide SEL, CASEL’s suggestions for advancing transformative SEL, and the District Resource Center (CASEL, 2023a; CASEL, 2023e; Saavedra & Nolan, 2018). There is no information regarding the measure’s validity and reliability as this survey was created by this researcher based on the culturally responsive SEL practices identified in the research. The purpose of each survey item was for teachers to self-reflect on their implementation of these individual practices. Teachers’ implementation of

culturally responsive SEL practices was measured by teachers' perception of their own implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices (part three of Appendix A). The implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices survey included a four-point response scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree) with nine survey items. Example survey items included "I use data in order to identify disparities among my students," "I actively encourage students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds," and "I facilitate learning about students' own culture and the culture of others."

In addition to the teacher survey, student data were collected through the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS). The MSS began in 1989 in order to learn about students' experiences, health, and well-being (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.b.). The MSS contains questions relating to topics such as educational engagement, mental health, and student-teacher relationships. The MSS is given online once every three years to students in grades five, eight, nine, and eleven and is available to all public, nonpublic, charter, and tribal schools. The survey is voluntary in which school districts choose to take the MSS, parents have the option to opt their child out of the survey, and individual students can opt themselves out of completing the survey. In each administration of the MSS, at least 81% of school districts have participated (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.b.). The MSS data is available on the Minnesota Department of Education website (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.c.). The survey data were broken down by race or ethnicity by the school district for those school districts that reached the required threshold to ensure confidentiality.

The MSS survey items included in this study targeted seven areas which reflect the CASEL framework's five core competencies and positive outcomes of school-wide implementation of SEL: academic achievement (e.g., "How would you describe your grades this

school year?"; 1 = mostly F's, 2 = mostly D's, 3 = mostly C's, 4 = mostly B's, 5 = mostly A's), self-awareness (e.g., "I feel valued and appreciated by others"; 1 = not at all or rarely, 2 = somewhat or sometimes, 3 = very or often, 4 = extremely or almost always), self-management (e.g., "I find good ways to deal with things that are hard in my life"; 1 = not at all or rarely, 2 = somewhat or sometimes, 3 = very or often, 4 = extremely or almost always), social awareness (e.g., "I am sensitive to the needs and feelings of others"; 1 = not at all or rarely, 2 = somewhat or sometimes, 3 = very or often, 4 = extremely or almost always), relationship building (e.g., "I accept people who are different from me"; 1 = not at all or rarely, 2 = somewhat or sometimes, 3 = very or often, 4 = extremely or almost always), responsible decision-making (e.g., "I say no to things that are dangerous and unhealthy"; 1 = not at all or rarely, 2 = somewhat or sometimes, 3 = very or often, 4 = extremely or almost always), and school connectedness (e.g., "Most teachers at my school are interested in me as a person"; 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree). Appendix C contains a list of all student survey questions that were used for this study.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualtrics was used to obtain the teachers' survey data. Out of the 97,352 surveys sent, 2,176 were returned (2.24% return rate). Of these returned surveys, 828 were removed because the individuals did not complete the survey. The teachers' data were downloaded through Qualtrics and then uploaded into JASP for analysis. The demographic survey data were used to provide a rich description of the sample and to disaggregate the data by teachers' race, ethnicity, grade level(s) taught, and school district. The results from the ESSD survey were analyzed and compared to the use of culturally responsive SEL practices used in the classroom.



Four of the 22 ESSD survey questions required reverse coding because they were worded so that a low response would indicate a high number. One grand total mean was calculated for the 22-question inventory. The data collected from part three (i.e., implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices) were analyzed and compared with teachers' ESSD results as well as students' outcome data. Since part three is related to implementation practices rather than a research-based inventory, the purpose was to use individual questions to see if there is a significant relationship between cultural competency as measured by the ESSD and perception of teaching practices.

The student survey data from the spring of 2022 was obtained from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) website, added to a Microsoft Excel document, and uploaded to JASP for analysis. Data were collected for the following Minnesota school districts: Anoka-Hennepin Public School District, Minneapolis Public School District, Osseo Public School District, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public School District, and South Washington County Schools. The mean results were disaggregated by ethnicity/race, grade level, and school district. The data were analyzed and compared with teachers' perceptions of implementation of culturally responsive SEL teaching practices. Teachers identified their current district of employment in order to ensure the minimum amount of district-level participation to analyze the data at a 95% confidence level.

### ***Alternative Hypothesis 1***

The first alternative hypothesis for this study was that there is a significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. In order to analyze this hypothesis, bivariate correlations were used to measure a statistically significant relationship within each racial/ethnic group. A minimum of 30

participants were needed per racial/ethnic group to analyze the data at a 95% confidence level. The total sample consisted of 1,348 teachers who participated and completed the teacher survey. Of those teachers, 31 were Hispanic or Latino/a, 1,317 were Not Hispanic or Latino/a; 11 were American Indian or Alaska Native, 16 were Asian, 15 were Black or African American, 1 was Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 27 were two or more races, 1,258 were White, and 20 were Other. Since there was no racial group other than White that had at least 30 responses, all teachers of color were combined into one group for analysis (Black, Indigenous, and people of color [BIPOC]). In this analysis, four different correlations were run to include the following ethnic and racial categories: Hispanic or Latino/a, not Hispanic or Latino/a, BIPOC, and White.

### ***Alternative Hypothesis 2***

The second alternate hypothesis was that there is a significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes within students' racial/ethnic group. In order to analyze this hypothesis, bivariate correlations were used to measure statistically significant relationships. Survey results were disaggregated by race and ethnicity for school districts which met the 25 students per racial/ethnic group threshold and the 30 teacher participants per school district threshold. In this analysis, five different correlations were run to include the following ethnic and racial categories: American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian, South Asian or Asian American; Black, African or African American; White; and Hispanic or Latino/a.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

The researcher chose not to survey students, but rather use the student survey data that already exists because gaining access to minors is challenging for researchers, including the challenge of receiving parental permission and there is a lack of time in school to have students

complete a survey. Due to the use of the MSS, students' responses could not be paired directly with individual teacher responses. In this way, the study could not show a direct relationship between culturally responsive teaching practices and students' outcomes.

An additional limitation of this study is that it was limited to the students who took the MSS and somewhat exclusive to teachers who were employed by certain public school districts. All teachers' responses were used to analyze research question 1; however, only teachers' responses from those employed by school districts with larger diverse student populations and had a minimum of 30 teachers who completed the teachers' survey were used for research question 2. Unfortunately, this limited the amount of data that could be used for analysis.

Another limitation of this study is that there is likely response bias because both the teacher survey and the student survey were self-report surveys answered from an individual perspective. Additionally, student surveys were completed during class where there were likely noise distractions and time constraints. Some students struggle with attention issues (e.g., Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; ADHD) or reading difficulties (e.g. specific learning disability) that might make reading and understanding the survey questions challenging.

There is a limited number of inventories measuring cultural competency, and even fewer focusing on teachers' cultural competency. The ESSD focuses specifically on teacher cultural competency, but due to the published date, the inventory can only show initial validity.

Another possible limitation is the impact that COVID-19 has had on our students' mental health. The pandemic increased mental health problems for children and adolescents, specifically in the areas of anxiety, depression, and attention issues (Child Mind Institute, 2021). For example, in Minnesota, youth ages 12-17 who had one or more depressive episodes increased from 13.56% in 2020 to 15.94% in 2022 (Reinert et al., 2019, 2021). Further, of those children

and adolescents who had a preexisting mental health condition, 83% reported that their mental health worsened during the pandemic (Child Mind Institute, 2021). The results of the MSS may have reflected higher levels of social-emotional and mental health needs due to the pandemic, regardless of teachers' cultural competency or implementation of transformative SEL.

Another possible limitation is that this study did not focus on the type of program or depth of SEL implementation. There are many types of SEL programs, some that are approved by CASEL and some that are not, there are also degrees of fidelity in program implementation. In this way, the study was not able to attribute program effectiveness to student outcomes, rather was only able to make generalizations regarding types of implementation practices.

The timing of the study may be a limitation. The beginning of the year is often a busy time for teachers and may impact the level of thought placed into responses as well as how many teachers responded to the survey. Finally, due to the limited response rate of teachers from different racial groups among teachers, all racial groups (with the exception of White teachers) were combined into one group for analysis. This group was labeled as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in Chapter 4. Due to this, the researcher could not differentiate results of research question 1 by all of the categories available for teachers' race.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher received a certificate of completion from the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), which includes training in ethical research (Appendix G). The Belmont Report guided the ethical decision-making for this study. According to the Belmont Report, there are three basic principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The researcher ensured the voluntary nature

of participation, the safety of participation, and the equitable distribution of participation in which the burdens and benefits were fair among the research population.

Prior to sending out surveys for data collection, the researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB; Appendix H) and the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB; Appendix I). Participants were instructed to give their informed consent prior to starting the survey instrument (Appendix A). The confidentiality of all participants was maintained. Qualtrics was used in order to keep teacher participants' identities confidential. In addition, all data was stored on a password-protected computer. The researcher received the MDE Student Survey data directly from the MDE website after receiving IRB approval. The Minnesota Department of Education de-identifies student data prior to publishing the results on the website. Data was only disaggregated by race/ethnicity if there were enough students in the district to meet the threshold to ensure student confidentiality.

Assessing the risk and benefits of the study was an important ethical consideration. Teachers were asked to provide a personal reflection of themselves which can impact how others view them, including school administrators. However, the results provided important information regarding how cultural competency and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL teaching practices impact students, providing a large benefit to school administrators. There was a small risk to participants because all data was kept confidential, and student data cannot be linked to individual student outcomes.

Finally, the selection process for subjects was an important part of justice in which the risks and benefits of the study are distributed fairly among participants. Proper care was given to the participant selection process. In order for the burden and benefit of participants to be

distributed fairly, all licensed teachers in the state of Minnesota were contacted and encouraged to participate.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The first purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competency and the self-reported use of culturally responsive social-emotional learning (SEL) practices in classrooms. The dependent variable was teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices as perceived and rated by teachers. Culturally responsive SEL teaching practices were measured by a descriptive survey which included nine questions relating to teachers' use of specific culturally responsive SEL strategies (CASEL, 2023a; CASEL, 2023e; Saavedra & Nolan, 2018). The independent variables were 1) teachers' cultural competence as measured by the Educators Scale of Student Diversity survey (ESSD; Patel, 2017), and 2) teachers' race or ethnicity. A bivariate correlation was used to measure a statistically significant relationship within each racial/ethnic group. All teachers of color were combined into one group for analysis because there was no racial group other than White that had at least 30 responses. In this analysis, four different correlations were run to include the following ethnic and racial categories: Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC); White; Hispanic or Latino/a; and not Hispanic or Latino/a.

The second purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes. The dependent variable was students' SEL outcomes as measured by the Minnesota Student Survey (MDE, n.d.b.). The independent variables were 1) teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and 2) students' race or ethnicity. Bivariate correlations were used to measure statistically significant relationships. In this analysis, five different correlations were run to include the following ethnic and racial categories: American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian,

South Asian or Asian American; Black, African or African American; White; and Hispanic or Latino/a.

### **Participants' Description**

The total sample consisted of 1,348 teachers who participated and completed the descriptive teacher survey (Table 1). Of those teachers, 31 were Hispanic or Latino/a, 1,317 were Not Hispanic or Latino/a; 11 were American Indian or Alaska Native, 16 were Asian, 15 were Black or African American, 1 was Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 27 were Two or more races, 1,258 were White, and 20 were Other (e.g., Anglican, Ashkenazi, Chicana, Middle Eastern, Russian American). Since there was no racial group other than White that had at least 30 responses, all teachers of color were combined into one group for analysis (Black, Indigenous, and people of color [BIPOC]). There were a total of 90 BIPOC teachers.

As shown in Table 1, demographic information of the total teaching sample from the 2021-2022 school year included 785 general education teachers, 282 special education teachers, 18 school counselors/social workers, and 263 other (e.g., adult basic education, ESL instructor, academic intervention, culture and curriculum specialist, general education and special education teacher, early childhood teacher). 303 held a bachelor's degree, 868 held a master's degree, 105 held a specialist degree, 34 held a doctorate, and 38 responded as other (e.g., completing masters degree, "all but dissertation" on PhD, bachelor's plus a certificate, four bachelor's degrees and one master's degree, MA60+, national board certified, principal certificate). 575 had 1-5 years of experience in their current position, 283 had 6-10 years, 162 had 11-15 years, 113 had 16-20 years, 115 had 21-25 years, 54 had 26-30 years, and 46 had 31 or more years. As of the 2021-2022 school year, 165 had 1-5 total number of years in the teaching profession, 191 had 6-10 years, 180 had 11-15 years, 237 had 16-20 years, 254 had 21-25 years, 180 had 26-30 years,



and 141 had 31 or more years.

Of the total sample, the following participants reported that they were currently employed by school districts in which they perceive the district's Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) plan focuses on creating the conditions that promote social and emotional growth for all students (e.g., trusting relationships, welcoming learning environments, culturally relevant practices): 296 responded with Strongly Agree, 658 responded with Agree, 151 responded with Neither Disagree nor Agree, 41 responded with Disagree, 85 responded with Strongly Disagree, and 117 were not employed by a district that implements an SEL program.

**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics Of Teacher Survey Participants*

	Race		Ethnicity		Total
	White	BIPOC	Hispanic or Latino/a	Not Hispanic or Latino/a	
<b>Role in School</b>					
General Education Teacher	733	52	19	766	785
Special Education Teacher	257	25	8	274	282
School Counselor/Social Worker	17	1	0	18	18
Other	251	12	4	259	263
<b>Education</b>					
Bachelor Degree	282	21	10	293	303
Masters Degree	809	59	19	849	868
Specialist Degree	99	6	0	105	105
Doctorate	33	1	0	34	34
Other	35	3	2	36	38
<b>Experience, Current Position</b>					
1-5 Years	535	40	17	558	575
6-10 Years	266	17	3	280	283
11-15 Years	149	13	3	159	162
16-20 Years	101	12	4	109	113
21-25 Years	110	5	2	113	115
26-30 Years	52	2	1	53	54
31 or more	45	1	1	45	46
<b>Total Years of Experience</b>					
1-5 Years	148	17	8	157	165
6-10 Years	174	17	4	187	191
11-15 Years	169	11	6	174	180
16-20 Years	225	12	3	234	237
21-25 Years	239	15	5	249	254
26-30 Years	171	9	2	178	180
31 or more	132	9	3	138	141
<b>SEL Implementation in District</b>					
Strongly Agree	276	20	4	292	296
Agree	611	47	17	641	658
Neither Disagree nor Agree	139	12	5	146	151
Disagree	39	2	1	40	41
Strongly Disagree	80	5	2	83	85
School does not implement SEL	113	4	2	115	117
<b>Total Teacher Population</b>	<b>1,258</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1,317</b>	<b>1,348</b>

The student sample for this study was comprised of fifth-, eighth-, ninth-, and eleventh-grade students during the 2021-2022 school year in the following Minnesota public school districts who voluntarily participated in the Minnesota Student Survey (MDE, n.d.c.): Anoka-Hennepin Public School District, Minneapolis Public Schools, Osseo Public School District, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public School District, and South Washington County School District. Students' participation was limited to students who attended participating school districts that are large enough to break down the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) data by race and ethnicity and a minimum of 30 teachers employed by that school district participated in the teacher survey. The student population of this study included the mean responses from 5,360 fifth-grade students, 7,745 eighth-grade students, 6,039 ninth-grade students, and 5,161 eleventh-grade students.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics are displayed below for the teacher survey and MSS. Table 2 includes descriptive statistics for the ESSD broken down by individual question and the mean of all 22 questions combined. Table 3 includes descriptive statistics for the nine survey questions related to teachers' use of specific culturally responsive SEL strategies. Teachers' self-reported higher levels of agreement in the areas of encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds and encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving. Teachers' self-reported lower levels of agreement in the areas of allowing students to productively challenge inequities that they see in their school and classroom and using data in order to identify disparities among their students. Finally, Table 4 includes descriptive statistics for the seven MSS survey questions broken down by students' race or ethnicity. Students' self-reported higher levels of academic achievement regardless of students' race/ethnicity, but

lower levels of agreement in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, and school connectedness regardless of students' race/ethnicity.

**Table 2***Mean, Standard Deviation, and Number Of Responses Of Teachers Perceptions: ESSD Survey*

ESSD Survey Questions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
ESSD Q1	3.700	1.070	1,348
ESSD Q2	3.512	1.051	1,348
ESSD Q3	4.329	0.874	1,348
ESSD Q4	3.771	0.985	1,348
ESSD Q5	3.369	1.157	1,348
ESSD Q6	4.341	0.824	1,348
ESSD Q7	3.743	1.143	1,348
ESSD Q8	4.573	0.674	1,348
ESSD Q9	3.417	1.235	1,348
ESSD Q10	3.699	1.027	1,348
ESSD Q11	2.528	1.017	1,348
ESSD Q12	3.656	1.191	1,348
ESSD Q13	2.786	1.182	1,348
ESSD Q14	3.846	1.236	1,348
ESSD Q15	3.651	1.214	1,348
ESSD Q16	4.381	0.785	1,348
ESSD Q17	4.303	0.816	1,348
ESSD Q18	3.282	1.128	1,348
ESSD Q19	2.851	1.055	1,348
ESSD Q20	4.392	0.698	1,348
ESSD Q21	4.441	0.755	1,348
ESSD Q22	3.989	0.991	1,348
ESSD Total	3.753	0.640	1,348

**Table 3**

*Mean, Standard Deviation and Number Of Responses of Teachers Perceptions: SEL*

*Implementation*

SEL Survey Questions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q1	3.289	0.540	1,348
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q2	3.182	0.540	1,348
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q3	3.208	0.555	1,348
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q4	3.116	0.555	1,348
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q5	2.999	0.715	1,348
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q6	3.468	0.566	1,348
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q7	3.294	0.619	1,348
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q8	3.216	0.641	1,348
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q9	3.467	0.546	1,348

**Table 4***Mean, Standard Deviation, and Number Of Students' MSS Responses By Race*

Student Questions by Race	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
<b>Minnesota Student Survey Q1</b>			
Black, African or African American	4.096	0.131	204
Asian, South Asian or Asian American	4.419	0.107	184
White	4.408	0.110	204
Hispanic or Latino/a	3.914	0.133	204
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3.956	0.137	125
<b>Minnesota Student Survey Q2</b>			
Black, African or African American	2.655	0.129	204
Asian, South Asian or Asian American	2.694	0.138	184
White	2.792	0.120	204
Hispanic or Latino/a	2.552	0.124	204
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2.451	0.270	125
<b>Minnesota Student Survey Q3</b>			
Black, African or African American	2.575	0.105	204
Asian, South Asian or Asian American	2.538	0.130	184
White	2.587	0.094	204
Hispanic or Latino/a	2.450	0.082	204
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2.410	0.173	125
<b>Minnesota Student Survey Q4</b>			
Black, African or African American	2.752	0.101	204
Asian, South Asian or Asian American	2.810	0.134	184
White	3.002	0.087	204
Hispanic or Latino/a	2.727	0.118	204
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2.763	0.138	125
<b>Minnesota Student Survey Q5</b>			
Black, African or African American	3.489	0.073	204
Asian, South Asian or Asian American	3.588	0.079	184
White	3.617	0.067	204
Hispanic or Latino/a	3.508	0.085	204
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3.512	0.089	125
<b>Minnesota Student Survey Q6</b>			
Black, African or African American	3.122	0.073	204
Asian, South Asian or Asian American	3.214	0.126	184
White	3.164	0.113	204
Hispanic or Latino/a	3.019	0.089	204
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2.911	0.145	125

Minnesota Student Survey Q7			
Black, African or African American	2.773	0.191	204
Asian, South Asian or Asian American	2.781	0.174	184
White	2.797	0.163	204
Hispanic or Latino/a	2.760	0.197	204
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2.753	0.226	125

### Research Question 1 and Hypotheses

Research Question 1 asked, “Is there a relationship between teachers’ perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices, conditional on teachers’ race?” The first null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) for this study was that there is no significant relationship between teachers’ cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers’ race. The first alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was that there is a significant relationship between teachers’ cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers’ race.

In order to analyze this hypothesis, a bivariate correlation was used to measure a statistically significant relationship within each racial/ethnic group between ESSD and each of the nine questions focusing on the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. In this analysis, four different correlations were run to include the following ethnic and racial categories: BIPOC, White, Hispanic or Latino/a, and not Hispanic or Latino/a.

#### ***Culturally Responsive SEL Practice (Q1): Encouragement of Students’ Reflection***

Teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they disagreed or agreed to the following statement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree): I encourage student reflection on their own lives and society. As shown in Table 5, the results were statistically significant and differ based on race/ethnicity. For BIPOC teachers, there was a large, positive, and significant relationship between teachers’ perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society ( $r =$



0.507,  $p < 0.001$ ). For White teachers, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society ( $r = 0.308, p < 0.001$ ). For Hispanic or Latino/a teachers, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society ( $r = 0.401, p < 0.05$ ). For teachers who are not Hispanic or Latino/a, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society ( $r = 0.319, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 5**

*Bivariate Correlation for SEL Q1: I Encourage Student Reflection On Their Own Lives and Society and Teachers' Cultural Competence*

		<i>n</i>	ESSD Mean
Race	BIPOC	90	0.507***
	White	1,258	0.308***
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino/a	31	0.401*
	Not Hispanic or Latino/a	1,317	0.319***

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

***Culturally Responsive SEL Practice (Q2): Students' Cultural Assets***

Teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they disagreed or agreed to the following statement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree): I connect students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills. As shown in Table 6, the results were statistically significant for three groups and differ based on race/ethnicity. For BIPOC teachers, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills ( $r = 0.477, p < 0.001$ ). For White teachers, there was a medium,

positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills ( $r = 0.328, p < 0.001$ ). For Hispanic or Latino/a teachers, there was not a significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills ( $r = 0.347, p > 0.05$ ). For teachers who are not Hispanic or Latino/a, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills ( $r = 0.339, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 6**

*Bivariate Correlation for SEL Q2: I Connect Students' Cultural Assets to Academic Concepts and Skills and Teachers' Cultural Competence*

		<i>n</i>	ESSD Mean
Race	BIPOC	90	0.477***
	White	1,258	0.328***
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino/a	31	0.347
	Not Hispanic or Latino/a	1,317	0.339***

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

***Culturally Responsive SEL Practice (Q3): Create Meaningful Relationships***

Teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they disagreed or agreed to the following statement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree): I am able to create meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from myself. As shown in Table 7, the results were statistically significant for three groups and differ based on race/ethnicity. For BIPOC teachers, there was a small, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves ( $r = 0.207, p < 0.05$ ). For White teachers, there was a small, positive, and significant relationship between teachers'

perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves ( $r = 0.069, p < 0.05$ ). For Hispanic or Latino/a teachers, there was not a significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves ( $r = 0.103, p > 0.05$ ). For teachers who are not Hispanic or Latino/a, there was a small, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves ( $r = 0.077, p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 7**

*Bivariate Correlation for SEL Q3: I Am Able to Create Meaningful Relationships With Parents Culturally Different From Myself and Teachers' Cultural Competence*

		<i>n</i>	ESSD Mean
Race	BIPOC	90	0.207*
	White	1,258	0.069*
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino/a	31	0.103
	Not Hispanic or Latino/a	1,317	0.077**

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

***Culturally Responsive SEL Practice (Q4): Productively Challenge Inequities***

Teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they disagreed or agreed to the following statement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree): I allow my students to productively challenge inequities that they see in my school and/or classroom. As shown in Table 8, the results were statistically significant for three groups and differ based on race/ethnicity. For BIPOC teachers, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of allowing students to productively challenge inequities they see in the school and/or classroom ( $r = 0.494, p < 0.001$ ). For White teachers, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship

between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of allowing students to productively challenge inequities they see in the school and/or classroom ( $r = 0.346$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). For Hispanic or Latino/a teachers, there was not a significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of allowing students to productively challenge inequities they see in the school and/or classroom ( $r = 0.286$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). For teachers who are not Hispanic or Latino/a, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of allowing students to productively challenge inequities they see in the school and/or classroom ( $r = 0.358$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 8**

*Bivariate Correlation for SEL Q4: I Allow My Students to Productively Challenge Inequities That They See In My School and/or Classroom and Teachers' Cultural Competence*

		<i>n</i>	ESSD Mean
Race	BIPOC	90	0.494***
	White	1,258	0.346***
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino/a	31	0.286
	Not Hispanic or Latino/a	1,317	0.358***

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

***Culturally Responsive SEL Practice (Q5): Use of Data***

Teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they disagreed or agreed to the following statement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree): I use data in order to identify disparities among my students. As shown in Table 9, the results were statistically significant and differ based on race/ethnicity. For BIPOC teachers, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of using data in order to identify disparities among students ( $r = 0.305$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). For White teachers, there was a small, positive, and significant relationship

between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of using data in order to identify disparities among students ( $r = 0.290, p < 0.001$ ). For Hispanic or Latino/a teachers, there was a large, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of using data in order to identify disparities among students ( $r = 0.675, p < 0.001$ ). For teachers who are not Hispanic or Latino/a, there was a small, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of using data in order to identify disparities among students ( $r = 0.278, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 9**

*Bivariate Correlation for SEL Q5: I Use Data In Order to Identify Disparities Among My Students and Teachers' Cultural Competence*

		<i>n</i>	ESSD Mean
Race	BIPOC	90	0.305**
	White	1,258	0.290***
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino/a	31	0.675***
	Not Hispanic or Latino/a	1,317	0.278***

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

***Culturally Responsive SEL Practice (Q6): Students Share About Their Experiences and Cultural Backgrounds***

Teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they disagreed or agreed to the following statement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree): I actively encourage students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds. As shown in Table 10, the results were statistically significant and differ based on race/ethnicity. For BIPOC teachers, there was a large, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds ( $r = 0.517, p < 0.001$ ). For White teachers,

there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds ( $r = 0.317, p < 0.001$ ). For Hispanic or Latino/a teachers, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds ( $r = 0.428, p < 0.05$ ). For teachers who are not Hispanic or Latino/a, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds ( $r = 0.329, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 10**

*Bivariate Correlation for SEL Q6: I Actively Encourage Students to Share About Their Experiences and Cultural Backgrounds and Teachers' Cultural Competence*

		<i>n</i>	ESSD Mean
Race	BIPOC	90	0.517***
	White	1,258	0.317***
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino/a	31	0.428*
	Not Hispanic or Latino/a	1,317	0.329***

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

***Culturally Responsive SEL Practice (Q7): Students See Themselves in Classroom***

Teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they disagreed or agreed to the following statement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree): I ensure that students can see themselves in my classroom. As shown in Table 11, the results were statistically significant and differ based on race/ethnicity. For BIPOC teachers, there was a large, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of ensuring that students can see themselves in the classroom ( $r =$

0.551,  $p < 0.001$ ). For White teachers, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of ensuring that students can see themselves in the classroom ( $r = 0.377$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). For Hispanic or Latino/a teachers, there was a large, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of ensuring that students can see themselves in the classroom ( $r = 0.660$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). For teachers who are not Hispanic or Latino/a, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of ensuring that students can see themselves in the classroom ( $r = 0.383$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 11**

*Bivariate Correlation for SEL Q7: I Ensure That Students Can See Themselves In My Classroom and Teachers' Cultural Competence*

		<i>n</i>	ESSD Mean
Race	BIPOC	90	0.551***
	White	1,258	0.377***
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino/a	31	0.660***
	Not Hispanic or Latino/a	1,317	0.383***

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

***Culturally Responsive SEL Practice (Q8): Facilitate Learning About Students' Culture***

Teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they disagreed or agreed to the following statement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree): I facilitate learning about students' own culture and the culture of others. As shown in Table 12, the results were statistically significant and differ based on race/ethnicity. For BIPOC teachers, there was a large, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of facilitating learning about students' culture and the culture of others ( $r = 0.509$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). For White teachers, there was a medium, positive,

and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of facilitating learning about students' culture and the culture of others ( $r = 0.352, p < 0.001$ ). For Hispanic or Latino/a teachers, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of facilitating learning about students' culture and the culture of others ( $r = 0.407, p < 0.05$ ). For teachers who are not Hispanic or Latino/a, there was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of facilitating learning about students' culture and the culture of others ( $r = 0.362, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 12**

*Bivariate Correlation for SEL Q8: I Facilitate Learning About Students' Own Culture and the Culture Of Others and Teachers' Cultural Competence*

		<i>n</i>	ESSD Mean
Race	BIPOC	90	0.509***
	White	1,258	0.352***
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino/a	31	0.407*
	Not Hispanic or Latino/a	1,317	0.362***

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

***Culturally Responsive SEL Practice (Q9): Collaborative Problem-Solving***

Teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they disagreed or agreed to the following statement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree): I encourage students to engage in collaborative problem-solving. As shown in Table 13, the results were statistically significant and differ based on race/ethnicity. For BIPOC teachers, there was a small, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving ( $r = 0.257, p < 0.05$ ). For White teachers, there was a small, positive, and



significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving ( $r = 0.221, p < 0.001$ ). For Hispanic or Latino/a teachers, there was a large, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving ( $r = 0.624, p < 0.001$ ). For teachers who are not Hispanic or Latino/a, there was a small, positive, and significant relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving ( $r = 0.214, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 13**

*Bivariate Correlation for SEL Q9: I Encourage Students to Engage In Collaborative Problem-Solving and Teachers' Cultural Competence*

		<i>n</i>	ESSD Mean
Race	BIPOC	90	0.257*
	White	1,258	0.221***
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino/a	31	0.624***
	Not Hispanic or Latino/a	1,317	0.214***

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

### **Research Question 2 and Hypotheses**

Research Question 2 asked, "Is there a relationship between teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts, conditional on students' race?" The second null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ) for this study was that there is no significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts conditional on students' race. The second alternative hypothesis ( $H_{a2}$ ) was that there is a significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts conditional on students' race.

In order to analyze this hypothesis, a bivariate correlation was used to measure statistically significant relationships. In this analysis, five different correlations were run to include the following ethnic and racial categories: Black, African or African American; Asian, South Asian or Asian American; White; Hispanic or Latino/a; and American Indian or Alaskan Native. The teacher population for research question 2 included 204 teachers from five districts (Table 14).

**Table 14***Descriptive Statistics Of Teacher Participants for RQ2*

	Race		Ethnicity		Total
	White	BIPOC	Hispanic or Latino/a	Not Hispanic or Latino/a	
<b>Grade Level</b>					
Grade 5	46	8	2	52	54
Grade 8	34	4	0	38	38
Grade 9	39	1	1	39	40
Grade 11	68	4	4	68	72
<b>Education</b>					
Bachelor Degree	25	1	0	26	26
Masters Degree	120	14	6	128	134
Specialist Degree	28	2	0	30	30
Doctorate	9	0	0	9	9
Other	5	0	1	4	5
<b>Experience, Current Position</b>					
1-5 Years	69	4	3	70	73
6-10 Years	40	3	1	42	43
11-15 Years	15	2	0	17	17
16-20 Years	23	3	1	25	26
21-25 Years	22	4	1	25	26
26-30 Years	8	1	1	8	9
31 or more	10	0	0	10	10
<b>Total Years of Experience</b>					
1-5 Years	14	1	0	15	15
6-10 Years	22	3	2	23	25
11-15 Years	18	4	0	22	22
16-20 Years	35	0	1	34	35
21-25 Years	47	4	1	50	51
26-30 Years	26	1	1	26	27
31 or more	25	4	2	27	29
<b>SEL Implementation in District</b>					
Strongly Agree	34	3	0	37	37
Agree	102	11	4	109	113
Neither Disagree nor Agree	29	2	1	30	31
Disagree	5	0	0	5	5
Strongly Disagree	15	1	2	14	16
School does not implement SEL	2	0	0	2	2
<b>Total Teacher Population</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>204</b>

Table 15 includes descriptive statistics for the teachers included in research question 2, including the nine survey questions related to teachers' use of specific culturally responsive SEL strategies and the mean of all 22 ESSD questions.

**Table 15**

*Mean, Standard Deviation and Number Of Responses Of Teachers Perceptions: ESSD Total and SEL Implementation for RQ2*

SEL Survey Questions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q1	3.314	0.506	204
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q2	3.191	0.542	204
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q3	3.265	0.505	204
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q4	3.225	0.523	204
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q5	3.074	0.658	204
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q6	3.471	0.547	204
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q7	3.324	0.622	204
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q8	3.191	0.679	204
Culturally Responsive SEL Practice Q9	3.510	0.520	204
ESSD Total	3.843	0.632	204

***Minnesota Student Survey (Q1): Academic Achievement***

Students were asked to indicate the following: How would you describe your grades this school year? Answer choices reflected a traditional grading scale (1 = mostly F's, 2 = mostly D's, 3 = mostly C's, 4 = mostly B's, 5 = mostly A's). As shown in Table 16, the results are displayed by students' race/ethnicity for all nine teacher questions focusing on the perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. Significant relationships between students' self-reported grades (i.e., academic achievement) and teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were found for Black, African or African American; Asian, South Asian or Asian American students; White; and American Indian or Alaskan Native students. No significant relationships between students' self-reported grades (i.e.,

academic achievement) and teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were found for Hispanic or Latino/a students.

**Black, African or African American Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' self-reported grades and teachers' perception of encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.233, p < 0.001$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.150, p < 0.05$ ), and encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving (SEL 9;  $r = 0.174, p < 0.05$ ).

**Asian, South Asian or Asian American Students.** There was a small, negative, and significant relationship between students' self-reported grades and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = -0.179, p < 0.05$ ).

**White Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' self-reported grades and teachers' perception of connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills (SEL 2;  $r = 0.153, p < 0.05$ ) and ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.164, p < 0.05$ ).

**American Indian or Alaskan Native Students.** There was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between students' self-reported grades and teachers' perception of encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.313, p < 0.001$ ). There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' self-reported grades and teachers' perception of ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.237, p < 0.01$ ), facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.288, p < 0.001$ ), and encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving (SEL 9;  $r = 0.225, p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 16**

*Bivariate Correlation for Student Q1: How Would You Describe Your Grades This School Year? and Teachers' Implementation of Culturally Responsive SEL Practices*

	Students' Race/Ethnicity				
	Black, African or African American	Asian, South Asian or Asian American	White	Hispanic or Latino/a	American Indian or Alaskan Native
Teacher SEL Q1	-0.026	-0.179*	0.033	-0.016	0.124
Teacher SEL Q2	0.085	-0.105	0.153*	0.001	0.061
Teacher SEL Q3	0.040	-0.117	0.082	0.056	0.086
Teacher SEL Q4	0.029	-0.039	0.049	-0.012	0.087
Teacher SEL Q5	-0.056	-0.050	0.076	0.033	0.162
Teacher SEL Q6	0.233***	-0.115	0.121	0.100	0.313***
Teacher SEL Q7	0.150*	-0.052	0.164*	0.075	0.237**
Teacher SEL Q8	0.103	0.039	0.079	-0.077	0.288***
Teacher SEL Q9	0.174*	0.010	0.130	0.134	0.225*

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

### ***Minnesota Student Survey (Q2): Self-Awareness***

Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following (1 = not at all or rarely, 2 = somewhat or sometimes, 3 = very or often, 4 = extremely or almost always): I feel valued and appreciated by others. As shown in Table 17, the results are displayed by students' race/ethnicity for all nine teacher questions focusing on the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. Significant relationships between students' perception of feeling valued and appreciated by others (i.e., self-awareness) and teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were found for Black, African or African American; Asian, South Asian or Asian American students; White; and American Indian or Alaskan Native students. No significant relationships between students' perception of feeling valued and appreciated by others and teachers (i.e., self-awareness) and teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were found for Hispanic or Latino/a students.

**Black, African or African American Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling valued and appreciated by others and teachers' perception of using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.189, p < 0.01$ ), actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.275, p < 0.001$ ), and ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.285, p < 0.001$ ). There was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling valued and appreciated by others and teachers' perception of facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.326, p < 0.001$ ).

**Asian, South Asian or Asian American Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling valued and appreciated by others and teachers' perception of using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.188, p < 0.05$ ), actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.246, p < 0.001$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.212, p < 0.01$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.266, p < 0.001$ ).

**White Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling valued and appreciated by others and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = 0.158, p < 0.05$ ), allowing their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in the school and/or classroom (SEL 4;  $r = 0.142, p < 0.05$ ), using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.266, p < 0.001$ ), actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.258, p < 0.001$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in

their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.285, p < 0.001$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.296, p < 0.001$ ).

**American Indian or Alaskan Native Students.** There was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling valued and appreciated by others and teachers' perception of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.360, p < 0.001$ ). There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling valued and appreciated by others and teachers' perception of ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.295, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 17**

*Bivariate Correlation for Student Q2: I Feel Valued and Appreciated By Others and Teachers' Implementation of Culturally Responsive SEL Practices*

	Students' Race/Ethnicity				
	Black, African or African American	Asian, South Asian or Asian American	White	Hispanic or Latino/a	American Indian or Alaskan Native
Teacher SEL Q1	0.118	0.099	0.158*	0.032	0.154
Teacher SEL Q2	0.130	0.041	0.121	-0.041	0.098
Teacher SEL Q3	0.088	0.036	0.096	0.055	0.165
Teacher SEL Q4	0.107	0.101	0.142*	0.016	0.080
Teacher SEL Q5	0.189**	0.188*	0.266***	0.121	0.163
Teacher SEL Q6	0.275***	0.246***	0.258***	0.105	0.360***
Teacher SEL Q7	0.285***	0.212**	0.285***	0.057	0.295***
Teacher SEL Q8	0.326***	0.266***	0.296***	0.025	0.152
Teacher SEL Q9	0.056	0.072	0.014	-0.036	0.175

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

### ***Minnesota Student Survey (Q3): Self-Management***

Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following (1 = not at all or rarely, 2 = somewhat or sometimes, 3 = very or often, 4 = extremely or almost always): I find



good ways to deal with things that are hard in my life. As shown in Table 18, the results are displayed by students' race/ethnicity for all nine teacher questions focusing on the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. Significant relationships between students' perception of finding good ways to deal with things that are hard (i.e., self-management) and teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were found for Black, African or African American; Asian, South Asian or Asian American; White; Hispanic or Latino/a; and American Indian or Alaskan Native students.

**Black, African or African American Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of finding good ways to deal with things that are hard and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = 0.163, p < 0.05$ ), connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills (SEL 2;  $r = 0.198, p < 0.01$ ), creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves (SEL 3;  $r = 0.170, p < 0.05$ ), allowing their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in the school and/or classroom (SEL 4;  $r = 0.147, p < 0.05$ ), using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.207, p < 0.01$ ), and encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving (SEL 9;  $r = -0.201, p < 0.01$ ). There was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of finding good ways to deal with things that are hard and teachers' perception of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.373, p < 0.001$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.359, p < 0.001$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.355, p < 0.001$ ).

**Asian, South Asian or Asian American Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of finding good ways to deal with things that are hard and teachers' perception of using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.217, p < 0.01$ ), actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.235, p < 0.001$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.222, p < 0.01$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.298, p < 0.001$ ).

**White Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of finding good ways to deal with things that are hard and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = 0.146, p < 0.05$ ) and using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.293, p < 0.001$ ). There was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of finding good ways to deal with things that are hard and teachers' perception of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.309, p < 0.001$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.311, p < 0.001$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.320, p < 0.001$ ).

**Hispanic or Latino/a Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of finding good ways to deal with things that are hard and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = 0.192, p < 0.01$ ), connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills (SEL 2;  $r = 0.184, p < 0.01$ ), creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves (SEL 3;  $r = 0.145, p < 0.05$ ), using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r =$

0.205,  $p < 0.01$ ), actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.236$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.268$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.245$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**American Indian or Alaskan Native Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of finding good ways to deal with things that are hard and teachers' perception of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.254$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.191$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 18**

*Bivariate Correlation for Student Q3: I Find Good Ways to Deal With Things That Are Hard In My Life and Teachers' Implementation of Culturally Responsive SEL Practices*

	Students' Race/Ethnicity				
	Black, African or African American	Asian, South Asian or Asian American	White	Hispanic or Latino/a	American Indian or Alaskan Native
Teacher SEL Q1	0.163*	0.115	0.146*	0.192**	0.149
Teacher SEL Q2	0.198**	0.045	0.141*	0.184**	0.041
Teacher SEL Q3	0.170*	0.038	0.120	0.145*	0.063
Teacher SEL Q4	0.147*	0.051	0.136	0.125	0.050
Teacher SEL Q5	0.207**	0.217**	0.293***	0.205**	0.145
Teacher SEL Q6	0.373***	0.235***	0.309***	0.236***	0.254**
Teacher SEL Q7	0.359***	0.222**	0.311***	0.268***	0.191*
Teacher SEL Q8	0.355***	0.298***	0.320***	0.245***	0.103
Teacher SEL Q9	0.202**	0.116	0.083	-0.017	0.090

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

**Minnesota Student Survey (Q4): Social Awareness**

Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following (1 = not at all or rarely, 2 = somewhat or sometimes, 3 = very or often, 4 = extremely or almost always): I am

sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. As shown in Table 19, the results are displayed by students' race/ethnicity for all nine teacher questions focusing on the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. Significant relationships between students' perception of feeling sensitive to the needs and feelings of others (i.e., social awareness) and teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were found for Black, African or African American; White; American Indian or Alaskan Native; and Hispanic or Latino/a students. No significant relationships between students' perception of feeling sensitive to the needs and feelings of others (i.e., social awareness) and teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were found for Asian, South Asian or Asian American students.

**Black, African or African American Students.** There was a small, negative, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and teachers' perception of using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = -0.148$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**White Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = 0.189$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills (SEL 2;  $r = 0.144$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.146$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.161$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.198$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Hispanic or Latino/a Students.** There was a small, negative, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and teachers' perception of using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = -0.185$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = -0.192$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = -0.262$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = -0.287$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**American Indian or Alaskan Native Students.** There was a small, negative, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = -0.198$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 19**

*Bivariate Correlation for Student Q4: I Am Sensitive to the Needs and Feelings Of Others and Teachers' Implementation of Culturally Responsive SEL Practices*

	Students' Race/Ethnicity				
	Black, African or African American	Asian, South Asian or Asian American	White	Hispanic or Latino/a	American Indian or Alaskan Native
Teacher SEL Q1	0.030	0.108	0.189**	-0.059	-0.198*
Teacher SEL Q2	0.015	-0.022	0.144*	-0.136	-0.100
Teacher SEL Q3	7.706e-4	0.001	0.076	-0.121	-0.072
Teacher SEL Q4	0.037	0.106	0.132	-0.016	-0.158
Teacher SEL Q5	-0.148*	0.059	.0146*	-0.185**	-0.102
Teacher SEL Q6	0.052	0.009	0.055	-0.192**	0.042
Teacher SEL Q7	-0.043	0.018	0.161*	-0.262***	-0.041
Teacher SEL Q8	-0.029	0.119	0.198**	-0.287***	0.019
Teacher SEL Q9	0.049	0.060	-0.027	-0.084	0.101

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

***Minnesota Student Survey (Q5): Relationship Building***

Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following (1 = not at all or rarely, 2 = somewhat or sometimes, 3 = very or often, 4 = extremely or almost always): I accept people who are different from me. As shown in Table 20, the results are displayed by students' race/ethnicity for all nine teacher questions focusing on the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. Significant relationships between students' perception of accepting people who are different from them (i.e., relationship building) and teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were found for Asian, South Asian or Asian American; White; and Hispanic or Latino/a students. No significant relationships between students' perception of accepting people who are different from them (i.e., relationship building) and teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were found for Black, African or African American and American Indian or Alaskan Native students.

**Asian, South Asian or Asian American Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of accepting people who are different from them and teachers' perception of facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.226, p < 0.01$ ).

**White Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of accepting people who are different from them and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = 0.209, p < 0.01$ ), connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills (SEL 2;  $r = 0.153, p < 0.05$ ), allowing their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in the school and/or classroom (SEL 4;  $r = 0.164, p < 0.05$ ), using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.233, p < 0.001$ ), and actively encouraging students to share about their experiences

and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.246, p < 0.001$ ). There was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of accepting people who are different from them and teachers' perception of ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.300, p < 0.001$ ) and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.328, p < 0.001$ ).

**Hispanic or Latino/a Students.** There was a small, negative, and significant relationship between students' perception of accepting people who are different from them and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = -0.155, p < 0.05$ ), connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills (SEL 2;  $r = -0.180, p < 0.01$ ), using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = -0.177, p < 0.05$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = -0.215, p < 0.01$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = -0.240, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 20**

*Bivariate Correlation for Student Q5: I Accept People Who Are Different From Me and Teachers' Implementation of Culturally Responsive SEL Practices*

	Students' Race/Ethnicity				
	Black, African or African American	Asian, South Asian or Asian American	White	Hispanic or Latino/a	American Indian or Alaskan Native
Teacher SEL Q1	-0.052	-0.001	0.209**	-0.155*	0.007
Teacher SEL Q2	-0.100	-0.055	0.153*	-0.180**	0.035
Teacher SEL Q3	-0.063	-0.088	0.131	-0.128	0.141
Teacher SEL Q4	-0.022	0.029	0.164*	-0.130	0.003
Teacher SEL Q5	-0.081	0.128	0.233***	-0.177*	0.040
Teacher SEL Q6	0.040	0.078	0.246***	-0.076	0.144
Teacher SEL Q7	-0.091	0.076	0.300***	-0.215**	0.152
Teacher SEL Q8	-0.059	0.226**	0.328***	-0.240***	0.100
Teacher SEL Q9	0.085	0.040	0.046	0.008	0.160

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

### ***Minnesota Student Survey (Q6): Responsible Decision-Making***

Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following (1 = not at all or rarely, 2 = somewhat or sometimes, 3 = very or often, 4 = extremely or almost always): I say no to things that are dangerous and unhealthy. As shown in Table 21, the results are displayed by students' race/ethnicity for all nine teacher questions focusing on the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. Significant relationships between students' perception of saying no to things that are dangerous and unhealthy (i.e., responsible decision-making) and teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were found for Asian, South Asian or Asian American; Hispanic or Latino/a; and American Indian or Alaskan Native students. No significant relationships between students' perception of saying no to things that are dangerous and unhealthy (i.e., responsible decision-making) and teachers' perceived



implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were found for Black, African or African American and White students.

**Asian, South Asian or Asian American Students.** There was a small, negative, and significant relationship between students' perception of saying no to things that are dangerous and unhealthy and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = -0.185, p < 0.05$ ), connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills (SEL 2;  $r = -0.209, p < 0.01$ ), creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves (SEL 3;  $r = -0.229, p < 0.01$ ), actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = -0.161, p < 0.05$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = -0.234, p < 0.001$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = -0.155, p < 0.05$ ).

**Hispanic or Latino/a Students.** There was a small, negative, and significant relationship between students' perception of saying no to things that are dangerous and unhealthy and teachers' perception of facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = -0.179, p < 0.05$ ).

**American Indian or Alaskan Native Students.** There were small, positive, and significant relationships between students' perception of saying no to things that are dangerous and unhealthy and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = 0.195, p < 0.05$ ), using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.177, p < 0.05$ ), actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.273, p < 0.01$ ), and ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.244, p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 21**

*Bivariate Correlation for Student Q6: I Say No to Things That Are Dangerous and Unhealthy and Teachers' Implementation of Culturally Responsive SEL Practices*

	Students' Race/Ethnicity				
	Black, African or African American	Asian, South Asian or Asian American	White	Hispanic or Latino/a	American Indian or Alaskan Native
Teacher SEL Q1	-0.120	-0.185*	-0.076	-0.027	0.195*
Teacher SEL Q2	-0.114	-0.209**	-0.048	-0.022	0.109
Teacher SEL Q3	0.028	-0.229**	0.044	0.007	0.150
Teacher SEL Q4	-0.057	-0.109	-0.059	-0.037	0.144
Teacher SEL Q5	0.066	-0.095	0.114	-0.126	0.177*
Teacher SEL Q6	0.097	-0.161*	0.095	0.039	0.273**
Teacher SEL Q7	0.008	-0.234***	0.065	-0.086	0.244**
Teacher SEL Q8	0.012	-0.155*	0.060	-0.179*	0.088
Teacher SEL Q9	0.081	-0.079	-0.007	0.035	0.086

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

### ***Minnesota Student Survey (Q7): School Connectedness***

Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree): Most teachers at my school are interested in me as a person. As shown in Table 22, the results are displayed by students' race/ethnicity for all nine teacher questions focusing on the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. Significant relationships between students' perception of feeling that their teachers at school are interested in them as a person (i.e., school connectedness) and teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were found for Black, African or African American; Asian, South Asian or Asian American; White; Hispanic or Latino/a; and American Indian or Alaskan Native students.

**Black, African or African American Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling that their teachers at school are

interested in them as a person and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = 0.232, p < 0.001$ ), connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills (SEL 2;  $r = 0.201, p < 0.01$ ), creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves (SEL 3;  $r = 0.171, p < 0.05$ ), allowing their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in the school and/or classroom (SEL 4;  $r = 0.194, p < 0.01$ ), using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.242, p < 0.001$ ), and encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving (SEL 9;  $r = 0.143, p < 0.05$ ). There was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling that their teachers at school are interested in them as a person and teachers' perception of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.373, p < 0.001$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.358, p < 0.001$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.363, p < 0.001$ ).

**Asian, South Asian or Asian American Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling that their teachers at school are interested in them as a person and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = 0.157, p < 0.05$ ), allowing their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in the school and/or classroom (SEL 4;  $r = 0.145, p < 0.05$ ), using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.236, p < 0.001$ ), and ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.291, p < 0.001$ ). There was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling that their teachers at school are interested in them as a person and teachers' perception of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r =$

0.305,  $p < 0.001$ ) and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.357$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**White Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling that their teachers at school are interested in them as a person and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = 0.194$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills (SEL 2;  $r = 0.178$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves (SEL 3;  $r = 0.145$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), allowing their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in the school and/or classroom (SEL 4;  $r = 0.188$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.233$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). There was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling that their teachers at school are interested in them as a person and teachers' perception of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.358$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.332$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.346$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Hispanic or Latino/a Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling that their teachers at school are interested in them as a person and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = 0.231$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills (SEL 2;  $r = 0.213$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves (SEL 3;  $r = 0.186$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), allowing their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in the school and/or classroom (SEL 4;  $r = 0.219$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ),

using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.251, p < 0.001$ ), and encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving (SEL 9;  $r = 0.170, p < 0.05$ ). There was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling that their teachers at school are interested in them as a person and teachers' perception of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.378, p < 0.001$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.362, p < 0.001$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.348, p < 0.001$ ).

**American Indian or Alaskan Native Students.** There was a small, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling that their teachers at school are interested in them as a person and teachers' perception of encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society (SEL 1;  $r = 0.278, p < 0.01$ ), connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills (SEL 2;  $r = 0.188, p < 0.05$ ), creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves (SEL 3;  $r = 0.222, p < 0.05$ ), allowing their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in the school and/or classroom (SEL 4;  $r = 0.224, p < 0.05$ ), using data in order to identify disparities among students (SEL 5;  $r = 0.273, p < 0.01$ ), and encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving (SEL 9;  $r = 0.219, p < 0.05$ ). There was a medium, positive, and significant relationship between students' perception of feeling that their teachers at school are interested in them as a person and teachers' perception of actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (SEL 6;  $r = 0.434, p < 0.001$ ), ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom (SEL 7;  $r = 0.388, p < 0.001$ ), and facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (SEL 8;  $r = 0.373, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 22**

*Bivariate Correlation for Student Q7: Most Teachers At My School Are Interested In Me As a Person and Teachers' Implementation of Culturally Responsive SEL Practices*

	Students' Race/Ethnicity				
	Black, African or African American	Asian, South Asian or Asian American	White	Hispanic or Latino/a	American Indian or Alaskan Native
Teacher SEL Q1	0.232***	0.157*	0.194**	0.231***	0.278**
Teacher SEL Q2	0.201**	0.113	0.178*	0.213**	0.188*
Teacher SEL Q3	0.171*	0.086	0.145*	0.186**	0.222*
Teacher SEL Q4	0.194**	0.145*	0.188**	0.219**	0.224*
Teacher SEL Q5	0.242***	0.236***	0.233***	0.251***	0.273**
Teacher SEL Q6	0.373***	0.305***	0.358***	0.378***	0.434***
Teacher SEL Q7	0.358***	0.291***	0.332***	0.362***	0.388***
Teacher SEL Q8	0.363***	0.357***	0.346***	0.348***	0.373***
Teacher SEL Q9	0.143*	0.128	0.107	0.170*	0.219*

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

### Summary of Findings

The first purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competency and the self-reported use of culturally responsive social-emotional learning (SEL) practices in classrooms, conditional on teachers' race. Based on the results of the teacher surveys returned, there was a demonstrated positive and statistically significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. In other words, teachers who reported higher levels of cultural competence were also more likely to agree that they encourage student reflection on their own lives and society regardless of their race/ethnicity. Second, teachers who reported higher levels of cultural competence were also more likely to agree that they connect students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills for BIPOC, White, and not Hispanic or Latino/a teachers. Third, teachers who reported higher levels of cultural competence were also more likely to agree that

they create meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves for BIPOC, White, and not Hispanic or Latino/a teachers. Fourth, teachers who reported higher levels of cultural competence were also more likely to agree that they allow their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in their school and/or classroom for BIPOC, White, and not Hispanic or Latino/a teachers. Fifth, teachers who reported higher levels of cultural competence were also more likely to agree that they use data in order to identify disparities among their students regardless of their race/ethnicity. Sixth, teachers who reported higher levels of cultural competence were also more likely to agree that they actively encourage students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds regardless of their race/ethnicity. Seventh, teachers who reported higher levels of cultural competence were also more likely to agree that they ensure that students can see themselves in their classroom regardless of their race/ethnicity. Eighth, teachers who reported higher levels of cultural competence were also more likely to agree that they facilitate learning about students' own culture and the culture of others regardless of their race/ethnicity. Finally, teachers who reported higher levels of cultural competence were also more likely to agree that they encourage students to engage in collaborative problem-solving regardless of their race/ethnicity.

Table 23 displays whether specific hypotheses were rejected or failed to be rejected.

**Table 23***Analysis Results for Teachers' Perceived Cultural Competence and Implementation Of Culturally**Responsive SEL Practices*

Hypothesis	Culturally Responsive SEL Question	Race/Ethnic Group	Result	p-value
(H <sub>0</sub> 1a) There is no significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers' race.	Q1: I encourage student reflection on their own lives and society.	BIPOC	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		White	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.05$
		Not Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.001$
(H <sub>0</sub> 1b) There is no significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers' race.	Q2: I connect students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills.	BIPOC	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		White	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Failed to reject	$p > 0.05$
		Not Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.001$
(H <sub>0</sub> 1c) There is no significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers' race.	Q3: I am able to create meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from myself.	BIPOC	Reject	$p < 0.05$
		White	Reject	$p < 0.05$
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Failed to reject	$p > 0.05$
		Not Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.01$
(H <sub>0</sub> 1d) There is no significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers' race.	Q4: I allow my students to productively challenge inequities that they see in my school and/or classroom.	BIPOC	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		White	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Failed to reject	$p > 0.05$
		Not Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.001$
(H <sub>0</sub> 1e) There is no significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers' race.	Q5: I use data in order to identify disparities among my students.	BIPOC	Reject	$p < 0.01$
		White	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		Not Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.001$
(H <sub>0</sub> 1f) There is no significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers' race.	Q6: I actively encourage students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds.	BIPOC	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		White	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.05$
		Not Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.001$



(H <sub>0</sub> 1g) There is no significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers' race.	Q7: I ensure that students can see themselves in my classroom.	BIPOC	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		White	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		Not Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.001$
(H <sub>0</sub> 1h) There is no significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers' race.	Q8: I facilitate learning about students' own culture and the culture of others.	BIPOC	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		White	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.05$
		Not Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.001$
(H <sub>0</sub> 1i) There is no significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices conditional on teachers' race.	Q9: I encourage students to engage in collaborative problem-solving.	BIPOC	Reject	$p < 0.05$
		White	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.001$
		Not Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	$p < 0.001$

The second purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes, conditional on students' race. Based on the number of teacher participants (minimum of 30), working in Minnesota school districts meeting the minimum threshold for racial/ethnic groups (minimum of 25), student data were disaggregated by grade level and race/ethnicity for five Minnesota public school districts. The results indicated some positive and negative, statistically significant, relationships between teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' perceived SEL outcomes across all racial and ethnic groups.

The first student question was related to academic achievement. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society, Asian, South Asian or Asian American students were more likely to report lower academic achievement. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills, White students were more likely to report higher academic achievement. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging

students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds, Black, African, or African American and American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher academic achievement. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom, Black, African, or African American, White and American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher academic achievement. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others, American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher academic achievement. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving, Black, African, or African American and American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher academic achievement.

The second student question was related to self-awareness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society, White students were more likely to report higher self-awareness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with allowing their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in the school and/or classroom, White students were more likely to report higher self-awareness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with using data in order to identify disparities among students, Black, African, or African American, Asian, South Asian, or Asian American, and White students were more likely to report higher self-awareness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds, Black, African, or African American, Asian, South Asian, or Asian American, White, and American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher self-awareness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with

ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom, Black, African, or African American, Asian, South Asian, or Asian American, White, and American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher self-awareness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others, Black, African, or African American, Asian, South Asian, or Asian American, and White students were more likely to report higher self-awareness.

The third student question was related to self-management. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society, Black, African, or African American, White, and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report higher self-management. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills, Black, African, or African American, White, and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report higher self-management. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves, Black, African, or African American and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report higher self-management. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with allowing their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in the school and/or classroom, Black, African, or African American students were more likely to report higher self-management. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with using data in order to identify disparities among students, Black, African, or African American, Asian, South Asian, or Asian American, White, and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report higher self-management. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds, students were more likely to report higher self-management regardless of

their race/ethnicity. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom, students were more likely to report higher self-management regardless of their race/ethnicity. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others, Black, African, or African American, Asian, South Asian, or Asian American, White, and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report higher self-management. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving, Black, African, or African American students were more likely to report higher self-management.

The fourth student question was related to social awareness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society, White students were more likely to report higher social awareness and American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report lower social awareness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills, White students were more likely to report higher social awareness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with using data in order to identify disparities among students, White students were more likely to report higher social awareness and Black, African, or African American and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report lower social awareness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds, Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report lower social awareness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom, White students were more likely to report higher social awareness and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more

likely to report lower social awareness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others, White students were more likely to report higher social awareness and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report lower social awareness.

The fifth student question was related to relationship building. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society, White students were more likely to report higher relationship building and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report lower relationship building. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills, White students were more likely to report higher relationship building and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report lower relationship building. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with allowing their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in the school and/or classroom, White students were more likely to report higher relationship building. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with using data in order to identify disparities among students, White students were more likely to report higher relationship building and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report lower relationship building. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds, White students were more likely to report higher relationship building. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom, White students were more likely to report higher relationship building and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report lower relationship building. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others, Asian, South Asian, or Asian

American and White students were more likely to report higher relationship building and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to report lower relationship building.

The sixth student question was related to responsible decision-making. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society, American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher responsible decision-making and Asian, South Asian, or Asian American students were more likely to report lower responsible decision-making. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills, Asian, South Asian, or Asian American students were more likely to report lower responsible decision-making. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves, Asian, South Asian, or Asian American students were more likely to report lower responsible decision-making. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with using data in order to identify disparities among students, American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher responsible decision-making. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds, American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher responsible decision-making and Asian, South Asian, or Asian American students were more likely to report lower responsible decision-making. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom, American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher responsible decision-making and Asian, South Asian, or Asian American students were more likely to report lower responsible decision-making. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture

of others, Asian, South Asian, or Asian American students were more likely to report lower responsible decision-making.

Finally, the seventh student question was related to school connectedness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging student reflection on their own lives and society, students were more likely to report higher school connectedness regardless of their race/ethnicity. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with connecting students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills, Black, African, or African American, White, Hispanic or Latino/a, and American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher school connectedness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with creating meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from themselves, Black, African, or African American, White, Hispanic or Latino/a, and American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher school connectedness. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with allowing their students to productively challenge inequities that they see in the school and/or classroom, students were more likely to report higher school connectedness regardless of their race/ethnicity. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with using data in order to identify disparities among students, students were more likely to report higher school connectedness regardless of their race/ethnicity. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds, students were more likely to report higher school connectedness regardless of their race/ethnicity. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with ensuring that students can see themselves in their classroom, students were more likely to report higher school connectedness regardless of their race/ethnicity. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with facilitating learning about students' own culture and the culture of others,

students were more likely to report higher school connectedness regardless of their race/ethnicity. When teachers reported higher levels of agreement with encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving, Black, African, or African American, Hispanic or Latino/a, and American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to report higher school connectedness.

Table 24 displays whether specific hypotheses were rejected or failed to be rejected.



**Table 24***Analysis Results for Teachers' Perceived Implementation Of Culturally Responsive SEL**Practices and Student Outcomes*

Hypothesis	Student Question	Race/Ethnic Group	Result	Summary
(H <sub>0</sub> 2a) There is no significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts conditional on students' race.	Q1: How would you describe your grades this school year? (SEL Competency: Academic Achievement)	Black, African American	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q6, Q7, and Q9 and students' grades
		Asian, South Asian or Asian American	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1 and students' grades
		White	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q2 and Q7 and students' grades
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Failed to reject	There is not a statistically significant difference between culturally responsive SEL implementation and students' grades
		American Indian or Alaskan Native	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q6, Q7, Q8 and Q9 and students' grades
(H <sub>0</sub> 2b) There is no significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts conditional on students' race.	Q2: I feel valued and appreciated by others. (SEL Competency: Self-Awareness)	Black, African American	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
		Asian, South Asian or Asian American	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
		White	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Failed to reject	There is not a statistically significant difference between culturally responsive SEL implementation and students' SEL outcomes
		American Indian or Alaskan Native	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q6 and Q7 and students' SEL outcomes

(H <sub>0</sub> 2c) There is no significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts conditional on students' race.	Q3: I find good ways to deal with things that are hard in my life. (SEL Competency: Self-Management)	Black, African or African American	Reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, and Q9 and students' SEL outcomes
		Asian, South Asian or Asian American	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
		White	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q2, Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
(H <sub>0</sub> 2d) There is no significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts conditional on students' race.	Q4: I am sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. (SEL Competency: Social Awareness)	Black, African or African American	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q5 and students' SEL outcomes
		Asian, South Asian or Asian American	Failed to reject	There is not a statistically significant difference between culturally responsive SEL implementation and students' SEL outcomes
		White	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q2, Q5, Q7, and Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
(H <sub>0</sub> 2e) There is no significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in	Q5: I accept people who are different from me. (SEL Competency: Relationship Building)	Black, African or African American	Failed to reject	There is not a statistically significant difference between culturally responsive SEL implementation and students' SEL outcomes
		Asian, South Asian or Asian American	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
		White	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1 and students' SEL outcomes
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1 and students' SEL outcomes

Minnesota public school districts conditional on students' race.		White	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q2, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q2, Q5, Q7, and Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
		American Indian or Alaskan Native	Failed to reject	There is not a statistically significant difference between culturally responsive SEL implementation and students' SEL outcomes
(H <sub>0</sub> 2f) There is no significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts conditional on students' race.	Q6: I say no to things that are dangerous and unhealthy. (SEL Competency: Responsible Decision-Making)	Black, African or African American	Failed to reject	There is not a statistically significant difference between culturally responsive SEL implementation and students' SEL outcomes
		Asian, South Asian or Asian American	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q2, Q3, Q6, Q7, and Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
		White	Failed to reject	There is not a statistically significant difference between culturally responsive SEL implementation and students' SEL outcomes
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q8 and students' SEL outcomes
		American Indian or Alaskan Native	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q5, Q6, and Q7 and students' SEL outcomes
(H <sub>0</sub> 2g) There is no significant relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts conditional on students' race.	Q7: Most teachers at my school are interested in me as a person. (SEL Competency: School Connectedness)	Black, African or African American	Reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, and Q9 and students' school connectedness
		Asian, South Asian or Asian American	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8 and students' school connectedness
		White	Partially reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8 and students' school connectedness
		Hispanic or Latino/a	Reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, and Q9 and students' school connectedness

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American Indian or Alaskan Native	Reject	There is a statistically significant difference between the implementation of SEL Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, and Q9 and students' school connectedness
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## **Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, Recommendations**

Social and emotional development is an ongoing process and differs among culture, age, and gender (Saavedra & Nolan, 2018). In schools, social-emotional learning (SEL) is a systemic approach in order to strengthen the social, emotional, and academic development of students in preschool through grade 12 (Schlund et al., 2020). CASEL sets the standard for the majority of research-based SEL programs (El Mallah, 2020). CASEL identifies five intrapersonal and interpersonal core competencies including relationship skills, social awareness, self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making (Schlund et al., 2020). As students gain proficiency in the SEL core competencies, research has found positive academic and behavioral student outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Ross & Tolan, 2018); however, few scholars have focused on racial and ethnic differences in SEL outcomes (Rowe & Trickett, 2018).

### **Overview of the Study**

The first purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competency and the self-reported use of culturally responsive SEL practices in classrooms, conditional on teachers' race. For this quantitative study, an anonymous survey was sent to 97,352 licensed educators in the state of Minnesota. Out of the 97,352 surveys sent, 2,176 were returned (2.24% return rate). Of these returned surveys, 828 were removed because the individuals did not complete the survey. The total population of participants for research question 1 was 1,348 educators. The survey included 12 demographic questions, 22 questions from the Educators Scale of Student Diversity survey (ESSD; Patel, 2017), and nine questions related to culturally responsive SEL practices. Data were analyzed using JASP and analysis included a Pearson test to examine the correlation between teachers' perceived cultural competency and the self-reported use of culturally responsive SEL practices in classrooms, conditional on teachers'

race. Due to a limited data set for teachers of color, all teachers of color were combined and reported as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). Four different correlations were run to include the following ethnic and racial categories: Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC); White; Hispanic or Latino/a; and not Hispanic or Latino/a.

The second purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes, conditional on students' race. Student participation was limited to students who attended participating school districts that are large enough to break down the MSS data by race and ethnicity and who had a minimum of 30 teachers employed by that school district who participated in the teacher survey. The teacher sample for research question 2 included 204 teachers from five Minnesota school districts. The 2022 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) was administered to students in grades five, eight, nine, and eleven. The student sample included the mean scores of 5,360 fifth-grade students, 7,745 eighth-grade students, 6,039 ninth-grade students, and 5,161 eleventh-grade students. Data were analyzed using JASP and analysis included a Pearson test to examine the correlation between teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes. Five different correlations were run to include the following ethnic and racial categories: Black, African or African American; Asian, South Asian or Asian American; White; Hispanic or Latino/a; and American Indian or Alaskan Native.

### **Research Questions**

Research Question 1 asked, "Is there a relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices, conditional on teachers' race?" The correlational results indicated a positive relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of culturally

responsive SEL practices. Descriptive statistics indicated that overall teachers perceived that they were implementing culturally responsive SEL practices in the classroom. The results also indicated that White teachers had lower correlations when compared to BIPOC teachers. Finally, the results indicated that Not Hispanic or Latino/a teachers had lower correlations compared to Hispanic or Latino/a teachers (with the exception of SEL Q4 which looked at the relationship between teachers' perceived cultural competence and the perceived implementation of allowing students to productively challenge inequities they see in the school and/or classroom). There were three insignificant correlations for Hispanic or Latino/a teachers, however, these were likely due to the small sample size which produced low power. These results suggest that it is important for schools to have a diverse teacher population and that there is a need to strengthen teachers' cultural competence, specifically for White teachers.

Research Question 2 asked, "Is there a relationship between teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' SEL outcomes in Minnesota public school districts, conditional on students' race?" The results indicated positive and significant, small to medium, correlations for American Indian or Alaskan Native students' academic achievement when teachers reported implementing four of the culturally responsive SEL practices. The results also indicated a positive and significant relationship for all student groups' self-awareness except for Hispanic or Latino/a when teachers reported implementing culturally responsive SEL practices. The results indicated a positive and significant relationship for Black, African, or African American and Hispanic or Latino/a students' self-management when teachers reported implementing culturally responsive SEL practices. The results indicated a positive and significant relationship for White students' social awareness and relationship building, however, there was a negative and significant relationship for Hispanic or Latino/a

students' social awareness and relationship building when teachers reported implementing culturally responsive SEL practices. The results indicated a negative and significant relationship for Asian, South Asian, or Asian American students' responsible decision-making when teachers reported implementing culturally responsive SEL practices. Finally, the results indicated a positive and significant relationship for students' school connectedness when teachers reported implementing culturally responsive SEL practices regardless of students' race/ethnicity. These results suggest that while teachers have the perception of implementing culturally responsive teaching practices, these efforts are not positively influencing students' outcomes to the degree expected. It is likely that these culturally responsive practices are implemented through a mostly White lens and teachers may not be as culturally competent as they may perceive.

There were a few limitations in this study that should be taken into consideration throughout the discussion. First, students' responses could not be paired directly with individual teacher responses, therefore, this study could not show a direct relationship between culturally responsive teaching practices and students' outcomes. Second, teacher participants were limited for research question two. Teacher sample sizes were small after disaggregating for school district and grade level which produced low power and likely insignificant correlations. Third, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and students' mental health needs, the results of the MSS may have reflected higher levels of social-emotional and mental health needs, regardless of teachers' cultural competency or implementation of transformative SEL. Fourth, this study did not look at the degree of fidelity in SEL implementation. Finally, there was a slight difference between the population of teachers of color in Minnesota (4.3%; Wilder Research, 2019) and the teacher participants of color in this study (6.7%).



## **Discussion**

The current study has several conclusions that can be made based on the results. First, there was a perception among teachers that they are culturally competent and implementing culturally responsive SEL practices, however, the perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices were not positively enhancing student outcomes across all racial/ethnic groups. Second, there were some statistically significant differences among racial/ethnic groups when examining the relationship between teachers' implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' academic achievement, self-awareness, and self-management skills. Third, when teachers reported higher levels of implementing culturally responsive SEL practices, students in their school district were more likely to agree that they felt their teachers were interested in them as a person (i.e., school connectedness) regardless of their race/ethnicity. Finally, for Black, African, or African American, Asian, South Asian, or Asian American and Hispanic or Latino/a students, when teachers reported higher levels of implementing culturally responsive SEL practices, students were more likely to self-report lower levels of SEL outcomes.

### ***Teachers' Perception of Cultural Competency***

This study found that there is a perception from teachers of being culturally competent and implementing culturally responsive SEL practices (e.g., actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds, ensuring that students can see themselves in the classroom, encouraging students to engage in collaborative problem-solving); however, these practices are not meeting the needs of all students. For instance, the results indicated that there was either a negative relationship or a lack of relationship between the implementation of many of the culturally responsive SEL practices and academic achievement. There were only two SEL competencies for African American students (i.e., self-management,

school connectedness), and one SEL competency for Hispanic or Latino/a and American Indian students (i.e., school connectedness) where the null hypothesis was fully rejected.

The results confirmed prior research that explains how students of color are more likely to be successful when they have culturally competent teachers; without culturally competent teachers, students are more likely to have negative experiences in school which can lead to lack of engagement, decreased motivation, and an increase in the achievement gap between White students and students of color (Ursache et al., 2012). The results also confirmed prior research that describes how teachers often struggle to find culturally responsive ways of meeting the social and emotional needs of students although researchers have shown many positive benefits of SEL implementation (e.g., increase in student grades, decrease in discipline problems; Barnes & McCallops, 2019). This study revealed that teachers have the perception of cultural competence, however, they are not meeting the SEL needs of students and would benefit from professional development focused on culturally responsive teaching practices in order to increase their cultural competence and SEL students' outcomes. Without culturally competent teachers, and/or a race/ethnic match between students or teachers, misunderstandings will likely remain and lead to negative outcomes (i.e., increase in dropout rates, decrease in academic achievement, increase in disciplinary problems).

An explanation for the results of this study is the teacher diversity gap. A diversity gap between students and teachers exists in the state of Minnesota. According to Wilder Research (2019), only 4.3% of all teachers are teachers of color whereas 33.5% of students are students of color. The population for this study was similar as 6.7% of teachers were teachers of color and 41.6% of students were students of color. Due to this mismatch, American schools tend to be

culturally relevant to White middle- to upper-class students because they perpetuate American middle-class cultural ideals (Jagers et al., 2019).

Another explanation for these results is that teachers often have implicit biases related to expectations of students of color which can then negatively impact student outcomes (Cherng, 2017). Cherng suggested that teachers underestimate the academic abilities of Black and Latinx students which was related to poorer academic outcomes in both math and reading. It is not surprising then that when there is a racial or ethnic match between students and teachers, there is a greater likelihood that students will benefit through increased “engagement, motivation, social skills, and school attendance” (Rasheed et al., 2020, p. 611).

### ***Culturally Responsive SEL and Positive Student Outcomes***

This study found statistically significant differences among racial/ethnic groups when examining the relationship between teachers’ implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and student outcomes. The current study showed positive results for increasing academic achievement and self-management when teachers focused on community-building practices for Black, African or African American, Asian, South Asian, or Asian American, and Hispanic or Latino/a students. These results confirmed prior research in which SEL has shown positive results for increasing students’ engagement (i.e., academic achievement) and influencing identity development (i.e., self-management) among students of color when focusing on community-building (Rivas-Drake et al., 2020). In addition, how students adapt to school is heavily influenced by teachers’ perceptions and the student-teacher relationships formed (Alzahrani et al., 2019).

Black, African or African American students were more likely to have increased academic achievement and self-management skills when teachers encouraged students to share

about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (Teacher SEL Q6) and facilitated learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (Teacher SEL Q8). Black, African or African American students were also more likely to have increased self-management skills when teachers ensured that students could see themselves in the classroom (Teacher SEL Q7) and encouraged students to engage in collaborative problem-solving (Teacher SEL Q9).

Asian, South Asian, or Asian American and Hispanic or Latino/a students were more likely to have increased self-management skills when teachers encouraged students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (Teacher SEL Q6), ensured that students could see themselves in the classroom (Teacher SEL Q7), and facilitated learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (Teacher SEL Q8).

Finally, American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to have increased academic achievement when teachers facilitated learning about students' own culture and the culture of others (Teacher SEL Q8). American Indian or Alaskan Native students were more likely to have increased self-management skills when teachers encouraged students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds (Teacher SEL Q6) and ensured that students could see themselves in the classroom (Teacher SEL Q7).

This study also found a positive relationship between two culturally responsive SEL practices (i.e., actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds, ensuring that students can see themselves in the classroom) and students' perceived self-management skills regardless of race/ethnicity. In addition, the results indicated a positive relationship for all culturally responsive SEL practices and self-management for Black, African, or African American students. Finally, the results indicated a positive relationship for

seven of the nine culturally responsive SEL practices and self-management for Hispanic or Latino/a students.

Finally, this study found a positive relationship between two culturally responsive SEL practices (i.e., actively encouraging students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds, ensuring that students can see themselves in the classroom) and students' perceived self-awareness skills across all racial groups, however, the results were not significant for Hispanic or Latino/a students.

Although there were many insignificant results, as well as a few significant negative results, these significant positive results could be explained by the study's theoretical framework in which people are more likely to perceive and attend to stimuli that are interesting and a known pattern (Huitt, 2003). In this way, teachers' implementing culturally responsive SEL practices and attending to students' prior knowledge and cultural background are essential in order for information to move from sensory memory to short-term memory.

### ***School Connectedness***

This study found a positive relationship between teachers' perceived implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and students' perception of feeling an enhanced amount of school connectedness. The size of the correlations were both small and medium across all racial and ethnic groups but cannot show a direct correlation between students and teachers. These results indicated that teachers with higher perceived cultural competency were in fact more likely to implement culturally responsive SEL practices, which were positively associated with the level of perceived school connectedness of students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. The results confirmed prior research in which students who consistently participated in social-emotional learning activities (e.g., encouraging student voice and sharing, setting goals,

creating positive behavior routines) were more likely to experience a positive sense of community and safety where students of color could explore their identity (Rivas-Drake et al., 2020).

School connectedness includes students' sense of belonging and the feeling of having a positive student-teacher relationship (Allen et al., 2018). One explanation for the results of this study is that teachers' social-emotional competency is an important part of building strong teacher-student relationships (Jagers et al., 2018; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers with higher levels of social and emotional competence are more likely to have higher levels of empathy and build strong relationships with students which then positively influences students' social and emotional development (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Palomera et al., 2008).

Although many factors influence students' feeling of school connectedness (e.g., mental health, self-esteem, personality, optimism, academic goals [Allen et al., 2018]), the current study's finding has important implications for school administrators and teachers as they wrestle with exploring their own cultural competence and biases, culturally responsive academic and behavioral intervention practices, and how they can implement these practices into their daily work with students and families in order to build strong relationships and improve belonging.

### ***Significant Negative Relationships***

This study found several areas in which there was a significant negative relationship between teacher implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and student outcomes for Black, African, or African American, Hispanic or Latino/a, and Asian, South Asian, or Asian American students. A negative relationship was in the area of social awareness for Black, African, or African American students. For Hispanic or Latino/a students, there were negative relationships in the areas of social awareness, relationship building, and responsible

decision-making. For Asian, South Asian, or Asian American students, negative relationships were seen in the competency areas of academic achievement and responsible decision-making. However, the results revealed significant, positive relationships for White students in the areas of academic achievement, social awareness, and relationship building.

These negative results for Black, African, or African American, Hispanic or Latino/a and Asian, South Asian, or Asian American students confirmed prior research which discusses the implications of inequities in society and the lack of a diverse teacher population in the United States (Creasey et al., 2016). This is true for Minnesota as well (Wilder Research, 2019). The United States and other Westernized countries that value individualism have inequities in society (e.g., wealth in the hands of a few) that can impact students' mental health and wellness (Jagers et al., 2019). Black, Hispanic, and Asian cultures value collectivism. If schools in Minnesota tend to perpetuate American cultural ideals that are only relevant to White middle to upper-class students (Jagers et al., 2019), it is not surprising that the teaching strategies implemented negatively influence students from certain cultural backgrounds while positively influencing White students, especially considering that the implementation of these strategies are through the lens of mostly White teachers.

These negative results also confirmed prior research in which students of color are more likely to have negative experiences in school without culturally competent teachers, which can lead to a lack of engagement, decreased motivation, and an increase in the achievement gap (Ursache et al., 2012). How students adapt to school is heavily influenced by teachers' perceptions and the student-teacher relationships formed (Alzahrani et al., 2019). According to the results of this study, there appears to be a breakdown in teachers' approach to implementing culturally responsive teaching practices, confirming prior research in which there are

breakdowns in communication between diverse groups, such as emotional expression, which can lead to miscommunication and lack of trust (Green, 2019; The Education Trust, 2020; The Pennsylvania State University, 2018). These experiences can negatively impact how students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds develop their social and emotional skills (CASEL, 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; The Pennsylvania State University, 2018).

One explanation for these negative results is that although teachers perceived themselves as implementing culturally responsive practices, it is likely behaviors such as implicit biases and microaggressions, which often are harder for White people to be aware of, are playing a larger role in the disconnect between teacher behaviors and student outcomes. Typically, there is no intent to harm students behind these teachers' behaviors; however, these consistent slights toward marginalized groups can have a detrimental impact on students who belong to these racially and ethnically diverse groups (Applebaum, 2019).

Sometimes microaggressions can even appear as a compliment that the teacher is giving (e.g., telling a student of color that they are articulate, telling someone that he or she is a good English speaker, saying "I don't see color"), yet the message received by the student is actually the exact opposite and leads to further marginalization (Applebaum, 2019; Darwin, 2018). Other examples of microaggressions include setting low expectations for students of color or consistently ignoring a particular group of students (Darvin, 2018). For teachers who are not strong in cultural competence, stereotypes and biases held by White teachers of non-White students often contribute to inequities (Weinstein, 2002). Human experience often shapes expectations and preferences which come from their own cultural background (Schlund et al., 2020).



Like microaggressions, implicit bias is not intentional but rather is automatic and oftentimes occurs without people knowing (Boysen & Vogel, 2009). According to Applebaum (2019), “Implicit bias or unconscious bias involves automatic or habitual associations connected to certain groups of people that affect the way individuals respond to the targeted group” (p. 131). These biases are ingrained into people’s brains so much so that they are seen as normal, and it is hard to see how they impact people’s behavior (Applebaum, 2019). In this way, biases that teachers hold impact the effectiveness of teaching and relationship-building, leading to a decrease in student learning (The Pennsylvania State University, 2018). The student-teacher relationship is essential to building social and emotional skills (Rivas-Drake et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2018); without culturally competent teachers to develop a strong student-teacher relationship, students’ SEL skills cannot be built (The Education Trust, 2020).

It is critical that teachers acknowledge that culture plays a large role in how students view and interact with the world (Green, 2019). Teacher education programs have been requiring multicultural education courses for decades, so although teachers may be able to acknowledge and understand that race and culture play a large role in the classroom, they still feel unprepared to teach a diverse population of students (Acquah & Commins, 2017). In general, teachers need to spend more time analyzing and exploring how their own assumptions and biases impact their beliefs and values and how these translate into the classroom.

### **Implications for Educational Practice**

The results of this study have important implications for educators as they seek to improve the social and emotional development of students. The implications focus on administrators and other school leaders who have a role in the change process within a school and/or school district. School leaders may include school board members, district administration

leaders (e.g., superintendent; director of human resources; director of diversity, equity, and inclusion [DEI]; curriculum director; chief financial officer; advancement), and building/site leaders (e.g., school principals, assistant principals, school counselors). In addition, this study has implications for teacher preparation programs and state legislatures. In order for state and school leaders to create structural change to the educational system, leaders cannot solely focus on implicit biases and microaggressions; rather, leaders need to be willing to change the foundation on which “dominant ideologies” were formed (Applebaum, 2019, p. 139). The implications that follow are intended for state and school leaders as they navigate improving culturally responsive practices and the implementation of SEL in order to have a greater impact on student SEL outcomes.

### ***Increase Teacher Diversity***

Educator training programs and school administrators should work to continuously increase teacher diversity because schools tend to be more culturally relevant to White students (Jagers et al., 2019), yet teachers have the perception of being culturally competent. During the 2015-2016 school year, 51.1% of the student population were identified as students of color (U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection, n.d.c), and by the fall of 2029, the percentage of White students in the United States is predicted to drop to 44% of the overall student population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020b), meaning that the population of students of color is the majority of students. The recruitment and retention of teachers of color has been a national priority over the past decade (Rasheed et al., 2020). When students’ racial or ethnic identities match that of their teachers, students are more likely to experience greater happiness, increased motivation, and feeling cared for by their teacher often due to an increased ability of teachers of color to relate to students from a similar background (Egalite & Kisida,

2017; Rasheed et al., 2020). Even with these initiatives in place, the recruitment efforts of school districts do not seem to have had enough of an impact (Carver-Thomas, 2018) as demonstrated by the results of the current study.

Carver-Thomas (2018) outlined several barriers that impact a school district's ability to recruit and retain non-White teachers. First, the percentage of people of color to complete their four-year college degree, and more specifically a teacher education program, is low. Barriers for students of color include being unprepared for the rigor of college coursework, the lack of diversity among college students and faculty, the lack of transportation, and family responsibilities (Al-Asfour & Abraham, 2016; Mattern et al., 2013; Stewart et al., 2015). Second, less students are enrolling in teacher preparation programs likely due to the increasing debt that students face when leaving college, which is more true for non-White students than White students (Carver-Thomas, 2018). According to Baum and O'Malley (2003), when both students of color and White students expected the same loan debt after graduation and the same salary, students of color were more likely to report that loans and salary impacted their college choice. In addition, Black students changed their educational major and career choice based on their anticipated loans (Baum and O'Malley, 2003).

Third, the quality of teacher education programs is an important factor in teacher retention (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Teacher candidates of color are more likely than White candidates to graduate from an alternative certification program rather than the traditional college route (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2021). Teachers who attend alternative programs tend to complete less coursework and student teaching than those who go through a traditional pathway which may lead them to feel less prepared and more likely to leave the profession (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Finally, the school conditions play a

role in whether or not teachers of color stay at a particular school or in the teaching profession. According to Carver-Thomas (2018), 75% of teachers of color work in schools that serve a majority of students of color. These schools tend to be the schools that face a lot of challenges, including pressures of accountability and lack of resources (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Although some teachers leave, many teachers of color choose to stay in order to serve students that match their racial or ethnic background.

In order to reduce these barriers and increase diversity in the teaching population, there are several steps that school district administrators, principals, and state licensing boards could take. First, the state licensing board could take steps to reform the teacher licensure exam. Although the Praxis exams are not created by the state, it is important that licensing boards understand that these exams are failed by Black and Latinx teacher candidates at a much higher rate than White candidates (Nettles et al., 2011). In Minnesota, teachers seeking licensure take the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Examinations (MTLE). Like the Praxis exams, teachers of color (i.e., African American/Black, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, and Hispanic) are more likely to fail the MTLE subtests than White teachers (Pearson Evaluation Systems, 2021).

Second, since many students enter the teaching profession through traditional schooling and financial burdens are a significant barrier for students of color who want to enter the teaching field, legislatures and postsecondary institutions could rethink admissions policies, mentorship programs, and loan forgiveness for students of color (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Programs exist, including Title IV of the Higher Education Act, for educators who commit to teaching in high-need schools in which they receive loan forgiveness in exchange for working in hard-to-staff schools. In addition, several states offer grants that pay for people of color to attend

teacher preparation programs, then based on the amount of years the grant paid for college, teachers commit to teach for that many years (Carver-Thomas, 2018). High school counselors could ensure that students are aware that these programs exist, encourage students to apply, and provide any necessary support.

Finally, administrators could prioritize improving school conditions in order to retain high-quality teachers of color (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Simon & Johnson, 2015). School conditions include focusing on improving school culture and safety, strengthening culturally responsive discipline practices, and ensuring equitable access to enriched coursework. In addition, strong administrative support and leadership are important aspects of the condition of schools (Carver-Thomas, 2018). According to Bednar and Gicheva (2019), when teachers of color worked in schools where the teaching population is 90% or more White, they were more likely to leave than White teachers if they felt they had unsupportive administrators; when they had supportive administrators, teachers of color and White teachers left schools at the same rate. Leadership support can be fostered through classroom support and encouragement, instructional leadership, engaging families and the community, and modeling norms to faculty, staff, and students (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). It is essential that school board members and district leaders vote to hire principals that have demonstrated a strong ability to build relationships and support their faculty and staff in order to retain teachers of color (Bednar and Gicheva, 2019).

### ***Implement Researched-Based Culturally Responsive SEL***

Administrators could benefit from investing in research-based culturally responsive SEL implementation practices in order to meet the social-emotional needs of students regardless of their race/ethnicity. This study showed that the perceived culturally responsive teaching practices

implemented by teachers were not influencing student groups as expected. In this way, it may benefit students if schools implement a research-based program with fidelity. One model that administrators might consider adopting is CASEL's systemic SEL model which begins with four interrelated practices: building foundational support, strengthening adult SEL, engaging all areas of the school (i.e., classrooms, schools, homes, community), and utilizing data for continuous improvement (CASEL, 2023g; Mahoney et al., 2021). Other practices include explicit classroom instruction (CASEL, 2023h), adults' modeling SEL competencies (Mahoney et al., 2021), incorporating SEL into academic subject areas (CASEL, 2023i; Schlund et al., 2020), developing teachers' SEL skills through professional development and collaboration (Schlund et al., 2020; Weissberg et al., 2015), and educating parents on SEL and promoting a collaborative partnership so that they can encourage these skills at home (CASEL, 2023i; CASEL, 2023j). CASEL (2023i) provides free tools to educators for implementing an SEL program through their Guide to Schoolwide SEL. In addition, many research-based SEL programs offer implementation guides, including ways to collaborate with parents, implement professional development series to teachers and administrators, and provide ongoing support for best practices.

McLeod et al. (2021) illustrate a model for program implementation based on best implementation science practices. First, schools have implementation inputs that include both "outer setting" inputs and "inner setting" inputs. Outer setting inputs include things such as district and state policy, characteristics of the school district, level of district administrative support, and professional development. Inner setting inputs include characteristics of the individual school, school-based leadership support, and the fit of the research-based program to the school (McLeod et al., 2021). Next, both the quantity and quality of implementation matter in its effectiveness (i.e., "treatment integrity"). For example, if a school is implementing a

research-based SEL program, the frequency that students engage in SEL lessons and SEL competencies are taught within regular classroom instruction (i.e., quantity) is important in addition to teachers' level of SEL competence and the level of student engagement within SEL lessons (i.e., quality). Both the implementation inputs and integrity of SEL implementation impact the growth and improvement of students' social, emotional, and academic development (McLeod et al., 2021).

District and school leaders could benefit from securing a culturally responsive, research-based SEL curriculum that is vertically aligned preschool through transition age. CASEL offers a program guide which helps school leaders select the appropriate research-based SEL curriculum for their school district, including the student population (CASEL, 2023k). The SEL curriculum chosen should affirm the cultural diversity of the student population and be relevant to students' experiences, backgrounds, and communities (CASEL 2023k; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021). For example, students should be given opportunities to share about their own experiences and learn from the experiences of others which will increase engagement and learning (CASEL 2023k; Jagers et al., 2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021). In addition, the curriculum should be sequenced and students should participate in active forms of learning where the skills are practiced (CASEL, 2023h; Mahoney et al., 2021). For example, the curriculum should encourage student voice and allow students an opportunity to problem solve and create positive change in their school and community (CASEL 2023k; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021). When teachers are able to create a sense of community and belonging in the classroom, students of color have benefited through increased engagement and overall academic achievement (Gray et al., 2018; Rivas-Drake et al., 2020; Sánchez et al., 2005).

One challenge that may present itself to districts trying to implement SEL is a lack of funding. In order for a program to have the best chances of success, it is helpful for there to be consensus among the school board, district administration including the chief financial officer and curriculum director, and building administration that the program is important. Even if considered important, budgets are typically limited in school districts which can raise a challenge to those districts seeking to implement a research-based SEL program. If funding is limited, district and school leaders could work together to research federal and state grant programs that are looking to give money to school districts focusing on students' mental health and wellbeing. In addition to researching grants that are specifically for SEL implementation, districts could also research specific government grants to see if they qualify. These grants include the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Program (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021a), Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants under Part A of Title II (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021b), the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) under Part B of Title VI (U.S. Department of Education, 2020), the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Title II Formula Grants Program (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, n.d.), Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2018) and Alternative Delivery of Specialized Instructional Services (ADSIS; Minnesota Department of Education, n.b.a.). Finally, school leaders could seek private donations and gifts from families and community members who seek to support SEL implementation and ongoing professional development. School districts can seek input from their advancement teams for creative ways to raise money through donations.

Schlund et al. (2020) identified several insights for school districts looking to implement CASEL's research-based model with a focus on equity. In addition, they also provide specific



examples of ways school districts are currently implementing those practices. First, schools should explicitly communicate that SEL is “a lever for equity” by creating “core values, commitments, and standards [that] align SEL implementation with equity goals” (Schlund et al., 2020, p. 8). For example, Minneapolis Public School is working toward finalizing their “Equity & SEL Standards” in which the district hopes to decrease biased beliefs and behaviors of faculty, staff, and students.

Second, school districts should prioritize enhancing adult SEL and cultural competency (Schlund et al., 2020; The Aspen Education & Society Program, 2018). This includes examining one’s biases and beliefs, implementing practices that do not solely focus on student discipline but rather ensure that students are being taught prosocial skills, and collaborating on district-wide solutions to building an equitable school culture. Sacramento City School District created reflection cards for adults with the intention to build social-emotional competencies through an equity lens. The cards feature self-reflection questions, organized by the five CASEL core competencies, which faculty and staff can utilize while engaging in professional development, lesson planning, and self-reflection after a difficult situation (e.g., student or family interaction, difficult class period) (Schlund et al., 2020). In Baltimore, school leaders began having faculty and staff engage in conversations reflecting on the students and families they serve, including in which part of the city the students’ live, economic factors, and mental health and well-being.

Finally, school districts should encourage students’ voice and allow for students to create positive change within their school (Schlund et al., 2020). For example, Washoe County (Nevada) School District created a student-led conference in which students lead breakout sessions on topics of school culture, SEL, mental health, and other challenges that students experience (Schlund et al., 2020; Washoe County School District, 2019). In Cleveland, each high

school has a student advisory board made up of 10 students who meet with the superintendent quarterly to discuss issues such as student attendance, climate and relationships, and other topics that are important to the students (Schlund et al., 2020).

Administrators would benefit from understanding that in order for teachers to engage in their own learning, the precondition is that they are mentally healthy (Greenberg et al., 2016; C. Cook, personal communication, March 28, 2023). SEL through an equity lens is imperative to student success and wellbeing; however, teachers need to be equipped with the skills to teach culturally responsive SEL. As schools look to implement professional development for implementing a research-based program, administrators and human resources directors are encouraged to assess teachers' readiness for implementation through a needs assessment, including their adult SEL skills, mental health and wellbeing, and ideas for what teachers feel they need in order to implement SEL with fidelity. This data should be used in order to plan implementation efforts, including professional development.

### ***Provide Ongoing Professional Development***

Faculty and staff, including administrators, could benefit from professional development on transformative SEL implementation practices and how to incorporate these culturally responsive practices into the classroom. The results of the current study revealed that teachers have the perception of cultural competence and implementing culturally responsive SEL practices, however, these practices were not influencing student groups as expected. In this way, ongoing professional development on culturally responsive SEL practices and how to successfully use these practices in the classroom could positively influence students' social-emotional development across all race/ethnic groups. Culturally responsive practices include focusing on students' lived experiences and prior knowledge; encouraging students'

voice and advocacy skills; building classroom community where students feel known and valued; and helping adults/teachers understand how their own SEL competencies, biases, and classroom practices impact equity and their students (CASEL, 2023a; Jagers et al., 2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021). In order for schools to see positive student outcomes from the implementation of these culturally responsive practices, much work is required at both an individual and district level (Applebaum, 2019).

Romijn et al. (2021) analyzed 45 papers studying the professional development efforts intended to increase the intercultural competencies of future teachers enrolled in teacher educator programs and current teachers participating in professional development. These researchers found that professional development should include three important elements in order to enhance cultural competency. First, professional development should be embedded into the context of the school district (Romijn et al., 2021). In other words, professional development should be designed in such a way that it matches teacher and student needs and directly aligns with the strategic plan, mission statement, and organizational goals.

Second, professional development should include guided self-reflection (Romijn et al., 2021). Self-reflection includes things such as journaling, discussions within a focus group, and self-rating through a standardized survey such as the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Not all teachers and pre-service teachers are comfortable or feel equipped to engage in reflection (Romijn et al., 2021). Guided reflection through a trainer or coach will increase teachers' likelihood of improved cultural competence. Finally, as the current study indicates, there is often a gap between what teachers think they believe about diversity and their actions toward diversity (Romijn et al., 2021). In addition, how teachers perceive that they act toward students is often different from the reality and thus, focusing solely on teachers' belief systems does not

necessarily impact behavior. Teachers would benefit from engaging in professional development in which they could practice how to teach these skills (Romijn et al., 2021).

Professional development should also focus on improving adult/teacher cultural competency by helping educators examine their own social-emotional competence, practices, and policies that impact educational equity (CASEL, 2023a; Jagers et al., 2018; Schlund et al., 2020). Culturally responsive teaching is more than just ensuring that students can see themselves in the classroom through diverse pictures on the walls and texts written by diverse authors; it also includes the ability to recognize and appropriately respond to microaggressions and biases that occur in the classroom, with families, and in conversations with coworkers (Darvin, 2018). Teachers should be challenged to understand and examine their own implicit biases and how they impact student learning (CASEL, 2021f; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2018; Schlund et al., 2020). The Intercultural Development Inventory, guided reflection and journaling, enactment, and focus groups are just a few tools that administrators can seek to help teachers become aware of their own cultural competency.

Applebaum (2019) cautioned administrators about the limitations of common training often put in place to improve cultural competence and school climate such as implicit bias training (IBT) and microaggression training. Unfortunately, the act of creating awareness of biases and microaggressions can lead people to resist the knowledge (Tate & Page, 2018). Training that focuses on helping teachers become aware of implicit biases often assumes that teachers will be able to rid themselves of these biases and change their behavior once they are able to acknowledge that these biases exist and that they are wrong (Applebaum, 2019). Although limitations exist, this should not stop schools from continuing to foster teachers' knowledge and training in culturally responsive teaching practices. In order for teachers to better

identify and understand microaggressions, teachers would benefit from reading reputable articles and books on the topic, engaging in discussion groups with colleagues, and attending in-service training on microaggressions. Another useful self-reflection tool to help teachers decrease microaggressions is videotaping in which they are able to watch themselves and analyze their interactions with students (Darvin, 2018).

Finally, professional development could include examining student data in order to reflect on the root causes and gain an understanding of the disparities present within the school or district. This includes examining student SEL data, discipline data, academic data, and school climate and community data (Schlund et al., 2020). There are many protocols available to help educators examine data, including the ATLAS Protocol and Digging Into Data Protocol (Institute for Learning, 2018; School Initiative Reform, 2021). Schools could also partner with students in order to gain qualitative data regarding their experiences with regard to school climate, communities, biases, and other inequities students feel they face. Once finding the gaps among student groups, administrators could reflect on the current practices and policies that may be contributing to those gaps and work toward creating equity-based policies (CASEL, 2023a; Jagers et al., 2019; Schlund et al., 2020). For example, Metro Nashville Public Schools engaged principals in student data by partnering with the Restorative Practice Student Groups in which students explained and discussed the school climate student data with the school principals (Schlund et al., 2020). In addition, Chicago Public Schools analyzed their discipline data in order to find subjective data (e.g., persistent defiance) that impacted higher levels of students of color. They then engaged students, families, and community members in order to rewrite their discipline policies (Schlund et al., 2020).

### ***Improve Multicultural Education in Teacher Education Programs***

The current study confirms that although multicultural education is embedded within teacher education and administrator preparation programs, there is still a disconnection between theory and practice (Acquah & Commins, 2017; Romijn et al., 2021; Weiner et al., 2021). Preparation programs ask for students to self-reflect on topics such as privilege and cultural background (i.e., who they are and how their own background influences them as a teacher) through avenues such as journaling and self-reflecting which are embedded in writing assignments (Romijn et al., 2021; Weiner et al., 2021). Overall, self-reflection is used in teacher and administrator education programs in order to increase “knowledge, skills, belief systems, and practices at the individual level” (Romijn et al., 2021, p. 11). Educators typically increase their knowledge when taking these courses (Acquah & Commins, 2017), but there is a lack of research on how this knowledge and the skills gained from education programs impact actual practice and student outcomes (Romijn et al., 2021). Improving multicultural education in teacher preparation programs could enhance student outcomes for all students, especially when there is a diversity gap between the population of teachers and students, and many teacher education programs are still unprepared for educating teachers to teach students who are culturally different from themselves (Creasey et al., 2016).

Although more research is needed on how teachers apply theory into practice, it is important to highlight the current recommended instructional strategies for education preparation programs. Practices that future educators have identified as helpful to increase their cultural competence include reflective journaling, writing their own autobiography, analyzing case studies, and engaging in small group discussion activities on diversity (Acquah & Commins, 2017; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). Educators benefit from putting what they have learned in the

classroom into practice, engaging in immersive experiences in order to gain firsthand knowledge, and participating in reflection exercises with their peers following implementation experiences.

For future administrators specifically, Weiner et al. (2021) found that there is a need for programs to better prepare these educators on how to lead courageous conversations on topics such as equity and discrimination. Some programs lack a diverse instructor population and do not include diversity among guest speakers. In addition, instructors have modeled microaggressions which have the power to reinforce discrimination (Weiner et al., 2021). If implicit biases and microaggressions are modeled to future administrators, there is the likelihood that these discriminatory practices are playing a role within institutional policies and practices, including their ability to lead conversations on equity and discrimination.

Teacher preparation programs would benefit from teaching an integrated approach between social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching (CRT). According to Donahue-Keegan et al. (2019), “No teacher can practice CRT unless the social-emotional dimensions of the students, the teacher, and the classroom community are taken into consideration” (p. 158). Teachers who are socially, emotionally, and culturally competent are more likely to successfully educate students from diverse backgrounds, including socio-economic, race, and culture. It is essential that teacher preparation programs cultivate social-emotional stamina in which teachers are taught how to successfully handle stressful situations with empathy and compassion (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Hammond, 2015). Minnesota Statute is clear that teacher education programs must train future teachers on culturally responsive teaching strategies (Teacher Preparation Programs, 2022). Donahue-Keegan et al. (2019) share their lessons learned for teacher preparation programs looking to improve their SEL/CRT model. First, restructuring a program requires buy-in and

support from a significant amount of the teaching faculty; one or two teachers can make changes to their curriculum, but they will need more support to make a shift in the overall program structure. Second, teachers who supervise student teachers should be asked to participate in the revision process so these skills can be transferred into the student-teaching classroom (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019). Lastly, a strong motivator for universities to move to an SEL/CRT model within their coursework is when states have state-mandated SEL competencies. Currently, 27 states have SEL competencies for K-12, and all states have SEL competencies for preschool (CASEL, n.d.b.).

The Education Trust (2023) developed a tool in order to help states and school districts understand how well their state is doing in prioritizing the social, emotional, and academic development of students by looking at current state policies. One critical policy area in order to support students' social, emotional, and academic development is Rigorous and Culturally Sustaining Curriculum. When looking at the state of Minnesota, there are specific areas that are identified as meets criteria, partially meets criteria, and does not meet criteria within state goals, policies and funding, and data collection (The Education Trust, 2023). The state meets criteria in its implementation of providing professional development and support to school districts in order to train teachers in culturally responsive curriculum and practices, which is reflected in the Minnesota Statutes for the outcome goals of professional development (Staff Development Program, 2022), and the state provides data on student enrollment in advanced courses on its website that is disaggregated by student demographics, including race and ethnicity (The Education Trust, 2023). Alternatively, the state does not meet criteria in creating public goals for enrolling students of color in advanced courses. Minnesota does not provide funding for school districts that are looking to purchase culturally responsive curriculum, and the state does not



provide guidance for school districts on how to choose culturally responsive curriculum that is aligned to state standards (The Education Trust, 2023). All state and school district leaders would benefit from looking at their state policies that are currently in place and advocating for change in the identified areas of need. Advocacy is needed by families, educators, and other supporters of the social and emotional well-being of students in order to ensure that SEL competencies and standards, as well as the integration of CRT, are in place in all states.

### *A Call for Structural Changes*

The current study shows that gaining positive student outcomes for all students can be challenging. One way that students' social and emotional competence can be improved is through explicit SEL classroom instruction that is taught in developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive ways (CASEL, 2023i; Schlund et al., 2020). The success of SEL in the classroom is greater when there is policy in place at the state level that supports the implementation of SEL in all schools, and many states have seen a lot of growth in this area (CASEL, n.d.b.). All states are in different phases of SEL implementation and integration with CRT (The Education Trust, 2023); it has taken advocacy at the state level in order for states to create SEL competencies that are required for teachers to integrate into their classroom instruction, and for institutions of higher education to integrate into their curriculum in order for new teachers to know and understand these competencies before they enter the classroom (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019). According to a scan of teacher certification requirements, all states require at least some teacher SEL in their requirements and over half of the states have certification requirements that focus on SEL competencies for students (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). Responsible decision-making, social awareness, and relationship skills were the most common teacher SEL skills that are required by states for preservice teachers to gain

certification; self-awareness and self-management were mostly absent. Likewise, the majority of states require preservice teachers to learn how to build students' responsible decision-making skills, relationship skills, and self-management skills; only about half of states require attention toward students' self-awareness and social awareness skills (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). Although steps have been taken, and some states are further along than others, more work is needed to advance the SEL skills of both teachers and students.

According to The Education Trust (2023), state leaders can advance how districts and schools are able to meet students' social, emotional, and academic needs by "prioritizing these policies in state goals, providing evidence-based and equity-focused guidance and sufficient funding, and ensuring data is publicly available" (para. 3). State leaders, school boards, and other district and school leaders can utilize resources that both The Education Trust (2023) and CASEL (n.d.b.) have created that indicate the extent to which states have policies for things such as culturally responsive curriculum, discipline practices, SEL competencies, creating a diverse educator population, and engagement with families and the community. These tools should give leaders an idea of areas of strength for their state, but also opportunities for growth. It is important to note that these tools do not indicate the level of implementation fidelity (The Education Trust, 2023); district and school leaders will need to assess their own level of implementation and areas for growth in order to implement SEL and CRT with fidelity.

Finally, states should have systems for accountability as it has important implications for student equity (The Aspen Education & Society Program and the Council of Chief State School Officers, 2017). First, state leaders should ensure that systems are in place where schools measure both proficiency and growth on social-emotional and academic measures. This is especially important in low-income schools for high-achieving students who often get

overlooked when school leaders and teachers focus specifically on proficiency (The Aspen Education & Society Program and the Council of Chief State School Officers, 2017). Second, states should ensure that schools are reporting school climate data, including attendance data, student engagement, discipline, and college and career readiness. Finally, accountability should be in place that is relevant to all stakeholders, including students, families, and community members (The Aspen Education & Society Program and the Council of Chief State School Officers, 2017). Not only will this encourage stakeholder voice, but it will also encourage a collaborative relationship between district and school leaders and all members of the school community.

### **Implications for Further Research**

Future research could include a qualitative research study that provides an opportunity for exploring meaningful transformative SEL teaching practices from the perspective of parents from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Families know their students the best and have important insights into students' experiences, cultural backgrounds, and educational needs (CASEL, 2023i; CASEL, 2023i). Parents and caregivers should act as advocates for their child's social and emotional learning needs, and this process can strengthen the impact that SEL implementation can have on students' learning (CASEL, 2023i; CASEL, 2023i; Schlund et al., 2020).

Another area for future research could include replicating this study utilizing specific school districts that implement an SEL curriculum and have a diverse student population. Classroom teachers that implement the SEL curriculum should be asked to complete the teacher survey to then be compared with student data. New student data should be collected in which the researcher can directly compare the student and teacher data. With a large sample size of

teachers, the researcher would hopefully be able to differentiate the teacher data by racial and ethnic groups.

There are a limited number of surveys that measure cultural competency, and even fewer that measure teachers' cultural competence. When measuring a topic that involves self-reflection of a sensitive topic, such as cultural competency, response bias is often present and was likely present in the current study. Future research could explore more creative ways to measure cultural competence in a way that would avoid response bias.

Although many school district's professional development plans and teacher preparation program curriculum focus on increasing cultural competence, including decreasing implicit bias and microaggressions, there is a gap between teacher knowledge and the enactment of these practices and interventions in the classroom (Romijn et al., 2021). In addition, there remains a lack of research on the effectiveness of the enactment of CRT in the classroom when teachers have the knowledge. Future research could address how CRT knowledge translates into positive student outcomes in the classroom and what conditions must be met in order for these positive outcomes to occur.

Finally, future research could incorporate a case study of a school that is currently implementing culturally responsive teaching practices in addition to a research-based SEL program with fidelity. This type of research could identify areas of success as well as struggles with implementation; meaningful practices for students; implementation effects on grades, behavior, and mental health; and collaboration with teachers, families, and the community. Overall, the goal would be to identify specific practices that can be effective in meeting the social and emotional needs of racially and ethnically diverse students.

## **Concluding Comments**

The impact that cultural responsiveness has on teachers' ability to implement culturally responsive SEL practices in the classroom is evident based on the results of the current study. Yet, the results also indicate that these practices are not positively impacting students' SEL competency outcomes across all students' race and ethnicity groups as expected. When students come to school, they bring their own lived experiences, cultures, and strengths (CASEL, 2023a). The social and emotional health and wellbeing of students plays a large role in students' success, however, teachers struggle to find culturally responsive ways of meeting the needs of their racial and ethnic diverse students (Barnes & McCallops, 2019). Even when teachers perceive that they are implementing culturally responsive strategies in the classroom, these strategies are not effectively meeting students' social and emotional competencies. School districts can foster the social and emotional needs of racially and ethnically diverse students by prioritizing a commitment to social justice through increasing teacher diversity, implementing culturally responsive SEL with fidelity, and focusing on professional development that has an equity lens and transfers into the classroom. In addition, teacher education programs can foster preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices by not only facilitating awareness and promoting cultural competence, but also prioritizing how teachers transfer this knowledge into their teaching practices. Finally, all stakeholders can advocate for change at the state level to ensure that all states have policies for ensuring a diverse educator population, culturally responsive curriculum, and SEL competencies. Proactive work, rather than responding to issues as they arise, will create genuine change (Applebaum, 2019). This change will positively impact students' social and emotional wellbeing and academic development now and into the future.

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## Appendix A

### Teacher Survey

CONSENT FORM: You are invited to participate in a study of the implementation of culturally responsive social-emotional learning (SEL) practices. You were selected to participate in this study because you are a licensed teacher in the state of Minnesota and this is the population for the current study. The results of this research will be included in a dissertation that is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in K-12 Administration from Bethel University in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take the Educators Scale of Student Diversity (ESSD) which is a measure of cultural competency, and answer questions regarding your implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices as identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). This survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, your participation will help us learn more about the relationship between cultural competence and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices and its benefit to students. At the conclusion of this study, you will receive a summary of the results.

There is a slight risk involved with the completion of this study in relation to gathering sensitive information. As part of the survey, you will be asked information related to your perceived cultural competence where you may be concerned about the implications of other school staff or administration's perceptions of your responses. However, any information obtained will remain confidential where only the researcher will have access to the data. In any written reports, only aggregated data will be presented and no one will be identifiable. If you agree to participate, you may decide to stop participating at any time. If you choose to withdraw, you will not be penalized.

This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel University's Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participants' rights, please contact researcher Sarah Rothstein at 651-470-7039, the dissertation advisor Dr. Judith Nagel at 612-221-8047, or Bethel's IRB Chair Dr. Peter Jankowski at 651-638-6901.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: You are making a decision whether or not to participate. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate.

- Agree
- Disagree

If Disagree is Selected, Then Skip to End of Survey

Thank you for your willingness to complete this survey. The teacher survey consists of three parts: Demographics, Cultural Competency, and social-emotional learning (SEL) teaching practices. Please answer all of the questions honestly as there are no right or wrong answers.

You will answer the demographic questions as indicated. For the remainder of the survey, please indicate the degree to which you strongly disagree to strongly agree with the set of statements.

When you have finished, please click the “Next” arrow at the bottom-left corner of the survey.

Thank you for your time!

## PART 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Are you currently employed as a teacher/educator in Minnesota?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip to End of Survey

2. Were you employed as a teacher/educator in Minnesota during the 2021-2022 school year?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip to End of Survey

3. During the 2021-2022 school year, what type of school were you employed by?

- Public/Charter school
- Private/Independent school
- I was not employed by a school, this is my first year teaching

4. During the 2021-2022 school year, what was your role in the school?

- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- School Counselor/Social Worker
- Other

If Other Is Selected, Define "Other"

5. During the 2021-2022 school year, what grade(s) did you teach in your position? (Check all that apply)

- PreK
- K
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- Transition

6. During the 2021-2022 school year, what were your total years you have been in your current position (count the school year as 1 year)?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30 years
- 31 or more years

7. During the 2021-2022 school year, what were your total years you have been a teacher (count the school year as 1 year)?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30 years
- 31 or more years

8. What is your highest level of education?

- Bachelor degree
- Masters degree
- Specialist degree
- Doctorate
- Other

If Other Is Selected, Define "Other"

9. How would you describe your ethnicity?

- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Not Hispanic or Latino/a

10. How would you describe your race?

- Asian
- Black or African American
- White
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Two or more races
- Other

If Other Is Selected, Define "Other"

11. Does your district's Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) plan focus on creating the conditions that promote social and emotional growth for all students (e.g., trusting relationships, welcoming learning environments, culturally relevant practices)?

- My school district does not implement an SEL program
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither disagree nor agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

12. During this 2021-2022 school year, what was the name of your school district?



## PART 2: EDUCATORS SCALE OF STUDENT DIVERSITY

13. Please indicate the degree to which you 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with the following set of statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The primary religions of a district's families should have their holidays represented in the school calendar (e.g., 10 day break for Christmas, 3 day break for Eid, 2 day break for Diwali, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Non-standard" English is not appropriate in academic settings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students should see cultures similar to their own in the curriculum.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Native American students do not require differentiated instruction based on their cultural background.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers should include sociopolitical context in their curriculum and instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers should take students' cultural backgrounds into account when planning instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The American educational system is designed to educate middle class students of European descent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers should help students from different cultures maintain positive attitudes about themselves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students of color are disciplined at an equal rate and manner as White students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The traditional classroom has been set up to support a middle-class lifestyle.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lower income families should be given financial assistance to live in wealthier neighborhoods in order for their children to attend better schools.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All teachers, including myself, have implicit bias that negatively affects their interactions with some students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Schools should offer students of color opportunities that are not open for White students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Society gives White people more privileges than people of color.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Racism pervades all aspects of society, including my educational workplace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Diversity in a school benefits all students more than homogeneity of ethnicity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers should be responsible for helping students develop positive attitudes towards different ethnic and cultural groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ethnicity of the teacher does not matter when educating students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Schools in higher income neighborhoods should receive less funding and resources than those in lower income neighborhoods.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers need to make an effort to learn something about all the various cultures represented in their classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All students benefit from a diverse staff and faculty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
White students benefit from attending a school of diverse staff and faculty more than from a school with a mostly White staff and faculty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## PART 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING STRATEGIES

14. Please indicate the degree to which you disagree or agree with the following set of statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I encourage student reflection on their own lives and society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I connect students' cultural assets to academic concepts and skills (e.g., relate material to students' lived experiences).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to create meaningful relationships with parents culturally different from myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I allow my students to productively challenge inequities that they see in my school and/or classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use data in order to identify disparities among my students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I actively encourage students to share about their experiences and cultural backgrounds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I ensure that students can see themselves in my classroom (e.g., different races and cultures are represented on my classroom walls, classroom materials are written by authors from different races and cultural backgrounds).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I facilitate learning about students' own culture and the culture of others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I encourage students to engage in collaborative problem-solving.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix B

### Teacher Survey Introduction and Reminder

Greetings,

My name is Sarah Rothstein, and I am conducting a research study looking at the implementation of culturally responsive social-emotional learning (SEL) practices. This study is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in K-12 Administration from Bethel University in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

I humbly request that you consider participating in my doctoral study to gather the perceptions of Minnesota teachers' cultural competency and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. The survey is entirely voluntary and confidential. It takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please see the attached informed consent document for additional information.

Your participation would be invaluable to my study, and I deeply appreciate your consideration of this request. In addition to this introductory email, one friendly reminder will be sent.

To begin this survey, click on the following link: XXX

If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at [sar39239@bethel.edu](mailto:sar39239@bethel.edu), or at 651-470-7039.

Respectfully,

Sarah Rothstein  
Doctoral Candidate  
Bethel University

Greetings,

This is a friendly reminder regarding my request for your participation in my doctoral study, which seeks to gather the perceptions of Minnesota teachers' cultural competency and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL practices. My sincere thanks to those of you who have already taken the survey. The survey is entirely voluntary and confidential. It takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please see the attached informed consent document for additional information.

If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at [sar39239@bethel.edu](mailto:sar39239@bethel.edu), or at 651-470-7039.

To participate, click on this link: XXX

Respectfully,

Sarah Rothstein  
Doctoral Candidate - Bethel University

## Appendix C

### Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) Questions

#### Academic Achievement

- How would you describe your grades this school year?

#### Self-Awareness

- I feel valued and appreciated by others.

#### Self-Management

- I find good ways to deal with things that are hard in my life.

#### Social Awareness

- I am sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.

#### Relationship Building

- I accept people who are different from me.

#### Responsible Decision-Making

- I say no to things that are dangerous and unhealthy.

#### School Connectedness

- Most teachers at my school are interested in me as a person.

## Appendix D

### MDE Survey Public Use Permission

## Minnesota Student Survey

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Information for schools about registering and administering the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) will be available in November 2021. Schools may begin preparing by viewing the [2022 Minnesota Student Survey Timeline](#) and information on the [Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment \(PPRA\)](#).

### What is the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS)?

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is one of the longest-running youth surveys in the nation. It is a triennial survey that began in 1989. The survey is an anonymous statewide school-based survey conducted to gain insights into the world of students and their experiences. The next MSS will be administered between January and June 2022 to students in grades five, eight, nine and 11.

[Learn more about the Minnesota Student Survey](#)

### Minnesota Student Survey Data

State, county and district results for 2013, 2016 and 2019 are available in [online interactive reports](#) and [downloadable PDF tables](#).

School-level results (in PDF format) may be available upon request by emailing [mde.studentsurvey@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.studentsurvey@state.mn.us).

State results by educational setting (since 2007), racial/ethnic group (since 2007), and sexual orientation (2019) are available on the [Minnesota Department of Health website](#).

Individual-level data files may be requested in order to conduct additional statistical analysis. The requestor must complete the [MSS Data Request Form and User Agreement](#).

## Appendix E

### ESSD Permission

**Ronak Patel** · 3rd+

Educational Researcher Using Quantitative and Qualitative Research  
Methods to Compose Insightful Narratives

---

TODAY

---



**Sarah Rothstein, M.A., LSC** · 2:10 PM

#### Permission for Doctoral Research

Dr. Patel,

I am a doctoral student at Bethel University in St. Paul, MN. I am messaging you in reference to your dissertation work, The Educators Scale of Student Diversity. I am wondering if I might be able to use the survey instrument in my dissertation on teachers' cultural competency and the implementation of culturally responsive SEL strategies?

Thank you for your consideration,

Sarah Rothstein  
Doctoral Student  
Bethel University

---

FRIDAY

---



**Ronak Patel** · 1:26 PM

Hey Sarah,

Of course you can use my instrument. What is your email? I can send over the items with desired answers and factors.

Thanks,  
Ronak



## Appendix F

### CASEL Permission

Sarah Rothstein <sar39239@bethel.edu>  
to info ▾

3:07 PM (6 hours ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

Good afternoon,

I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation looking at teachers' cultural competency, the implementation of culturally responsive SEL strategies, and student outcomes. I'm wondering if I need permission to use the questions found on this worksheet as part of my research questions: <https://drc.casel.org/uploads/sites/3/2019/04/SEL-and-Equity-Beliefs-and-Actions.pdf>

If I do need written permission, can you direct me to who I need to contact? Thank you!

Sarah Rothstein  
Doctoral Student  
Bethel University



Info Casel

to me ▾

3:00 PM (2 hours ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

Sarah,

Thank you for your inquiry to CASEL. We appreciate that so many find value in our work and want to share it broadly. You may use our framework and include it on your site. We just ask that you please credit CASEL and point to the original source if applicable.

Best,

The CASEL Team

**CASEL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning**  
815 W. Van Buren St., Suite 210  
Chicago, IL 60607  
312-226-3770 (main)

[casel.org](https://casel.org) | [Subscribe to CASEL's Newsletter](#)

⋮

## Appendix G

### CITI Program Certificate



Completion Date 08-Jan-2021

Expiration Date 08-Jan-2023

Record ID 40176285

This is to certify that:

**Sarah Rothstein**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

**Doctoral students - Basic/Refresher**

(Curriculum Group)

**Doctoral students - Basic/Refresher**

(Course Learner Group)

**1 - Basic Course**

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**Bethel University**

**CITI**  
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w3c9e7aa3-b46d-4e40-9373-5a0f6bf6b2e3-40176285](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w3c9e7aa3-b46d-4e40-9373-5a0f6bf6b2e3-40176285)

**Appendix H**  
**IRB Approval Letter**



**BETHEL**  
**UNIVERSITY**

Institutional Review Board  
3900 Bethel Drive  
PO2322  
St. Paul, MN 55112

July 14, 2022

Sarah Rothstein  
Bethel University  
St. Paul, MN 55112

Re: Project SP-50-22 Social-Emotional Learning and Teachers' Cultural Competency:  
The Relationship Between Implementation Practices and Student Outcomes

Dear Sarah,

On July 14, 2022, the Bethel University Institutional Review Board completed the review of your proposed study and approved the above referenced study.

Please note that this approval is limited to the project as described on the most recent Human Subjects Review Form documentation, including email correspondence. Also, please be reminded that it is the responsibility of the investigator(s) to bring to the attention of the IRB any proposed changes in the project or activity plans, and to report to the IRB any unanticipated problems that may affect the welfare of human subjects. Last, the approval is valid until July 13, 2023.

Sincerely,



Peter Jankowski, Ph.D.  
Chair, Bethel University IRB

## Appendix I

### PELSB Permission

**MN\_PELSB\_Data Request** <DataRequest.PELSB@state.mn.us>  
To: Sarah Rothstein <sar39239@bethel.edu>

Fri, Jul 8, 2022 at 3:18 PM

Sarah,

The data you requested is public data, so I can provide that for you. I can have it for you sometime the week of July 18<sup>th</sup> or July 25<sup>th</sup>. The timeline generally is dictated by how many data requests I have and the urgency of them. Since PELSB does not have a data analytics department I generally run the data requests amongst my other duties.

If you need the data before July 30<sup>th</sup>, please let me know what date you need it as I can use that to justify putting it before data that is not as urgent.

Thank you.

**Pilamayaye | Miigwech | Thank You**

**Katherine “Kat” Anthony-Wigle**

*Oglala Lakota, She/Her*

Licensure Compliance Specialist

[DataRequest.PELSB@state.mn.us](mailto:DataRequest.PELSB@state.mn.us)

**Minnesota Professional Licensing and Standards Board**

1021 Bandana Blvd East, Suite 222, Saint Paul, MN 55108

[pelsb@state.mn.us](mailto:pelsb@state.mn.us)