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IMPACTS OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING ON ADOLESCENTS

A MASTER'S THESIS

BY

SARAH SCHROEDER

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

NOVEMBER 2023

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

IMPACTS OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING ON ADOLESCENTS

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November 2023

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family, fiancé, and friends who cheered me on, supported me, and believed in me. I never could have imagined completing this piece without their overwhelming love and support.

ABSTRACT

In the last five years, schools have seen an increased need for social and emotional learning instruction geared toward adolescent students. Many teachers, staff members, and administrators have been encouraged to incorporate social and emotional learning into their daily routines and structures. The purpose of this thesis is to address the different research-based programming available for adolescents, the impacts, and where certain programming falls into the CASEL social emotional learning pillar framework. The research located for this literature review was located by limiting criteria to school-based programming that targeted the needs of adolescent learners. The results indicated that there are 25 research-based school programs that are geared toward adolescent students. Among these 25 programs: eight programs were found to be effective in fostering self-awareness and self-management, three programs were located that had impacts on social awareness and relationship skills, adolescence responsible decision-making had seven programs with outcomes in this area, and finally, there are seven programs that have impacts across multiple domains.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the term social-emotional learning has become a prominent buzzword in education settings across the United States. People may wonder what exactly social and emotional learning means, what it looks like, what it sounds like, and how it is applied to the classroom. The term social-emotional learning leads individuals to speculate that this learning helps individuals grow their social skills along with their emotional regulation skills; however, it means much more than that and it goes even deeper than simple social and emotional skills. Teachers can feel the pressure to incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) into their classrooms from their communities, districts, and administration without actually knowing how to assess student needs for them, plan for them, and implement them meaningfully. Education administrators repeatedly encourage their teachers to incorporate SEL into their daily and weekly lesson planning but often do not share how to do this or explain the impacts of this type of teaching. Since the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic, many teachers and districts experienced an even greater push for SEL and they are noticing the increased social and emotional needs of their students post-pandemic. The need for SEL programming is apparent and has become emergent in the last few years.

Social-emotional learning can be defined 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, 2023, para. 1). CASEL has become a well-renowned resource for locating SEL programming and identifying competencies students need to meet when state education systems do not have SEL standards. This literature review will follow the five pillars of SEL

competencies that CASEL has identified for the structure of this thesis. The five pillars include *self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making*. For the purposes of the organizational structure of this thesis and since the following areas are closely related to one another the literature review will be grouped and sectioned. The following categorical grouping will be used in the structure of chapter two: self-awareness and management, social awareness and relationship skills, and lastly, responsible decision-making. A section for various pillars was added for programs that had outcomes in multiple of the pillar categories. It should be noted that the various pillars section could potentially hold more promising results for school districts since there is evidence that the potential outcomes of these programs may have greater impacts on adolescent students.

Much of the current research and many of the current SEL programs focus heavily on early childhood through elementary school-aged students. This type of learning is equally, if not more important, for adolescents. During the upper elementary and middle school years, students encounter many changes that pose additional challenges to students' mental health and overall well-being. Students transition from elementary school to middle school and then onto high school all within a short period of time. These changes along with the physical, chemical, and emotional changes foist internal challenges that students have never experienced before. Social-emotional development is a key component to adolescent well-being, and students may find that they do not have the skills to grow in this area on their own. School districts and communities need to step in to support SEL programming and the staff that help implement it. The future of the world sits in the classrooms before us, which means our future is in their hands; we need to provide them with the tools to be resilient and determined, which is exactly what SEL can do for our students.

Research Rationale

Social-emotional learning to me has been somewhat of a mythical thing. This educational buzzword has been talked about in almost every professional development course, brought up at numerous staff meetings, and is a question at the end of each yearly review cycle with administrators. I was never explicitly told what this type of learning consists of, how it is created, or how it is taught effectively. The CASEL definition mentioned in the previous section is not a concrete answer for someone wondering how to meaningfully plan and implement SEL.

Over the first several years of my first teaching job, I asked many questions to my colleagues and administrators about SEL. I would hardly ever get a straightforward, explicit answer. I also searched the internet numerous times for quick ways to incorporate this mysterious learning into my daily teaching to no avail. Quick searches provide specific activities that supposedly are beneficial to students' SEL, but there are hardly any results that allow teachers to implement this kind of learning into consistent lessons, let alone for adolescents. There is a lack of clear guidelines as to what teachers can do to put it into practice. Another issue many teachers face is that school districts do not always opt to buy programs or curricula specifically designed for SEL, which leaves teachers scrambling to piecemeal content and materials they feel or think are related to SEL. The abstractness of SEL, the elusiveness of implementing strategies, and the lack of direct and explicit answers, especially for adolescents, caused concern and sparked my curiosity.

During adolescence, many students struggle to regulate their emotions which leads to inappropriate social interactions, lack of school engagement, and increased disciplinary referrals. The lack of a prescribed social-emotional curriculum pilots creates teacher frustration due to a lack of clear implementation strategies in their classrooms. This has only become more prevalent

since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. I have not gained much clarity about social-emotional learning in itself, but in my job and throughout my higher education I have learned from coworkers, administration, classmates, and professors that it is imperative to student success. I have set out to gain clarity about social-emotional learning itself along with the role this plays in increasing the academic and functional achievement of adolescent students such as the ones that I teach in my middle school classroom. There have been a plethora of studies surrounding preschool and elementary-aged students regarding the impact of effective social-emotional learning curricula in the classroom, but the research surrounding best practices with adolescents is sparse at best. Identifying and implementing research-based strategies and structures to promote social-emotional learning would likely lead to positive change for adolescent students, and I would like to understand the ways this type of teaching can improve outcomes for these students.

CASEL Background and Framework

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a theoretical framework that aims to provide research-based information regarding SEL. This non-profit organization began in 1994 to bring academics and social-emotional needs together for students. CASEL is a collaborative organization that works to weave all voices together to meet the needs of students academically, socially, and emotionally. This organization has banded together with parents, teachers, students, and districts to identify evidence-based practices that support student social and emotional learning (CASEL, 2023, para. 1-4).

The five pillars, *self-awareness*, *self-management*, *social awareness*, *relationship skills*, and *responsible decision-making* are all parts of their requirements for different SEL programming. CASEL aims for high-quality and evidence-based social-emotional learning for

all students by conducting and synthesizing research (CASEL, 2023, para. 1-6). These competencies are also beneficial to schools and districts in the way that the pillars can be used to identify need areas for students who are struggling.

Research Question

The following research is centered around these questions: What are the impacts of social-emotional learning on adolescents? What are the different outcomes of different research-based SEL programs? What programs are proven to be effective with adolescents? The purpose of this research is to identify programs and their impacts as well as the effectiveness of SEL programs for adolescents. This research will reveal the current programs that encompass essential components of SEL and have been proven to be effective, and it will outline the specific impacts educators might experience when implemented with fidelity.

The research gathered for this thesis incorporates studies from the United States, Turkey, Portugal, Malaysia, Spain, and Canada. Other research within this thesis also included Hispanic students, students receiving special education services, and English language learners. All of the programming identified in this research is solely focused on adolescents and in-school programming during the regularly scheduled school year. The focus of this literature review is to provide information regarding the programming available that targets the social and emotional needs of adolescents rather than children. Programming that has notable impacts on one or more categories of CASEL's five competency pillars was another main focal point. This thesis is not intended to specifically address the effects on special education students or English language learners. It is however intended to identify the current research and programming for adolescent learners in general. This thesis is limited by the amount of research present. There is much more

work that needs to be done in order to have a thorough and meaningful understanding of what SEL looks like in secondary education settings.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Search Procedures

The literature for this thesis was identified through searches of Educational Journals using ERIC, and SAGE, with publication dates ranging from 2014-2023. The articles were narrowed by reviewing empirical studies from peer-reviewed journals. Reports that focused on aspects of social-emotional learning for adolescent students in grades 5 through 12 within a school setting were gleaned for the purpose of addressing this thesis focus. The following keywords were used in the search for these publications: “social emotional learning”, “social and emotional learning”, “SEL in middle school”, “SEL in high school”, “SEL in adolescents”, “effect”, and “impact”.

Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning is described by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2023), 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” (para. 1). The use of social-emotional learning within secondary school settings has been shown to impact equity, partnerships, and learning environments, and empower students in various ways. There are numerous programs and strategies that claim to be SEL-focused, but not all of these programs are all-encompassing or necessarily have the effects that they are believed to achieve. The CASEL framework promotes a five-pillar framework to provide guidance components needed to positively impact students’ learning and development. The five pillars CASEL outlines

are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. When teachers, schools, or districts weigh out different SEL programming, the pillars should be considered to ensure maximal success in achieving the outcomes they are seeking. These pillars are similarly used in this thesis literature review to outline the targets as well as findings of SEL programming in school settings. It is important to note that the groupings used in this review are not individual; they are grouped by likeness and are done so similarly in CASEL materials.

Kasikci et al. (2021) set out to find the effect SEL has on academic achievement and happiness in middle school settings. The authors used the CASEL framework along with the World Health Organization (WHO) framework with 337 students from six different middle schools located in Erzurum, Turkey, through convenience sampling. They used self-report forms to collect data on personal information such as demographics and academic achievement, the Social Emotional Learning Skills Scale (SELSS), and the Adolescent Happiness Scale (AHS) to identify information related to their areas of focus. The study showed positive and significant relations between SEL skills and academic achievement for middle school students. It is important to note that this study took place virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic and relied heavily on self-report questionnaires and online student attendance. The authors theorized students who have high self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-efficacy also have high social-emotional skills. They also shared that, theoretically, students who have high self-management skills are able to effectively manage stress along with meeting goals that they set for themselves. All of these components are integral for student success in and outside of school settings.

The CASEL framework has also been studied to identify impacts on academic achievement, self-efficacy, peer, parent, and teacher support, parent involvement, and school climate. Fairless et al. (2021) had 378 students from a U.S. high school participate in their four-step data collection process. The authors collected data through student self-report on academic achievement, Social Emotional Learning through the Social Emotional Learning Scale (SELS), self-efficacy by using the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C), and school climate through the Delaware School Climate Survey – Students (DSCS-S). The Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (CASSS) and the Commitment to Achievement Measure were used to identify peer, parent, and teacher support as well as parent involvement. The group of researchers found that academic achievement and SEL were correlated, but not a statistically significant amount, which is different from Kasikci et al.'s (2021) research. This study also found statistically significant but weak connections between self-regulation, task articulation, and personal relationships, and SEL. Interestingly, SEL overall did not have a significant impact when other variables were present. Outside factors showed to have a larger impact on academic achievement than SEL did. Another notable finding was that student self-efficacy (students' belief in themselves to complete tasks or meet expectations) had the most significant impact on academic achievement; At the same time, this is believed to be an integral part of SEL, it is not directly a component of the five CASEL pillars.

The Second Step program was studied by Thierry et al. (2022). The Second Step program is aligned with the CASEL framework and has been implemented in all 50 states. This study consisted of 1,820 public school districts with 6,657 schools that participated. The study aimed to document data related to the SEL program, Second Step, regarding who implements it within school settings and the impacts of who facilitates the program. This study consisted of students

in grades K-8. Data was collected through the online Second Step platform and virtual school personnel interviews. Approximately 80% of the programs were facilitated by teachers, and 20% were facilitated by school counselors. It was found that there was low buy-in among administrators and teachers. Schools where the school counselors were implementing Second Step had more desirable outcomes than schools that had teachers implementing the program. Through the interviews, the authors concluded that teachers feel that they often need additional time to provide the capacity to facilitate SEL programs due to their hefty workloads. They also indicated that school counselors often do not feel supported and in turn, become burned out due to bearing the weight of running a school-wide program independently. The authors of the study suggest that counselors and teachers co-teach SEL curriculums until teachers are ready to implement them independently. This collaboration could bring a better understanding and higher levels of support for SEL in schools.

Self-Awareness and Self-Management

Throughout all school-aged settings, especially in secondary schools, teachers witness their students discovering themselves and managing the demands of school and home life. Social-emotional learning (SEL) programs often aim to enhance these key skills because of their integral impact on student's lives and life-long success. Programs such as the Personal and Social Responsibility model (TPSR-SEL), Focused Attention (FA), Open Meditation (OM), and Skills for Life target both self-awareness and self-management. Strong Kids and Strong Teens and, Positive Action Program (PA) mainly target self-awareness. Learning to BREATHE (L2B), Mastering Our Skills, and Inspiring Character (MOSAIC) target self-management.

The Personal and Social Responsibility model (TPSR-SEL) is a high school-level focused program. A study sought to find the effect of SEL on emotional intelligence (Arikan,

2020) in Turkey. This study was fairly small, with 82 student participants from various types of high schools in the intervention group. At the baseline, there were no significant differences in the data between high schools. For 16 weeks, students participated in lessons one day per week for a total of 32 hours across the study. Teachers were trained in the TPSR-SEL program and were supported throughout the delivery of the intervention through meetings, check-ins, and provided materials. At the end of each lesson, students completed a self-report evaluation using the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale to identify progress made throughout the process. The results showed that students who were part of the intervention had increased emotional intelligence scores, optimism, mood regulation, and appraisal of emotions compared to the control group. It should be noted that there was only one assessment used throughout the process to gather data, which could potentially weaken the findings of this particular study.

Mindfulness-based SEL interventions are focused on improving individual students' ability to become more self-aware and increase self-management skills. Culang et al. (2021) paired Focused Attention (FA) meditation with Open Monitoring (OM) meditation to identify impacts on mindfulness and stress reduction in at-risk high school-aged students. This study was comprised of three groups. The experimental group participated in mindfulness, and the active control group participated in quiet relaxation, and the passive control group had no training. The experimental group participated in mindfulness instruction each school day for nine weeks straight. The active control group was instructed to sit quietly and relax for three minutes each school day for nine weeks. The following things were measured throughout the study for data collection purposes: test anxiety by State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, emotional regulation by Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ), attention control by the Attentional Control Scale (ACS), and coping strategies by the COPE inventory. The findings of this study

showed that the experimental group had decreases in anxiety and increases in adaptive coping and emotional regulation. While the experimental group had positive outcomes, the active control group had no significant reductions in anxiety or coping through the quiet relaxation meditation intervention.

The Skills For Life (S4L) program was studied by Pannebakker et al. (2019) to identify how this program affects the self-efficacy and mental well-being of 7th, 8th, and 9th graders. There was a total of 38 schools that participated in the study; however, the schools were not entirely randomly selected due to contingencies made by some of the schools. There was a total of 18 schools and 30 classes in the experimental group and 9 schools and 14 classes in the control group. Data was collected through self-report questionnaires before the study, 12 into the study, and after 20 months of the study. Teachers also completed questionnaires on the psychological problem behaviors of each of the participating students at these times as well. Self-esteem, social interaction, self-efficacy, psychological problem behavior, and depressive symptoms. The final findings from the 20-month follow-up teacher reports showed significant improvements in problem behavior. Student self-reports displayed data to support that student depressive symptoms decreased compared to the control group's data. There was no significant data to support changes in self-esteem or positive social interactions.

In Texas, a school SEL yoga intervention was studied to identify impacts on Hispanic high school students (Sanchez & Kazen, 2021). This particular yoga intervention took place in a high school gym class where students voluntarily participated in a twelve-week intervention with 24 total yoga sessions. It is pertinent to note that the intervention took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the intervention was delivered virtually over ZOOM. There were 49 at-risk Hispanic students who participated in the intervention program. Data was collected

through self-report essay-style questions that were directly related to CASEL's five pillars. In the area of self-awareness, 53% reported that they learned and identified emotions more at the end of the intervention. The participants indicated that they developed an increased sense of self-awareness and ability to articulate their feelings. The study did not identify any significant data supporting impacts on social awareness or understanding peers with differing opinions. It is important to acknowledge that these results could have had a limited impact on social aspects due to this study taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further research should be conducted in order to understand the impacts this type of programming could have on social aspects of adolescent lives.

The StrongTeens program was adapted by Castro-Olivio (2014) to serve the Latinx population. In this study, the program was translated into Spanish for 102 Latinx students who were enrolled in intermediate-level English Language Development (ELD) support. The students were an average age of 14, and over half were reported to have been born in Mexico or another Latin American country. The intervention took place across five middle schools and two high schools in three separate Californian school districts with 75% of the students in middle school and the other 25% in high school. Students who lived in the U.S. for three or more years made up 48% while students living in the U.S. for less than three years made up 52% of the participants. There were four classrooms in the intervention group and four in the control group. It is important to indicate that the interventions were implemented by two bilingual teachers who had master's level education. These teachers participated in a four-hour training session and observed and met weekly with the principal investigator to increase success and consistency with implementation. The students in the intervention group were provided materials both in Spanish and English. Data was collected and measured through the Behavior Emotional Rating Scale

(BERS-2), a social validity questionnaire, and the Strong Teens Knowledge Test. The results showed that students liked the program, and they felt that they had learned valuable skills. Students also shared that they noticed positive changes in their peers and found the material to be relevant to their daily lives. While the data from this study was not heavily quantitative, it is still valuable since it addressed a gap seen in current SEL literature. Further research is needed in the area of English Language Learners in regards to SEL as well as other cultural differences from average U.S. students.

Mindfulness is tightly connected to self-awareness and self-management. The mindfulness program Learning to BREATHE (L2B) was studied in an ethnically diverse high school with a high level of at-risk students (Felver et al., 2019). Two health classes in New York were utilized to conduct interventions and collect data on the impacts of this study. One classroom received the intervention while one classroom was the control group. There was a total of 11 students who fully participated in the intervention group. The study was carried out over six sessions in the final quarter of the school year. The first and fourth authors conducted the intervention in the health classroom since they had extensive training in the L2B program. Data on the impacts were collected on psychosocial resiliency, psychosocial problem behavior, attendance, and student academic grades. The Social-Emotional Assets and Resilience Scales (SEARS-SF) were administered to collect data on psychosocial resiliency. The Behavior Assessment System for Children, third edition (BASC-3) was used to collect data on problem behaviors. School data systems were used to collect information regarding attendance and academic performance. The data showed that there was a large effect on psychosocial resiliency, while psychosocial problem behavior, attendance, and academic grades showed no significant changes. It is imperative to address that the intervention took place over state standardized

testing. The author noted that the standardized testing may have skewed the results due to heightened anxiety in student participants. Another concern that arises is that the sample size is relatively small, and the students were only from one school. Since students were from the same school it may have been obvious to students who were in the intervention group and who were in the control group which can also affect student self-report data. The study took place at the end of the school year, and a portion of the L2B program was carried out so students did not receive instruction on the full program.

The impact of social-emotional learning on character development was researched by MacDonnell et al. (2021) using the Mastering Our Skills and Inspiring Character (MOSAIC) program. In this study, there were a total of 255 participants from two schools in New Jersey who took part in the daily 15-minute advisory lessons, with the exception of the first week of school and state standardized testing weeks. The total intervention took place across two school years. The teachers were trained in two-hour workshops and had opportunities to participate in professional development throughout the study between the grades of 6th and 9th. The social-emotional character development (SECD) recollection was measured to identify students' recall of these skills. The School as a Caring Community Profile-II, Student Form (SCCP-II) was used to report on student-teacher relationships, school climate, student respect, friendship, and belonging, students' views about their ability to shape their own environment, and support and care by and for staff. Academic achievement was measured using student grade reports. This study showed that there were direct effects indicating that SECD reflection significantly predicted academic achievement. Data on student-teacher relationships showed to have indirectly positively impacted academic achievement. It is important to note that this study utilized grades to track academic achievement and that grading practices can be subjective, especially across

different schools. Further research should be conducted with other varying data collection methods regarding academic achievement.

Mahmud (2021) created a program based on a specific school's needs. The author sought to measure the effectiveness of his SEL program for 7th-grade students on their SEL skills, abilities, and academic performance. There were a total of 60 students who participated in six forty-minute sessions given by the author. Self-awareness and empathy were areas of focus and were targeted through direct instruction, acting, role play, computer-based support, and drawing. Data was collected through the Traid Emotional Intelligent Questionnaire Child Form (TEIQue-CF) to identify student emotional intelligence. The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) measured perspective taking, empathetic concern, fantasizing, and personal distress. The data showed that student emotional intelligence was significantly higher post-intervention while student empathy did not indicate changes.

Heart-Focused breathing (HF) is a mindfulness-based intervention that teaches students to focus on breathing and their heart rate to assist with school anxieties that was studied by Mcleod & Boyes (2021) in a rural high school near Alberta, Canada. There were 105 students who took part in the study, 35 of which were in the intervention group. Students in the intervention group received study skills instruction and the HF breathing technique instruction. They also used a HeartMath (HM) sensor and utilized an app called Inner Balance to track biofeedback. Students in the intervention group received instruction twice per week for 50-minute sessions from September to December. Data was collected after each instructional session, and students self-reported their biofeedback data from their Inner Balance app. The Test Anxiety Survey (TAS) and the Student Opinion Survey (SOS-SF) were completed to measure student test anxiety and well-being. Test-taking situations were simulated through reading

comprehension tests with similar difficulty levels. The participants were not graded based on their participation in the intervention and the data collection measures. A research assistant also conducted individual student interviews to collect data on qualitative measures related to experiences and personal student reflections. The data from the Test-Taking Self-Efficacy and Preparation Scale showed there was a significant interaction effect and medium effect size. Data related to worry about future social stress had a significant interaction effect and medium effect size. There were no significant findings in the area of negative perceptions of tests. The SOS-SF results were moderate and the social standing worry indicated decreased levels, but not at a significant amount. While the Positive Affect scale showed significant impacts, the effect size was small. The Negative Affect scale showed a significant interaction effect and medium effect size. The Stress Behaviors scale showed that there were no significant changes in the area of student responses to stressful stimuli. Overall, student feelings of test anxiety, social anxiety, and worry were reduced while self-efficacy and academic performance were increased among students in the experimental group. This study took place in one high school which makes the sample size small. Further research that incorporates various school settings, student populations, and socioeconomic statuses is needed to come to more definitive results.

Social Awareness and Relationship Skills

In secondary settings, students begin developing higher social awareness and start to identify their own and others' positive and negative relationship skills. Social-emotional learning (SEL) programs that focus on improving social awareness and relationship skills often target bullying, interpersonal relationships, or views on school climate and culture. In this research, there have been multiple studies that had positive outcomes regarding social awareness and relationship skills; however, there have been very few studies that have positive outcomes only

in these two areas. Many of the studies that have impacts on social awareness and relationship skills can be found in the “various pillars” section of this chapter. For the purposes of this literature review, there has been one identified study that heavily focuses on the areas of social awareness and relationship skills. One particular study weighs heavily on the relationship skills area, which will be addressed below.

Developmental Designs is a program that provides structured curricula for teachers to implement in classes such as advisory or homeroom. This specific program is directed toward middle school students to foster healthy relationships with one’s self, classmates, and teachers. Rivas-Drake et al. (2020) conducted a longitudinal study with 367 students in a suburban middle school in the midwestern United States. This particular study took place across three consecutive school years with the primary goal being minority students' SEL outcomes and impacts on ethnic-racial identities concerning the Developmental Designs program. To collect data on the effectiveness of the Developmental Designs program, students completed self-report questionnaires in their homeroom classes. The social-emotional learning practices data were collected by a survey created by the fourth author and the program developer. Ethnic-racial identities of students were identified through the Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS). Students also self-reported their ethnic-racial identifications, sex, and grade levels. After the three waves of data collection conducted at the end of each school year, the authors found that students reported having explored their ethnic-racial identity. There were also significant and positive correlations between ethnic-racial identity solutions and perceptions of teachers’ practices. There were also significant and positive correlations in waves two and three with student perceptions of school disciplinary actions. The results from this study were positive; however, the sample size is relatively small and only focuses on one area of the United States. Further research should

incorporate students from more diverse backgrounds as well as different areas throughout the U.S. to prove the data from this study is generalizable.

Neth et al., (2020) researched the Strong Kids Program in a suburban U.S. middle school. This study included 10 students in the intervention group with a total of eight completing the intervention sessions through the end of the study. Participants in this study were identified as having problem behaviors, academic grades significantly below grade level, substance abuse problems, and negative living situations. None of the participants were identified as special education students. The program was purchased by the school district, but teachers were not provided any formal training. The researchers met with the teachers implementing the instruction in 30-minute weekly sessions until teachers became familiar and comfortable with the program. Once teachers felt confident they moved to bi-weekly meetings with the researchers. Intervention students completed pre- and post-tests that included measures focused on internalizing and externalizing behaviors a week before and post-intervention. Students received instruction on the Strong Kids program once per week throughout the school year besides winter break. The Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) collected data on social skills, problem behaviors, and academic competency. The Strong Kids knowledge test was utilized to collect data on student understanding of Strong Kids content. The data displayed an increase in social-emotional knowledge with a medium effect size. There was very little change in externalizing behaviors while students' internalizing behaviors decreased at a medium effect size. This study had a small sample size with a total of 8 students. Since there were few participants, there needs to be further research that covers a larger range of students that is more reflective of the U.S. population.

The inspirED program is a secondary-focused initiative to incorporate problem-solving with SEL. This program is meant to better schools and communities through student-led projects.

Hoffmann et al. (2023) studied this program across 10 different states with 22 private, public, and alternative middle and high schools across the country. In total, there were 153 students who participated fully and completed projects related to their individual school's needs. Participants engaged in five asynchronous modules over the course of one school year. These modules were titled, *Getting Started, Assess, Brainstorm, Complete, and Debrief*. The inspirED student teams chose projects that related to their particular school's needs to improve their school climate. InspirED students completed an emotions matter evaluation to track team member attitudes. Each of the 22 schools that participated completed the following whole school surveys, the School Climate Walkthrough, the Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS), the Prosocial Behavior Intentions Scale, and a survey to report the impacts of the inspirED team projects post-experiment. The inspirED teams utilized the School Climate Walkthrough to identify their school climate need areas to assist them in choosing a project that suits their specific needs. The inspirED teams planned and conducted projects related to relationships among students, social safety, emotional safety, student-adult relationships, school pride, teaching quality, and respect for diversity. Projects created by students primarily incorporated technology such as videos, podcasts, online surveys, and online meetings. The data collected in this study revealed significant increases in a student's sense of purpose and emotions matter mindset. Student's sense of empowerment and their growth mindset did not show significant changes. There were statistically significant improvements in students' perceptions of teaching quality, sense of school pride, relationships among students, as well as emotional safety. It was found that there was a marginally significant increase in respect for diversity. There were no significant changes in school satisfaction, positive affect, negative affect, and prosocial intentions. Reports showed that over half of the students felt that their school's project helped

and made their school a better place. The results from this study suggest that the inspirED program can have significant positive effects. Implementing a program that encourages students to improve their school or community can lead students to find more meaning in their lives and push them to find their passion. The limitations to this program could be costs associated with student projects, and student and school buy-in. It is important to note that this study did not have a control group which can make it difficult to understand the true impacts since there was no comparison group.

Social awareness and relationship skills fall within the same category since they are so closely interrelated. This category of SEL is imperative to student success since it aids collaboration, a sense of belonging, and self-esteem, along with many other components. These two categories are ones that are life-long skills individuals need to obtain in order to be successful adults. Many skills built during adolescence carry into adulthood which increases the pertinence of growing these skills.

Responsible Decision-Making

Middle school and high school students can find themselves losing interest in school, getting distracted by relationships, and being tempted by peer pressure, at this age. Programming that targets decision-making can have potential impacts on students' futures, academic and social success, health, well-being, and behavioral tendencies.

A study by Deli et al. (2021) sought to find the effects of SEL programming on learning anxiety and dropout intention. They utilized a combined method with SEL and Teacher Autonomy Support (TAS) called TASSEL. The SEL program the authors used was the Strongkids curriculum. They had a total of four intervention groups with 209 eighth-grade students in Qinzhou City, Southwest China. The authors also looked at the differences in

outcomes based on delivery staff person. The intervention groups were separated by SEL taught by a regular teacher, SEL taught by a psychology teacher, TASSEL implemented by a regular teacher, and TASSEL implemented by a psychology teacher. To measure the outcomes, students were given a 20-question self-report questionnaire before and after the intervention to identify SEL knowledge. The Children's Dominant Anxiety Scale and the Learning Anxiety Index were used to identify levels of learning anxiety. Dropout intentions were measured by the "intentional to persist versus drop out" scale. The General Causality Orientation Scale (GCOS) measured motivation along with autonomy, control, and impersonal in an individual. Lastly, the Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ) identified the degree to which individuals felt supported. The results of this study showed that TASSEL groups showed higher levels of positive learning climates. The group that was instructed with TASSEL by the psychology teacher had higher levels of increasing SEL knowledge as well as decreased intentions to drop out. Learning anxiety was significantly reduced in the group with regular Strongkids SEL taught by the psychology teacher. The SEL group taught by the regular teacher showed to have reduced learning anxiety, but not as significantly as the groups taught by the psychologist teacher. Overall, the type of teacher conducting the SEL intervention played a significant role in student learning anxiety levels and intentions to drop out. All SEL-based interventions in this study had the desired impacts on learning anxiety as well as drop-out intentions. This study may raise questions about how schools can increase this impact for regular teachers since not all schools have the means to employ psychology teachers.

The Second Step program is a universal classroom intervention for grades 6-8 that targets inappropriate classroom behaviors (i.e., aggression, impulsivity, etc.), social skills, empathy, school connectivity, and student assumptions of conventional norms about drug use

(Espelage et al., 2015). A 3-year longitudinal study using the Second Step program consisted of 36 schools across Illinois and Kansas with a total of 3,651 students in sixth grade at the start of the study. This study aimed to identify the impacts of Second Step on bullying, cyberbullying, homophobic teasing, and sexual harassment. Students were randomly assigned to control and intervention groups. Each student who participated completed questionnaires that focused on their involvement in bullying, cyberbullying, homophobic name-calling, sexual harassment, and delinquency. Over the three-year study, it was found that there were decreased levels of delinquent behaviors over time. The most significant effects of the Second Step program were reductions in bullying and aggressive behaviors. There was no notable evidence of a reduction in sexual harassment.

The Second Step SEL program was also used in an evaluation related to students receiving special education services (Espelage et al., 2016). There was a total of 123 students receiving special education services from Illinois and Kansas with 47 in the intervention group and 76 in the control group. None of the students were on 504 plans, and students who were deaf/hard of hearing were not included. Teachers were trained on the Second Step curriculum and supported throughout the study. Student self-report and disability data were used to gather information for this study. To identify feelings of school belonging, the authors utilized the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM). The Empathetic Concern (EC) scale measured levels of empathy. Caring behaviors were measured by the Caring of Others (COO) scale. Student's willingness to intervene in bullying was tracked through the Willingness to Intervene in Bullying Episodes scale. Districts provided data on individual student grades and state standardized testing scores to note achievement data. There was a total of four data collection periods in this study. After the fourth period of data collection, it was determined that

there were no statistically significant differences in any of their final data. The authors emphasized that there were significant increases in willingness to intervene in bullying and that student grades increased on average from a C to a B+ in the intervention group, and that students who used the Second Step program performed better on standardized assessments than peers in the control group.

Skills For Life is a program that addresses the reduction in behavioral and health problems while also improving pro-social behavior, self-awareness, social awareness, self-control, interpersonal skills, as well as ethical decision-making. (Fekkes et al. 2016). This program is based on Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). The study conducted by Fekkes et al. (2016) took place over the span of two years in Dutch schools with a total of 1,394 students in grades 7-9. There were 24 schools that participated in the intervention group and 14 schools that were part of the control group. It is important to note that the control schools were more likely to be from an urban area than the intervention schools. The teachers who provided instruction for the Skills For Life intervention were trained in two three-day content training and were provided with two additional enhancement sessions. Data was collected at three different points through self-report questionnaires that focused on health behaviors, alcohol use, cannabis use, sexual harassment (being forced to do sexual things that they did not want), bullying, suicidal ideation (only measured once), and suicidal attempts. The study had five out of 29 teachers give all sixteen lessons. Ten of the teachers gave less than ten lessons. The experimental group showed to have a decrease in alcohol use while they had an increase in the use of tobacco. Students who participated in the experimental group were shown to be bullied less and bully others less. Data shows that the students in the experimental group were more likely to force

others to do sexual things than the control group. The outcomes from this study should be used with caution due to the majority of the intervention group not fully completing the instruction.

Moore McBride et al. (2016) studied the Teen Outreach Program (TOP) and the effects of preventing academic disengagement. The TOP focuses on teaching social and emotional skills through curriculum, experiential learning, and service learning. The study included two public schools in the Midwest. Students in a Master's of social work program implemented the program and attended a week of training for 40 hours total. The school that participated in the intervention had a total of 661 students from grades sixth to eighth, with 69.4% qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. For the purpose of the study, 112 seventh graders directly participated in the intervention. The control school had a total of 1,028 students enrolled in sixth to eighth grade, with 97.2% qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. Data was collected through student self-report surveys. The study collected data on levels of school belonging through the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale, emotional engagement through the Engagement versus Disaffection With Learning (EvsD) Measure, behavioral engagement through the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scale (PALS), civic duty through a 12 item scale, and school disciplinary events through self-report on academic behaviors as well as social behaviors. The intervention school had 75.6% of their students complete the pre- and post-test self-report questionnaires in their entirety and the control school had 70.2% of their students complete the pre- and post-test questionnaires. The comprehensive results showed an average of a two-point decrease in emotional engagement while student academic efficacy in the control group decreased by 1.43 points. The authors mentioned that the results showed that students who were part of the intervention group were less likely to skip class without permission and to have failing grades than the control group. While the emotional engagement and academic efficacy

data show negative correlations with the TOP the authors noted that the other results suggest that intervention students were more likely to make positive choices related to positive academic and behavioral outcomes.

The Titans's Learning Centre (TLC) program targets at-risk students to engage students in their schoolwork, learn social skills, and expand on their social behaviors in expected ways (Main & Whatman, 2016). A study was conducted by Main and Whatman (2016) in Australia. It is unclear how many participants actually took part in this study; however, it is apparent that there were 15 different feeder schools that identified students who were at-risk and disengaged from school work. This intervention lasted for 10 weeks over the course of three years. Qualitative methods such as field observation, document analysis, and interviews were used throughout the study to gather data. Field observations along with the Productive Pedagogies Reflection Tool (PPRT) documented teacher practices and student behaviors when participating in the TLC program. The results from this study were not quantitative but qualitative and indicated that teachers' techniques were mainly focused on connectedness which had a positive impact on the student learning environment. Students had improvements in the areas of self-image, self-esteem, resilience, and social skills. This particular program should be researched in greater depth. The study at hand does not have evident information regarding the participant pool, data collection, and overall impacts on students. The information presented in this study is heavily qualitative, which can cause concern for being subjective rather than objective as quantitative data can often provide.

The Positive Action Program (PA) was studied by Silverthorn et al. (2017) in 18 schools in Chicago to determine the impacts of the program on adolescent self-esteem levels. This study took place over the course of six years, starting in early adolescence, third grade, until eighth

grade. Initially, the intervention group started with 624 students, and by the end, there were 363 students due to low-income student mobility, which is consistent with Chicago Public School trends. The authors measured student self-esteem levels with the Self-Esteem Questionnaire (SEQ) and the Self-Esteem Formation and Maintenance Questionnaire, which identified student attitudes as well as adaptive and maladaptive behaviors. The study showed that the PA program had significant impacts over time on peer self-esteem, school self-esteem, the use of adaptive self-esteem, and maintenance strategies. Schools that completed the PA program had a smaller decline in score measures over time when compared to the control group. Results indicated that students in the PA group also had higher school and peer self-esteem levels. They also had a greater use of adaptive processes of self-esteem formation and maintenance, and greater motivation to maintain their self-esteem. There were no notable changes in the area of global self-esteem. The main hindrance to this study was the attrition of students.

Quiet Time Transcendental Meditation (TM) was studied in a middle school setting with a group of 101 sixth-grade students (Valosek et al., 2019). There were 51 students who took part in the intervention group and received five instructional sessions on the technique. Students in the intervention then practiced the TM each day for 10 minutes at the beginning of the day and 10 minutes at the end of the day. Participants were encouraged to continue practicing their meditations at home and on the weekends. Teachers were the primary instructors of TM and had three group meetings to check the fidelity of the implementation. There was a total of six teachers instructing the experimental group and six teachers teaching the control group. Data was collected through the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) teacher report to identify student decision-making, goal-directed behavior, personal responsibility, relationship skills, and optimistic thinking. Students completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

(SDQ) Emotional Symptoms scale. The results from the study showed a significant increase in overall social-emotional competency in the experimental group. The experimental group had all test items that showed improvements. Students who were below average at the baseline measure had the most significant improvements in their social-emotional competency. Experimental group students who were above average at the time of the baseline measure showed a significant decrease in emotional distress compared to the control group. Overall the TM program could potentially be beneficial for SEL. The limitations of this study are the small sample size, lack of varied measures, and lack of formal training for teachers.

Fostering student's decision-making skills has the potential to directly impact their futures. Many students do not naturally have stellar impulse control or executive functioning skills. The lack of these skills can lead to unwanted or undesirable consequences that can taint student self-efficacy. Students do not always fully understand the outcomes of their decisions and what repercussions they may face. When decision-making skills are directly targeted, students' futures are directly impacted. Programming that addresses this area has the potential to be the most impactful long-term.

Various Pillars

Programs that cover one or two of the CASEL pillars with significant success are ideal for schools and districts to invest in, but ideally, programs that cover three or more pillars can be more enticing for students, teachers, communities, and districts to invest time and money into. However, programs that have significant results and address three or more pillars thoroughly are difficult to come by.

MindOut was studied by Dowling et al. (2019) through the lens of secondary education. They targeted the impacts of SEL on disadvantaged students in high school settings. MindOut

was used as an intervention with 497 students between the ages of 15-18 across 30 schools in Ireland. Students participated in a total of 13 weekly lessons that were taught by trained teachers. Student self-reported measures included self-esteem, emotional regulation, and mood scales. Coping strategies, self-efficacy, and interpersonal competencies were measured through questionnaires. Student mental health and well-being were also reported on. Teachers completed the School Achievement Motivation Rating Scale (SAMRS) to identify teacher's points of view related to student academic motivation, desire to do well, and ability to overcome challenges. All of these measures align with the CASEL framework to identify which areas of competency had significant results from the MindOut program. The results from the study showed significant impacts on reduction in avoidance coping behaviors and decreased levels of self-reported stress and depression symptoms, and females showed a significant reduction in feelings of anxiety, which heavily hit on the self-awareness and self-management pillars. The data also showed that there were increased levels of social support, which touches the social awareness and relationship skill pillars.

Las-Hayas et al. (2019) used the UPRIGHT project to study a schoolwide approach to promote mental health and well-being. This program targets students between the ages of 12 and 14 and includes families as well as community members. In this study, the authors incorporated thirty-four schools from five different European countries with 3,767 students from a multitude of various backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. The facilitators of this study were mental health professionals from seven different European organizations. Students from Spain, Italy, Poland, Denmark, and Iceland participated within their regular school schedules and programming. Mental well-being, resilience, quality of life, perception of stress, behavioral issues, mental health disorders, and school resilience were measured through self-report

questionnaires. The individual school records were utilized to measure attendance and disciplinary referrals. The study's results showed that after the intervention, female students had a decrease in involvement in bullying and substance use while the male population had the highest positive impact on mental health and well-being. The experimental group's results had fewer reports of mental health issues when compared to the control group. The benefit of a school-wide targeted program like this one is that students with mental health problems get some of their needs met directly, and since their peers are going through the program as well the stigmatization of mental health issues is lessened. This study supports the theory of incorporating mindfulness-based SEL interventions in secondary settings to improve well-being among students.

Speaking to the Potential, Ability, and Resilience Inside Every Kid (SPARK) is a program for students in early adolescence that aims to minimize risk factors, construct resiliency, encourage well-being, and increase academic achievement. This pre-teen program targets students ages 10 through 13, the key ages where students experience transitions from elementary to secondary school, as well as experience many hormonal changes. Green et al. (2021) studied the SPARK program with 356 students in a southern U.S. school district, including two middle schools over the span of two semesters across two consecutive school years. Students who participated in the study completed self-report questionnaires to identify the data for different components of this study. Student level of curriculum knowledge was tracked through SPARK's Three Principles Inventory (3PI). The Communication, Decision-Making and Problem-Solving (CDP) scale was administered to identify these specific skills in pre-teen students. Emotional regulation difficulties were measured by the Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS-SF). Lastly, levels of student resilience were calculated by the Resiliency Scales for

Children and Adolescents (RSCA). The study found that 85% of the intervention students had significant changes in their knowledge of this curriculum. The CDP results indicated that 78% of the intervention students had significant changes. Of the intervention students, 69% of them improved their emotional regulation skills. Similarly to the communication, decision-making, and problem-solving data, 78% of intervention student's resiliency improved. Overall, the SPARK program showed improvements in each of the identified areas of CASEL.

The Positive Action Program (PA) was studied by Stalker et al. (2018) in North Carolina. This longitudinal study took place over the course of five years and had more than 7000 student participants from 38 different public schools. The 26 middle schools and 12 high schools were part of two low-income, racially and ethnically diverse rural counties. One county was the intervention group and the other was the control group. The first year of the study began at the middle school level with grades sixth through eighth. By the end of the study, participants ranged from grades sixth through twelfth. Students who received PA instruction for four years were followed to measure the impacts over time at the five-year mark. The intervention group received PA instruction two to three times per week in a health or social study class. Teachers were provided training and then were observed throughout the study to ensure fidelity of implementation. Incentives were given to teachers for meeting the requirements of PA instruction. On average, teachers instructed 26 lessons per year. Data was tracked through a modified version of the School Success Profile (SSP +). This measured adolescent perceptions and attitudes about school, friends, family, neighborhood, self, health, and well-being. School hassles were measured to identify student experiences with verbal, physical, and relational victimization, as well as being disrespected by someone at school. Students were also asked to report on whether they had ever used alcohol. The Youth Self-Report (YSR) was used to identify

student aggression and anxiety. Students also self-reported symptoms of depression. The study results indicated a significant impact on decreased school hassles. This result suggested improvements in the school climate. Indirect impacts included decreases in alcohol use, aggression, depression, and anxiety. The authors suggest that the indirect impacts are due to the direct impact of school climate. It is important to highlight that there were no direct impacts on alcohol use, aggression, depression, or anxiety. The authors encourage schools to focus on improving school climate to improve well-being among students. This study included two districts from one state, which can cause concern due to the sample size being representative of one area of the country.

Lemberger-Truelove et al. (2021) studied the impacts of mindfulness-based interventions (MBI) with the combined programs, Advocating Student-within-Environment (ASE), a theoretical approach, and the Learning to Breathe (L2B). The ASE approach is a theoretical approach that incorporates humanistic counseling, social justice advocacy, neuroscience, SEL, and contemplative mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs). While L2B is a psychoeducational program that incorporates MBIs, and for this study, it was minimized from an 18-week intervention to a six-week program with 45-minute sessions in consultation with the L2B creators. The adjusted L2B program honed in on MBI practices that easily aligned with classroom instruction and practices. The reason the authors added the ASE theoretical approach is because ASE aims to focus more on “students’ inner and social awareness, integration, flexibility, and intentionality” (Lemberger-Truelove et al., 2021, p. 3). This particular study took place in one district in six different classrooms across two Title I middle schools, with 51 students in the intervention group and 65 in the control group. Baseline data was collected a week before the intervention started. The intervention was instructed by a school counselor who

was trained both on the ASE theory and the pertinent L2B components. This counselor met with the authors in weekly 3-hour sessions to ensure fidelity, discuss highlights, and receive additional support. Data was collected through student self-reports via the Five-Dimensional Curiosity (5DC) scale and the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF). These measures collected information on joyous exploration, deprivation sensitivity, stress tolerance, social curiosity, thrill-seeking, inhibition, shifting, emotional control, monitoring, working memory, planning and organizing, organization of materials, and initiating task completion. The results showed significant differences in student stress tolerance and social curiosity. In the area of executive functioning, intervention students showed an increased ability to inhibit distracting stimuli, shifting, planning, organizing, and task management. The impacts on academic achievement were seen in English, science, and social studies; there was no significant impact in the area of math. These findings should be researched further since this specific study does not have a large number of participants, is from one single school district, and has a relatively short intervention timeline. Another potential concern is that this is a counselor-implemented program and is not classroom teacher-based, which can become a burden on the school counselor's already large list of responsibilities.

The Positive Attitude (PA) program is for students in 7th through 9th grade and follows the CASEL framework. The PA program adopts the Social Learning Theory and the ABCD model of development (Coelho et al., 2017, p. 295). The PA program was studied by Coelho et al. (2017) in Portugal to determine the impact of the PA program on improvements in student SEL, the differences between boys' and girls' improvements, and whether students with SEL instruction who originally are low in these skill areas show a significant improvement. In this study, there were 472 students in the intervention group and 156 in the control group across 33

classes at the middle school level. It is important to note that the data presented in this study was part of a larger study and only examines the data from pre-intervention to post-intervention. Data was collected using the Bateria de Socialização-3 (BAS), which measures five dimensions: self-control, social awareness, leadership, social isolation, and social anxiety. The results of this study indicated that the PA program improved the social and emotional skills of students in the intervention group. The results for impacts on social anxiety showed non-significant decreases after year 1 and after year 2 of the intervention. The effects of SEL and gender showed that females from the intervention groups had significant gains compared to the females in the control groups, while the males had no significant differences across groups. There were significantly increased levels of self-control for both male and female intervention students. The results also showed that students who had low levels of social-emotional competencies indicated benefits in the area of social awareness. The PA program shows promise in helping students meet some of the CASEL competencies, but there should be further research on this program with middle school-aged students to ensure these findings are able to be replicated across different cultures, socioeconomic statuses, and areas of the world.

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) program intends to capitalize on adolescent strengths through resources and opportunities to inspire students to take control of their development. Ross and Tolan (2018) conducted a longitudinal study that started with 1,717 fifth-grade students across 40 cities in 13 states in the United States and followed students through high school. To account for attrition in this longitudinal study, the authors added appropriate amounts of students throughout the study across the years. Data was collected for this study in the areas of social and emotional learning, school engagement, grades, risk behaviors, delinquency, and depressive symptoms. The Selection, Optimization, and

Compensation (SOC), Target-Based Expectations Scales (TBES), Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors scale (PSL-AB), Peer Support Scale (PSS), and the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents and Children (SPPA/SPPC) were utilized to gather information regarding social and emotional learning. The PSL-AB was also used to measure school engagement, grades, risk behaviors, and delinquency. The Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression (CES-D) scale was used to identify depressive symptoms. This study used the CASEL framework as a type of assessment. Once the study was completed the data was evaluated in each of the five competency areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The results showed significant outcomes for a decrease in risky behaviors, a decrease in depressive symptoms, a decrease in delinquency, and an increase in grades. School engagement did not have significant results. This study sought to identify specific components of the five areas of SEL. The authors came to the conclusion that the following categories fit CASEL's framework. Depressive symptoms related to the area of social awareness, risky behaviors, and delinquency to the area of responsible decision making, risky behaviors, depressive symptoms, and delinquency also fell into the relationship skills area. Grades, school engagement, delinquency, and depressive symptoms fell into the self-awareness category while the only component of self-management was marked as school engagement.

Programming that encompasses multiple pillars of the CASEL SEL framework are often seen as ideal programs for schools to purchase, although there is more needed to aid their success. Through the research in this section, it is evident that when these programs are implemented with fidelity they have greater results. Schools and districts that want to see great outcomes also need to be able to support their staff with continuous training and ways to hold their staff accountable in the implementation process.

CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of the Literature

Social and emotional learning can be identified as the process by which students learn social and emotional skills. These skills can be identified through the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework using the five pillars of SEL. The pillars, *self-awareness*, *self-management*, *social awareness*, *relationship skills*, and *responsible decision-making* are all important components of developing a student's ability to be a successful learner, member of society, and employee. The term social-emotional learning has become a broad term used to describe student needs outside of academics. Through this literature review, it has become apparent that there are programs that can build on each of the pillars of SEL for adolescent students, but there are not a plethora of them for this age group.

Student self-awareness and self-management had the largest impact among the studies located for this thesis. Many of the interventions in this section of chapter two were mindfulness-based and shown to be effective in the reduction of student anxiety and the improvement in coping strategies, as seen in the Focused Attention and Open Meditation studies conducted by Culang et al. (2021). Renditions of the Strong Kids/Teens programs were addressed repeatedly throughout the literature and had mentionable success with cultural and linguistic adaptations (Castro-Olivo, 2014). The Learning to BREATHE (L2B) program was another one that was studied more than once. In relation to self-management and self-awareness, this program had a significant effect on psychosocial resiliency, which is a major part of SEL. Another notable intervention that was conducted by McLeod and Boyes (2021) was the

Heart-Focused breathing mindfulness intervention. This study showed that student's test anxiety and had improved high school student's overall well-being. The studies in this section of chapter two had evidence of the potential positive impacts that SEL programming had not only on students' self-awareness and self-management but also on their well-being and academic performance.

Several different researchers targeted social awareness and relationship skills. It is not evident that these researchers were blatantly aiming for these competency areas; however, the results of these studies indicated impacts in social awareness and relationship skill areas. These studies showed to heavily focus on bullying, interpersonal relationships, and school climate. The advisory or homeroom program known as Developmental Designs has been shown to foster healthy relationships among middle school students (Rivas-Drake et al., 2020). The Strong Kids program studied by Neth et al. (2020), which is the predecessor to the Strong Teens program, showed an increase in social-emotional knowledge, and students showed a decrease in internalizing behaviors. The project-based program, inspirED indicated improvements in students' sense of purpose, and student perceptions of teaching quality, emotional safety, student relationships, and respect for diversity (Hoffmann et al., 2023). These studies showed to have potential impacts on social awareness and relationship skills and should be focused on in future research since this is such an integral part of adult life.

Responsible decision-making plays a large part in students' current lives and their futures. Deli et al. (2021) studied Teacher Autonomy Support (TAS) through the lens of SEL (TASSEL). This study showed to have more positive learning climates when the instruction was delivered by a psychology teacher. Student dropout intentions also were reduced, along with student learning anxiety. The outcomes were more impactful when the instruction was delivered

by a psychology teacher which brings up the question of how this can be replicated with regular classroom teachers. The Second Step program was implemented in a middle school and showed to have significant decreases in bullying and aggressive behaviors (Espelage et al., 2015). This same program was studied by Espelage, et al. (2016) with students with disabilities in mind. This study showed that there was increased willingness to intervene in bullying, improved academic grades, and improved performance on standardized assessments. The Teen Outreach Program (TOP) had positive effects on academic and behavioral outcomes (Moore-McBride et al., 2016). The TLC program researched by Main and Whatman (2016) focused on teacher techniques, and the results showed to have a positive impact on learning environments, student self-image, self-esteem, resilience, and social skills. The Positive Action Program (PA) was a 6-year study that had significant impacts on adaptive and motivation to maintain self-esteem (Silverthorn et al., 2017). Lastly, the Quiet Time Transcendental Meditation (TM) study was facilitated by Valosek et al. (2019) and indicated significant increases in social-emotional competencies and decreases in emotional distress. Adolescents need instruction on responsible decision-making to assist them with school engagement and future success.

Several studies fell under multiple categories and did not fit into one single section of the literature review. These studies have the potential to be quite impactful since they encompass multiple CASEL pillars. Dowling et al. (2019) studied the impacts of the MindOut program and found that it had significant improvements in student self-esteem, emotional regulation, mood, coping strategies, self-efficacy, interpersonal competencies, and well-being. Another study conducted by Las-Hayas et al. (2019) explored the schoolwide UPRIGHT project with European students. The UPRIGHT project's results showed positive impacts on mental health, resilience, stress, and behavioral issues. The SPARK program aims to target resiliency, well-being,

minimizing risks, and academic success. There are potential successes with communication, decision-making, problem-solving, emotional regulation, and resilience (Green et al., 2021). The Positive Action Program (PA) was studied by both Stalker et al. (2018) and Coelho et al. (2017) and shown to have impacts related to multiple CASEL pillars. The study conducted by Stalker et al. (2018) showed a significant effect on decreasing school hassles. This indirectly impacted the reduction of alcohol use, aggression, depression, and anxiety that students reported. Coelho et al. (2017) took place in Portugal, and the results indicated significant improvements in self-control and self-awareness. Lemberger-Truelove et al. (2021) studied the combination of mindfulness-based interventions paired with the Advocating Student-within-Environment (ASE) and the Learning to BREATHE (L2B) program. The outcomes indicated significant improvements in stress, social curiosity, executive functioning, and academic performance. Lastly, the Positive Youth Development (PYD) program improved SEL and decreased risk behaviors, delinquency, depressive symptoms, and academic performance. Programming that covers three or more CASEL pillars is seemingly rare and highly sought out by school districts. These programs have the potential to have greater impacts than programming that covers one or two SEL pillars.

Limitations of the Research

This literature review fixated on the impacts of SEL programming directed toward adolescents in school settings. The research collected for this literature review was narrowed down to focus on the last 10 years. The dates selected to be included in the results of this thesis ranged from 2014-2023, which encompasses the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and started to impact students in the United States in 2020. The peer-reviewed academic journals were located through ERIC and SAGE databases.

Initially, the intention was to only focus on studies completed in North America. The literature surrounding adolescents and social-emotional programming is sparse at best. Much of the current research is geared toward preschool and elementary school-aged children. Since there was such limited research, it was determined to be appropriate to broaden the focus to incorporate studies conducted in other countries. By including research done in other countries in this research, additional perspectives were brought in on the social and emotional needs of adolescent students in various cultural settings. The majority of the peer-reviewed academic journals took place within the United States school settings. To limit the research it was found to be appropriate and more relevant to only include studies that took place in more traditional school settings rather than summer programming, after-school programming, or homeschooling.

It was imperative to focus on SEL programming that supported adolescence because the literature is quite limited. Adolescence is a trivial time for most students and they often need additional structured support so that they can be successful and avoid falling behind. This research revealed that many elementary settings have SEL programming and once students reach the middle school level, social and emotional learning takes the backseat while the focus on academics takes the driver's seat. It can be incredibly challenging for students to learn academics if their social and emotional needs are not met. Social and emotional needs are the foundational pieces needed to learn academic skills. There is a large need for social and emotional programming that addresses these students' needs.

Implications for Future Research

Throughout this research, it was a great challenge to find social-emotional programming geared toward adolescent students. This kind of learning is imperative to several areas of student success. In the process of this research, it became obvious that future research should focus on

SEL programming for adolescents in general, but it should also include special education students, English language learners, and at-risk students.

Much of the research that was located for this thesis focused heavily on academic outcomes and impacts. While this is an important area of research, it may be more pertinent to focus on student well-being. Once students hit middle school it is easy to see academic disengagement grow as they progress each year. This area and overall student well-being should be larger areas of concern before noting academic impacts. Without students' social and emotional needs being met, it can be incredibly difficult for individuals to absorb academic content as well as new academic skills.

Conclusion

The need for social and emotional learning is flourishing throughout all academic settings. The scarce amount of research on evidence-based practices for implementing SEL for adolescent students is concerning. Presenting adolescent students with meaningful and impactful SEL instruction should be a top priority for everyone. Our students need to develop in each of CASEL's five competency areas if the expectation for our students is that they will become functioning, contributing, and positive members of our society at the completion of their education. Students should receive solid foundational social and emotional support throughout childhood and into adolescence.

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