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Addressing The Need For Systemic Implementation of Social Emotional Learning

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ADDRESSING THE NEED FOR SYSTEMIC IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Emilie Day Correa

Educational Leadership

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This document was created as one part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

**Works Cited**


6.20.16
Abstract

Two alarming trends are on the rise in schools, the rise of school violence and school shootings, and our nation’s hyper-focus on academics and standardized test scores. I argue that schools have a societal responsibility as stewards of the public to prepare students academically, socially, and emotionally to ensure well-being in school, life, and work in the 21st Century. I will also argue that not teaching social emotional learning (SEL) in schools is a disservice to our students, our school culture, and our community at large. This change leadership plan illustrates the “As Is” (Wagner et al., 2006) of a district lacking systemic SEL, and the “To Be” (Wagner et al., 2006) of a district with viable SEL curriculum and programming.
Preface

I am the emotional wellness coordinator in District 1234 (pseudonym). I am currently in the third year of serving the district in this capacity. My job responsibilities include oversight of the Emotional Wellness Committees at each individual school and working collaboratively with students, staff, administrators, parents, and community members to further enhance a multitiered approach to emotional wellness and social emotional learning (SEL). As the coordinator, I must exemplify emotional well-being while demonstrating a commitment to providing a healthy culture and climate in all district endeavors. In addition to supporting the work of Emotional Wellness Committees at each school in the district, I coordinate wellness initiatives and opportunities at the district level, publish a district-wide emotional wellness newsletter, gather, and analyze data from culture and climate surveys, conduct longitudinal studies of data, and report findings annually to the Board of Education.

Through this change leadership plan, I have considered an organizational plan for renewal inclusive of an audit of the existing SEL programming and the adoption and implementation of an SEL program. This plan for organizational change is at both district and building levels because adoption of an SEL resource at the district level requires building level compliance in implementing the program with fidelity. This plan addresses student social and emotional needs in SEL skills and competencies for academic, social, and emotional well-being in school, life, and work in the 21st Century.

With the central problem of D1234 not having SEL programming district-wide identified, I needed to have a better understanding of current assets and challenges. In order to gather a snapshot of the “As Is” (Wagner et al., 2006) in D1234, I framed the situation using Wagner’s 4 C’s Diagnostic Tool (2006) which includes: context, culture, conditions, and competencies
(Wagner et al., 2006). Using this same tool and forward thinking about what the situation would be like if the problem did not exist, I came up with the “To Be” (Wagner et al., 2006) solution. This change leadership plan delves deeper into identified problems and potential solutions. To move the needle from the “As Is” (Wagner et al., 2006) to the “To Be” (Wagner et al., 2006) will require dynamic and resonant leadership.

Throughout this change leadership plan, I have learned important leadership lessons. One such lesson is to control my emotions. I tend to be emotionally charged, and highly sensitive, which is an asset for the emotional wellness initiative, however, it can be crippling in leadership. I have learned how to self-regulate through mindfulness activities and breathing awareness. The trick for me was not to suppress my emotions, but to learn how to manage them. Related to being emotionally intuitive, is my capacity for empathy. As I stated, I am highly sensitive, and I can feel what others might be feeling. In my role as Emotional Wellness Coordinator, this leadership skill of being empathic has proven to be a great strength.

As mentioned in the Program Evaluation (Correa, 2017), I have been fortunate to work with a coach from outside of the district, provided through a grant program. This coach/mentor relationship has provided a tremendous amount of leadership scaffolding. I have learned that seeking advice, or counsel from the mundane to pressing issues is a leadership strength. My EWC coach, Laura Mott (pseudonym), has been insightful, pointing out what can be regarded as my blind spots and by encouraging me to think about things differently. Since Laura is not part of my everyday decision-making process, she is able to provide an outside perspective based on her experiences, thinking, and expertise. This relationship is truly invaluable and has impacted my leadership skills and abilities in a very positive way.
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Section One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

In 2004, the Illinois State Board of Education, with direction from the collaborative for academic, social, and emotional learning (CASEL), instituted state-wide SEL standards. The SEL standards revolve around five competencies of SEL set forth by CASEL which include: self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship management, self-management, and responsible decision-making skills (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.). As a result, all schools in Illinois are mandated to teach SEL skills and competencies as part of their educational program--but are they? Where is the accountability? Who is monitoring and ensuring that students across the state of Illinois are being taught SEL? This is precisely the nature of my problem statement. D1234, the school district in which I work, does not consistently, systematically, and comprehensively teach SEL skills and competencies. Currently, there is not viable SEL curriculum in place for students to learn the essential life and career skills that are inherent in social emotional learning.

To further complicate accountability issues, SEL skills and competencies are not assessed or reported upon by the district or by the state of Illinois. At a conference I recently attended, I overheard someone say, “what is measured is treasured.” As such, without a system of accountability, measure, assessment, or reporting, SEL skills and competencies have not been at the forefront of educational focus and are not targeted with the same tenacity as other higher profile subject areas such as math and English language arts (ELA). As such, SEL skills and competencies are not consistently being taught in our schools.

As described at length in my Program Evaluation (Correa, 2017), the emotional wellness (EW) Program in D1234 is unique in the state of Illinois. Having such a program in the district has helped guide efforts to bolster SEL by infusing SEL programming and activities for students,
staff, and the parent community, throughout the district. Although the EW Program has effectively and positively managed to impact school culture, it cannot be mistaken for SEL programming in which students develop SEL skills and competencies with scope and sequence (Correa, 2017).

SEL is defined by CASEL (n.d.) as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set, and achieve positive goals, feel, and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL.org, n.d.). I am not claiming that SEL is not being taught in District 1234; however, it is my professional opinion that D1234 does not have established district-wide K-8 SEL curriculum and programming with scope and sequence consistently delivered.

According to CASEL (n.d.), research alludes to the idea that social and emotional development can be fostered, and a variety of approaches can be used to effectively teach social and emotional skills, attitudes, and behaviors. For example,

- Free-standing lessons designed to enhance students’ social and emotional competence explicitly.
- Teaching practices such as cooperative learning and project-based learning, which promote SEL.
- Integration of SEL and academic curriculum such as language arts, math, social studies, or health.
- Organizational strategies that promote SEL as a school-wide initiative that creates a climate and culture conducive to learning. (CASEL.org, n.d.)
Figure 1. CASEL SEL approaches, short-term outcomes, and behavioral/academic outcomes (CASEL, 2015).

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of CASEL’s SEL approaches, short-term outcomes, and behavioral/academic outcomes, which illustrates the theory of action behind SEL programming. The acronym SAFE (CASEL.org, “What is SEL\Approaches,” n.d.) is often used by CASEL to describe the most effective SEL teaching strategies: sequenced, active, focused, and explicit. First, the lessons should be sequenced meaning that they should be connected and coordinated activities to foster skills development. Second, the lessons should be active. That is to say, students should be active during the lessons to help them master new skills and attitudes. Third, the lessons should be focused. Focusing the lesson is an essential component that emphasizes developing personal and social skills. Lastly, the lesson should be taught explicitly so as to target specific social and emotional skills (CASEL.org, n.d.).

From my professional experience, the delivery of SEL instruction in D1234 is predominantly teacher dependent, that is to say, if the classroom teacher is well versed, well trained, well supported, and genuinely values SEL, he or she will most likely teach SEL skills and competencies directly, as well as capitalize on natural opportunities to embed SEL into other
subject area lessons. On the other hand, if a teacher is solely focused on the academic needs of students and does not have knowledge, support, or training in SEL, then the teacher is less likely to teach SEL skills and competencies directly, or seize opportunities to embed SEL in other subject area content. There is no reward for teaching SEL, nor is there a penalty for avoiding this type of discourse in a classroom community. As one can imagine, the lack of teaching SEL in elementary schools and middle schools can be quite problematic in that students are not learning the art of well-being, self-care, social awareness, and other life skills that comprise SEL.

I posit that by not teaching SEL in schools, we are doing a disservice to our students, our school culture, and our community at large. Renowned author in the field of emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman (2009) distinguishes that although education is essential, it is not necessary for success and outstanding performance. According to Goleman (2009), what is more important for success and exceptional performance is how a person manages themselves and their relationships. Goleman’s observations tip the scales in favor of SEL skills and competencies over academic performance. Goleman contends that these skills, SEL skills, must be taught in schools in addition to standard curriculum (Goleman, 2009). By teaching students SEL skills and competencies, schools are preparing students for academic, social, and emotional well-being in school, life, and work in the 21st Century.

In addition to preparing students for life and work, there is an academic benefit to teaching SEL. Joe Durlak of Loyola University (Chicago) and Roger Weissberg of the University of Illinois at Chicago have recently completed a research synthesis, a meta-analysis of 213 studies of such school-based programs. The research clearly demonstrates that SEL programming significantly improves student academic performance on standardized tests. Overall, there was an improvement of 11 percentile points of academic gain for the students who
received SEL programming (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Moreover, compared to control groups, children who have participated in SEL programs have significantly better school attendance, less disruptive classroom behavior, report that they like school more, and perform better in school (CASEL.org, 2015).

The seemingly obvious solution to this problem would be to implement SEL curriculum complete with developmentally appropriate scope and sequence to be delivered consistently and with fidelity district-wide. I envision the consequences of successfully initiating this implementation of SEL programming being an improved culture and climate in our schools, leads to a host of benefits for students, staff, and the community which I will later discuss in further detail. As we are informed by the research of Durlak and Weissberg (2011), when there is quality implementation of an SEL program, there is a direct and positive impact on academics (Durlak & Weissberg, 2011).

The implementation plan I have constructed would be twofold: first, conduct an SEL audit district-wide to gauge staff knowledge and current teaching practices of SEL skills and competencies, and second, to construct a well-conceived plan to implement SEL at the district level. The SEL audit will be in the form of survey questions to be answered by all certified staff members. The audit will reveal if SEL is being taught, how often, where it is being taught in the current curriculum, and how. Based on the responses, the data will be analyzed and prepared to report out to staff, administration, and the Board of Education. While affirming the good things that people are already doing, the data will help identify areas of need.

The second phase of the plan, constructing a well-conceived plan to implement SEL at the district level, would involve working with my current supervisor and district level administration to construct a plan for district-wide implementation of SEL that includes;
engaging key stakeholders in SEL governance committee, providing SEL professional
development and experiential training for staff, conducting a needs analysis, SEL program
vetting, SEL program(s) selection and adoption, creating an action plan for program
implementation which includes, program piloting, ongoing assessment of implementation for
continuous improvement, and assessment of program outcomes. This plan entails ongoing
discourse with staff, administration, the Board of Education, and parent community in relation to
the importance of affording students and staff SEL skills and competencies that serve as the tools
for academic, social, and emotional well-being in school, life, and career.

Rationale

The reason I have selected this problem as the focus of my change plan is that I am
passionately committed to advocating for SEL in our schools. With a background in teaching,
school counseling, and EW, I understand and believe that schools need to address the whole
child, not just academics. Competencies (CASEL, 2015) such as self-awareness, social-
awareness, self-management, relationship skills and responsible decision making, help students
gain a better understanding of who they are, how they relate to themselves and others, and how
to make our world a better place.

I am alarmed by two recent trends in schools. First, the rise of school violence and school
shootings, and second, by our nation’s hyper-focus on academics and test scores. I am a firm
believer that schools have a responsibility to our civilization to teach SEL skills and
competencies. Excluding this curriculum from the education of children is a disservice to the
students, staff, school culture, and the greater communities in which we live. There is more to the
education of a child than just reading, writing and arithmetic. While addressing the needs of the
whole child, SEL provides tools for students and staff for academic, social, and emotional well-
being in school, life, and career.

Implementation of a district-wide SEL program is extraordinarily important to me because I firmly believe in its transformative impact. In my role as the EW coordinator in D1234, meaning, it is my responsibility to advocate for students to receive a quality education inclusive of SEL, as well as advocate for staff to receive the support they need in order to teach meaningful SEL curriculum. It is my understanding that SEL curriculum has always been part of the educational plan, but somehow it has perished in a sea of high-stakes testing and common core curriculum. In other words, when Plato described a philosophical education in The Republic (Plato. and Lee, 1974), in addition to a curriculum of math, science, reading, and physical training, he included character and moral training.

As it was deemed essential in ancient Greece, the grave necessity for character and moral training remains constant in 21st century educational programs. As stewards of public education, policy makers, administrators and school districts alike need to be thinking of our greater civilization, and teaching students how to become good citizens of character. As I will explore in greater detail later in this writing, research in the field of SEL continues to conclude that students, staff, schools, and communities benefit from SEL when SEL programming is implemented with fidelity (Durlak & Weissberg, 2011).

D1234 is a district renown for overachievement in academics. There is an enormous amount of pressure on students to excel and perform at an elite level from very early on in their schooling experience. This pressure can be overwhelming considering the rigorous curriculum students are challenged with daily. Additionally, students are encouraged to participate in sports, clubs, and other extracurricular demands. If children are being taught to operate at these sophisticated levels early in their educational careers, then they need to be given the tools to
manage these critical faculties. Now more than ever, schools need to teach, practice, and support whole child education with SEL.

Students around the country, and especially in affluent districts such as D1234, are faced with a world that demands them to be smarter, better, faster, and more or less perfect. The only problem is that the expectation of perfection is not humanly possible. Perfect is merely a subjective construct. Trying to live up to the expectation of parents, teachers, coaches, and their own expectations can be overwhelmingly stressful to our youth. In 2015-2016, 86% of D1234’s eighth grade students entering high school scored above the national average on standardized tests. With the focus so steeped in academics, and students achieving more curriculum-wise at earlier ages, it is critical that we address students’ social and emotional needs with equal rigor and expectation.

Goals

The intended goal of the change plan is for District 1234 to indoctrinate district-wide, systemic implementation of an SEL program, inclusive of intensive staff training and support, and a combination of embedded and direct teaching of SEL standards. This goal supports the district achievement milestone of every student attaining significant social and emotional growth. By achieving this goal, adopting guaranteed and viable SEL curriculum, all students and staff in District 1234 will be able to demonstrate knowledge, understanding, and application of SEL skills and competencies. This goal also entails that all District 1234 staff will be professionally engaged in SEL practice and programming, that is to say, there will be a scaffolded approach to consistently, mindfully, and meaningfully teach SEL.

My hope is that the district will embrace and internalize the overwhelming amount of research (Durlak et al., 2011) highlighting the many ways that SEL plays a critical role in the
development of students and staff by improving the culture of schools, and benefitting the
greater community. With these goals in mind, the district administration will be held accountable
for prioritization of SEL, setting expectations for consistent and meaningful delivery of SEL
programming, and providing essential feedback on the delivery of SEL programming. With
administrative expectations, guidance, and support, all District 1234 personnel will be held
accountable for walking the talk, leading by example, demonstrating an embodiment of the basic
tenets of SEL.

If this change plan, systemic implementation of SEL programming, is successful it will
rectify the problem of D1234 not being in compliance with the Illinois State Standards in SEL.
Equally as important as being in compliance with the state standards, systemic implementation of
an SEL program would directly serve the social and emotional needs of all district stakeholders.
Equipping our students with the skills and strategies needed to exercise self-management, self-
awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills will not only
enhance and enrich student and staff experiences while in District 1234 schools but will continue
to affect the way they navigate the course of their lives. We are not just aiming to improve the
culture and climate of the schools in D1234, we are setting our sails to make the world a better
place for all.

Demographics

District 1234 is a very interesting district in that it is a fairly homogenous population (See
Figure 2). To explain, 2% of the student population is Low-Income Students, 1% is English
Language Learners, and 12% have disabilities. The average spending per pupil in D1234 is
$9,145 compared to the state average of $7,419. The school district is recognized both statewide
and nationally for its innovative, instructional practices and solid educational programs
Sixty-four percent of students met or exceeded the expectations on the PARCC Test and 86% of eighth grade students entering the high school were above the national average.

![Racial-Ethnic Breakdown of D1234](IllinoisReportCard.com)

Figure 2. Racial-Ethnic Breakdown of D1234 (IllinoisReportCard.com).

The district is made up of three elementary schools and a middle school. The middle school is divided into an east side and a west side. The east side houses the fifth and sixth graders while the west side is for seventh and eighth graders. The total population of all schools in the district is 1,877 students. The population breakdown by school is as follows: elementary school A: 329 students, elementary school B: 313 students, elementary school C: 247 students, and middle school: 988 students. There are a total of 159 Full Time Teachers of which 70% hold a master’s degree or higher. The teacher retention rate is 85.9%, and the average class size is 19.

**Section Two: Assessing the 4 C’S**

In this section, I will be delving deeper into the systemic perspective of the problem to include the 4 C’s – context, culture, conditions, and competency (Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Helsing, Howell & Rasmussen, 2006). The 4 C’s chart is available for viewing in Appendix A. It is important to keep in mind that the problem statement in this change
leadership plan is that there is no consistent, systemic, research-based SEL programming in place district-wide in D1234. The goal of this change proposal is district-wide implementation of consistent, systemic, research-based SEL programming. The rationale is to first and foremost do what is best for students, and improve teaching and learning.

Wagner et al., provide the 4 C’s (2006) diagnostic tool serves to support further analysis of influential factors and components that contribute to a school or district’s problem statement. This tool is intended to assist in identification of the current problem in the “As Is” (Wagner et al., 2006) state, by generating “a dynamic snapshot of current assets and challenges in relation to one another and to the identified problem” (Wagner, et al., 2006, p. 117). The “As Is” (2006) is the current situation or reality in a school or district. By using the 4 C’s (2006), one is able to frame different aspects of the problem, identify contributing factors, and articulate the need for change. By analyzing the context, culture, conditions, and competencies in which a problem exists, one can unveil a deeper understanding of the problem.

The next step in Wagner’s 4C’s Diagnostic Tool (2006) is to create a “To Be” (2006) scenario using the same systems analysis of context, culture, conditions, and competencies. In doing so, one must envision what the educational system might look like in an optimal scenario. Wagner encourages, “forward thinking about your future and what you are doing and will do to get there” (Wagner, et al., 2006, p. 117). The “To Be” (2006), should create the picture of what things would be like if the problem was addressed. In the following paragraphs, I will be sharing my assessment of Wagner’s, “As Is” (2006) scenarios in D1234 to illustrate our starting point, and our potential for growth and change.

**Context**

To begin, I will look into the context, or larger organizational system of D1234, which
includes the social, historical, and economic context. D1234 is situated in a very affluent North Shore community, which, for the purpose of this study, will be referred to as River Woods. According to city-data.com, in 2013, the median household income in River Woods was $142,223, compared to the Illinois state average of $56,210. The estimated house or condo value in River Woods in 2013 was an impressive $773,407, compared to the Illinois state average of $169,600 (city-data.com).

River Woods has an excellent track record for maintaining extremely high academic achievement; however, along with this honor, a dark cloud tends to loom over the horizon of the community: its history of teenage suicides. According to an article from the Daily North Shore (2014), between 2003-2014, there were 12 deaths that occurred on the train tracks in this community. Of these 12 deaths, only a fraction were considered suicides (Daily North Shore, 2014). Whether the deaths were accidental, or intentional, the facts remain the same, over an eleven-year period, there were 12 deaths on the train tracks. The students in River Woods are under an inordinate amount of pressure to perform at elite levels academically, athletically, socially, and emotionally, and many go on to our nation’s most prestigious schools. In my professional opinion as a school counselor, students who live in communities such as River Woods, arguably more than any students, require SEL skills and competencies to manage the stress and demands that they face on a daily basis, and over a long period of time. SEL addresses these needs by teaching students to acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set, and achieve positive goals, feel, and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2015).
Culture

Next, I will be speaking to the culture of D1234, which can be defined as the, “shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 102). One word that comes to mind when I think of D1234 staff is, professional. Of the 159 full time teachers in the district, 70% have a Master’s Degree or higher. According to the School Workplace Satisfaction Survey (SWSS), teachers in this district report that they genuinely like teaching and feel that they are making a positive difference in the lives of their students (SWSS, 2012).

With the emotional wellness program intact, the culture and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school are constantly being assessed and addressed. In comparison to the national sample on the comprehensive school climate inventory (National School Climate Center, 2016) D1234 staff and students average mean scores were reported at or above average in all 13 dimensions of the survey. The dimensions include Safety rules and norms, sense of physical security, sense of social-emotional security, support for learning, social and civic learning, respect for diversity, social support adults, social support students, school connectedness and engagement, physical surroundings, social media, leadership (school personnel only), and professional relationships (school personnel only). The lowest average mean scores for three years running have been in the dimensions of social-emotional security and social media for both staff and students.

Despite the highly qualified and professional teaching staff, in recent years most staff professional development has been focused on academics such as new curriculum adoption and common core standards. That said, there has not been sufficient staff development and training in
In most instances, school districts chart the course for the staff and students. As such, if SEL is not being prioritized, supported, and expected at the district level, then schools, including both staff and students, will not benefit from a curriculum that supports these vital skills and competencies.

Conditions

The conditions of D1234, defined by Wagner as, “the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources,” (Wagner et al., 2006, pg. 101) will be described next. A lack of tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources including professional development in SEL, can be perceived as a mismatch between what we say we value and what is actually being implemented. A gap in values and practice can create stress and tension in an educational community. When professional development is not provided in an area such as SEL, staff may feel incompetent and uncertain about teaching the subject matter. Likewise, if there is not built-in instructional time system-wide devoted to teaching SEL, it is probable that SEL skills and competencies will not be taught.

To balance academic rigor and well-being, supportive conditions would encompass a system-wide consistent, intentional focus on SEL skills and competencies for both students and staff. Supportive conditions include the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources for SEL curriculum. Districts across the state and nation, like D1234, are being overextended with changing curricular demands and student reporting. The addition of SEL poses the challenge of adding more to an already full plate. That said, with a clearly articulated plan and proper implementation procedures, district-wide implementation of SEL is both manageable and advantageous for all stakeholder groups.

It is important to note that D1234 is not starting from scratch in the process of
implementing SEL. The emotional wellness program has been intact since 2009-2010, and in SY 2015-2016, when D1234 entered a grant program through North Suburban Special Education District (NSSED) to implement a multilitered behavior intervention system, Foundations, created by Randy Sprick. As a result, each school in D1234 has both an Emotional Wellness Committee and a Foundations Team. The Foundations teams are committed to attending three years of professional development in Foundations training. Make no mistake, neither emotional wellness program nor foundations is an SEL program. These programs are intended to assist D1234 schools in establishing school-wide emotional wellness activities and establish behavioral expectations in common areas of the schools, such as hallways, cafeteria, and bathrooms. Arguably, there are aspects of the emotional wellness and foundations programs that address SEL topics; however, emotional wellness and foundations do not qualify as an SEL program.

**Competencies**

The last of the 4 C’s is competencies, defined by Wagner as, “the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 99). Based on my experience in the field of SEL, I explain Illinois’ situation by stating that Illinois put the cart before the horse, meaning, regardless of the fact that most teacher preparation programs do not include SEL, nor have districts supplemented professional development and training in SEL, the state SEL standards were adopted. How can teachers teach what they do not know? I share this information in hopes of illuminating a bigger picture. This is not just about D1234 struggling to comply with the Illinois SEL standards, this is about a whole state struggling to comply with SEL standards.

The timing of Illinois’ adoption of SEL standards could not have been more inopportune. Illinois adopted SEL standards in 2004, just three years after No Child Left Behind (NCLB),
when schools and districts were scrambling to raise standardized test scores. Decisions were being made to double the time allotment in subjects like math and reading because those were the subjects that were being tested. As was then, and still is now, SEL is not measured on state tests. Because SEL is not tested and reported out, this curriculum, like other subject areas not tested, has taken a backseat to common core standards. “At a time when so many students at so many ages are flooded with anxiety as they struggle to succeed on standardized tests … SEL programs [are] more relevant and useful to schools than ever before” (Goleman, 2004, pg. vii).

Through my “As Is” analysis (Wagner et al., 2006), I find that SEL skills and competencies are not being taught with consistency in D1234. That statement should not be taken out of context. In other words, teachers are not to be blamed as they have not been provided sufficient training and support in teaching SEL skills and competencies. Likewise, amidst the shuffle of curriculum and laser focus on standardized test scores, districts are struggling to implement SEL programming. If districts are not prioritizing SEL and leading the charge to systemically implement SEL, then it is likely that our teachers are not being provided the necessary training to teach and model SEL skills and competencies.

D1234 has made strides in the right direction with the adoption of School Board Policy 6:65 back in 2010, which calls for student social and emotional development, consistent with Illinois SEL standards, to be incorporated into D1234’s educational program (School Board Policy 6:65, district name omitted for purpose of anonymity). By adopting this policy, administration has made clear that D1234 values SEL by requiring it to be part of the educational program. That said, clear and consistent expectations for teaching and learning SEL are in place at the district level. What is missing is that teachers have not been given the tools and the training to comply with this policy. This seems to be the story in many districts in the state of
Illinois.

Even though Illinois law requires schools to teach SEL standards, and has done so since 2004, many schools and districts across the state are not compliant. I would venture to say that the majority of schools in Illinois do not have clearly defined SEL programming with scope and sequence that is taught with fidelity and consistency. With all of the other needs, demands, challenges, and initiatives in schools including, but not limited to, changes in curriculum, Danielson evaluations, PARCC testing, NWEA testing, Foundations, and Response to Intervention (RTI), SEL has not yet been prioritized.

Section Three: Methodology

As I have communicated in the 4 C’s section, there are many factors that contribute to the problem of not having an SEL program in place. To further investigate these factors and others that may exist that are contributing to the problem, I have developed and facilitated a district wide SEL audit (See Appendix B). The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the SEL standards set forth by the state of Illinois are being taught directly, as well as integrated in common core curriculum in D1234. The data that I have collected has helped me gain an accurate, more in depth understanding of the problem, not having an SEL program. The data spoke volumes and acted as a catalyst in conveying urgency of the need for D1234 to implement a district-wide SEL program.

The study included surveying all D1234 certified teaching staff using Google Forms. The purpose of this audit was to get a first-hand account from all certified staff district-wide to gather a true sense of the “as is” (Wagner, et al., 2006) in terms of teaching the SEL standards. All surveys were anonymous. The only personal information requested was whether the teacher teaches grades K-4, or 5-8. I aimed to:
• Determine the degree and frequency in which SEL is currently being taught in classrooms;
• Determine the degree and frequency in which bully awareness, prevention, and intervention is being taught in classrooms;
• Determine the degree and frequency of staff attending SEL professional development;
• Identify which, if any, research-based, published SEL programs are being used as primary resources in teaching SEL skills;
• Gauge the opinion of staff relevant to the need for students to develop greater Social Emotional awareness and competencies;
• Gauge the opinion of staff relevant to the need for staff to develop a greater understanding of the social emotional learning standards and competencies.

This survey was used to inform what SEL practices and strategies were currently in place, and to determine the potential opportunities for growth in SEL programming. As the survey contained both open and closed questioning, it allowed for both qualitative and quantitative data collection. The survey was administered in two formats; in person, and via email. At the middle school, I administered the survey in person during a staff meeting. I briefly introduced the survey and told staff that their participation was completely voluntary. All staff members present agreed to participate. Before giving out the survey link, I spoke about the nature of the research, read the consent form aloud, and told staff that by clicking the link, they were consenting to participate. Staff was given time to participate in the survey during the meeting. Most participants finished the survey in 10 minutes or less.

At the elementary schools the survey was sent out via email. As the principal evaluator, I sent the email to all certified teaching staff at the elementary schools requesting their
participation. The email contained a brief description about the nature of the research, the informed consent form, and the link to the survey. I explained in the email that by clicking the survey link they were consenting to participate in the survey. Two follow-up emails were sent out about a week apart to remind those who had not yet taken the survey to do so at their earliest convenience.

**Research Design**

An online survey method was chosen to collect feedback from participants. A small team of collaborators, including Laura Mott (pseudonym), my professional coach from the Charmm’d Foundation, Ivette Winter (pseudonym), D1234 Executive Director of Student Services, and I, created the SEL audit. The audit was pilot tested by a group of doctoral candidate colleagues. The survey instrument was created and administered using Google Forms. The final product was a thirteen-question survey consisting of 11 multiple choice questions with scaled responses, and two open ended questions which required participants to type their response in a text box.

In addition to the SEL audit survey results, and in order to better inform my research, I will also be using data from the comprehensive school climate inventory (CSCI) that has been administered for the past three years in D1234. This survey is given to staff and students annually to gather measures of school climate and culture. Parents are asked to participate in the survey every other year. I am hopeful that themes and trends that can be seen in the CSCI results will help convey urgency in the need to address the problem of not having a SEL program in place.
Section Four: Relevant Literature

Schools will be most successful in their mission to educate children when they integrate efforts to promote children’s academic, social, and emotional learning (Elias, Wang, Weissberg, Zins, & Walberg, 2002). According to a publication in the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council titled, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*, “If we really want to build a strong platform for healthy development and effective learning in the early childhood years, then we must pay as much attention to children’s emotional well-being and social capacities as we do to their cognitive abilities and early literacy skills” (Shonkoff, 2006. p. 2188). As the field of SEL continues to grow and gain traction, we are surrounded by insurmountable evidence that SEL is an essential component in educating the whole child.

Linda Dusenbury, a senior researcher at the CASEL, told *Ed Week*. “We have amassed so much research (in SEL) by this point that we're now ready, I believe, to really be helping to inform education through things like policy and learning standards” (Kominiak, 2016, para. 7).

As cited in a research study on Roots of Empathy, Glenda Cain, and Dr. Yvonne Carnellor share, “There is a growing body of research that reinforces what many teachers have believed for years: that success in school and life depends not only on academic ability, but also on the social emotional competency of the individual. Schools can be reassured by scientific and pragmatic evidence that time spent implementing SEL will enhance the academic success of students” (McCombs, 2004 as cited in Cain & Carnellor, 2008. P. 54). As SEL research continues to flourish it would be negligent for schools, districts, and policy-makers not to heed SEL’s implications on teaching and learning.
In this literature review, I will be discussing a brief history of a selection of pivotal experts in the field of SEL including James Comer, Roger Weissberg, Richard Davidson, and Daniel Goleman. I will discuss the common characteristics of effective SEL programming. Next, I will describe person-centered SEL practices and the five competencies of SEL. After that, I will explore mindfulness as an effective classroom teaching strategy that supports SEL. I will examine how improving teacher SEL competence enhances SEL for students. Then, I will discuss current research and SEL program outcomes. Lastly, I will examine SEL policy and implementation at the local, state, and national level.

**Pivotal Experts in the Field of SEL**

**James Comer.** I will begin this review of literature with the work of the late Dr. James P. Comer, former professor of child psychiatry at Yale University. I present this body of work with the intention of illuminating the connection between, and the influence of Comer’s work, and the field of SEL. In this section, I will describe the research and intentions of Comer, as well as draw connections between Comer’s work and SEL. Comer’s work reignited the human aspect of education by emphasizing the importance of school culture, relationships, and well-being.

In the late 1960s, Dr. James Comer, along with colleagues from Yale, got involved in a two-year intervention program at two elementary schools in New Haven, Connecticut. This program was called the School Development Program (SDP), also known as the Comer Process. Comer’s program set out to improve the educational experience and academic performance of economically disadvantaged minority youth (Comer, 1988). “Comprehensive in nature, the SDP addresses the factors that have impact on student performance, development and well-being, including school organization, school climate, curriculum and instruction, level of program implementation, and students’ self-concepts, behavior, social competence, and achievement”
(Lunenburg, 2011, p. 9). Similar to SEL, among other things, the focus of Comer’s SDP work entails factors such as well-being, school climate, students’ self-concept, behavior, and social competence.

Comer’s program spoke directly to the impact and importance of positive school culture and relationships between stakeholders, which can be framed as seeds of thought that would later flourish into SEL. Establishing a further connection between SDP and SEL, Dr. Comer used his observations to conclude that children's experiences at home and in school deeply affect their psychosocial development, which in turn shapes their academic achievement (Comer, 1988). That is to say, the interaction of social and emotional factors, thoughts, and feelings all have a significant impact on learning. That said, I would deduce that Dr. James Comer, along with his colleagues, laid the foundational groundwork for SEL with the SDP.

Roger Weissberg. Roger Weissberg is a Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Education and NoVo Foundation Endowed Chair in SEL at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). In addition to serving as the director of the SEL Research Group, he is also board vice chair and chief knowledge officer for the CASEL (Social and Emotional Learning: A Short History, 2011). Weissberg made his way to New Haven, Connecticut to participate in the research that was begun by James Comer. There he met Yale graduate, and teacher in New Haven Public Schools, Timothy Shriver. Weissberg and Shriver worked closely together alongside other researchers and local educators from 1987 to 1992 where the K-12 New Haven Social Development program was founded (Social and Emotional, 2011). During that same time period, the W.T. Grant consortium on the school-based promotion of social competence, was co-chaired by Weissberg and Maurice Elias (Social and Emotional, 2011).

By 1994, the term social emotional learning was coined and the organization CASEL
bore its name. Originally situated at Yale, CASEL moved its headquarters to the UIC in 1996 with Roger Weissberg as the acting director. In 1997, Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators, which was coauthored by nine CASEL collaborators, including Roger Weissberg, both established and defined the field of SEL (Social and Emotional, 2011).

Richard Davidson. Richard Davidson, neuroscientist and Ph. D from Harvard University, presented on the phenomenon of Neuroplasticity at a conference in conjunction with CASEL in 2008. During his presentation, Davidson proclaimed that SEL was, “an empirically verified strategy to improve skills of emotional regulation and social adaptation and, as such, SEL likely produces beneficial changes in the brain” (Davidson, 2008). As the field of neuroscience continues to grow, research continues to support Davidson’s work, and further advocate for, and promote the teaching of SEL in schools. Davidson, a huge proponent of SEL suggests that, “SEL can change brain function, brain structure, and can actually produce adaptive emotional and cognitive functioning as a consequence” (Davidson, 2008).

What exactly is neuroplasticity and why is it so important to the field of SEL? The phenomenon Davidson refers to, neuroplasticity, is “The idea that the brain is plastic, malleable, and changes in response to experience” (Davidson, 2008). As such, by teaching SEL in schools, we are not only teaching behavior, we are also changing the structure of the brains in positive ways. Davidson conveys that, “The brains of children are constantly being shaped and molded by experience, both of a negative and positive sort” (Davidson, 2008). He suggests that, “Our task must be to take the reins and to promote positive brain changes, and one of the central vehicles to do so is through SEL” (Davidson, 2008).

Daniel Goleman. Harvard Psychologist, science journalist, and author of Emotional
Intelligence, Why it Can Matter More Than IQ? (Goleman, 1995), Daniel Goleman writes extensively on brain and behavior relationships. In a podcast about EQ, he stated that, “Social and Emotional skills account for up to 80% of success in life” (Goleman, 2009). Goleman asserts, “The Education that we get is essential, it’s the necessary platform, but it’s not sufficient for success, for outstanding performance. What distinguishes you is how you manage yourself and how you handle your relationships, something completely other than the standard curriculum in school” (Goleman, 2009). The findings of Daniel Goleman suggest that schools should be prioritizing, funding, and allocating resources for the teaching SEL, not only for the well-being of the students and the school culture, but also to provide students with the necessary tools to be successful in life and in their career.

In a 2008 interview titled, Selling SEL: An Interview with Daniel Goleman, Goleman spoke on the value of social and emotional learning. Goleman weighs in on the standardized testing frenzy by taking the perspective that I touched upon earlier, standardized testing has overshadowed whole child education. Goleman (2008) explains,

We have to first get over our fixation on academic achievement tests as the end all and be all of education. We have to remember we are educating the whole child and if you talk to people in companies as I often do, you find that they do not just want bright kids with technical skills, they want bright skills with technical skills who know how to get along, who can cooperate, who can be good teammate members, who could relate well to customers, who manage their emotions well, who stay motivated, who take initiative. Those are social emotional skills (Goleman, 2008).

Goleman goes on to fuse his knowledge of emotional intelligence with recent findings in neuroscience to further promote why schools should be teaching SEL. He combats the common
misunderstanding of SEL as fluff, by infusing the argument with science. Goleman (2009) contends that neuroplasticity, the shaping of the brain through repeated experience, plays a key role in the benefits from SEL (Goleman, 2009). As he so eloquently states,

Neuroscience is now telling us that children’s brains are plastic, that is, they are shaped by repeated experience, and if you are going to help a child be prepared for life you want to give that child the repeated experiences that are going to help his brain or her brain be able to manage their anger, to calm down when they are upset, to tune into other people, to get along. And the best way to shape the brain we are finding, is through SEL because it targets the very circuitry that is taking shape through childhood that is going to be your foundation for life, for better or worse on how well you can do those things. So this is not touchy-feely, this is very hard science now (Goleman, 2008).

**Characteristics of Effective SEL Programming**

Well respected experts from the field of SEL make compelling arguments as to why SEL should be taught in schools. Unfortunately, implementing an effective SEL program is not as easy as it may seem. It is not as simple as purchasing a program and distributing the materials to teachers to deliver the curriculum. As powerful as SEL programming can be for all who engage in the curriculum, to be effective, the SEL program must be implemented by well trained and supported staff. Staff must embody and model the tenets of SEL, while genuinely and consistently delivering program curriculum with fidelity.

In the *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, Joseph E. Zins, Michelle R. Bloodworth, Roger P. Weissberg, and Herbert J. Walberg (2007) have set forth what they deem to be the essential characteristics of effective SEL programming (See Appendix C.). According to this team of experts in the field of SEL, the essential characteristics are: SEL
programming must address affective and social dimensions of learning; lead to coordinated, integrated, and unified programming linked to academic outcomes; address key implementation factors to support effective SEL and development; involve family and community partnerships; and program the design should include continuous improvement, outcome evaluation, and dissemination components (Zins et al., 2007, p.10-11). In the following paragraphs, I will explore each characteristic in greater detail.

To begin, the first essential characteristic of effective SEL programming is that the programming addresses affective, or emotional, and social dimensions of learning (Zins, et al. 2007). A SEL program must establish a safe, caring, engaging, collective relationship between students, teachers, school, and the greater community. An effective SEL program should offer programs and activities designed to bring school communities together. In D1234, the emotional wellness program is charged with coordinating this type of programming. Examples of programming include: Family Reading Night, Family Game Night, Back to School Picnics, character assemblies, service learning projects, and family volunteering opportunities. By developing a sense of respect for the school and community, a sense of safety and belonging, SEL programming has the potential to bring communities together (Zins, et al., 2007).

The second essential characteristic of effective SEL programming is that the program leads to coordinated, integrated, and unified programming linked to academic outcomes (Zins, et al. 2007). To explain, the program framework should incorporate both SEL and integrated aspects of both formal and informal academic curriculum and development. SEL programming should be systemic in approach and follow a scope and sequence that allows curriculum to build along a continuum over multiple years, preferably pre-K through 12th grade. Lastly, the SEL experts in the school or district, such as counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and
wellness teachers take on a large role in coordinating SEL program implementation and ongoing support (Zins, et al., 2007).

The third essential characteristic of effective SEL programming is that programming must address key implementation factors to support effective social and emotional learning and development (Zins, et al., 2007). That is, first and foremost, to ensure high quality program implementation, those who will be delivering the SEL program should be well trained and supported throughout the process. Professional development including training teachers to embody the tenets of SEL, will make the experience more authentic and therefore more beneficial for all. To ensure that the program is being implemented with fidelity, teachers should be given the opportunity to take on leadership roles in SEL, such as serving on a building or district level committees to progress monitor, problem solve, and report out findings (Zins, et al., 2007).

Another key implementation factor is creating a classroom environment that promotes well-being. Teachers must continuously monitor this environment to ensure that all students feel safe, cared for, and nurtured by their teacher and by their classmates. Students should feel encouraged and safe to participate freely and cooperatively in all aspects of their learning environment. To maintain consistency from the classroom environments to the common spaces of the schools’ policies should be in place that support and connect with SEL program goals (Zins, et al., 2007).

The fourth essential characteristic of effective SEL programming is that SEL programming must involve family and community partnerships (Zins, et al., 2007). In order to be successful, an SEL program must promote families and the local community to be engaged in the educational process, including academic, social and emotional learning. D1234 has the emotional
wellness program in place to coordinate these efforts. Getting parent and the community involved in teaching and learning SEL-related skills and attitudes demonstrates collaboration and promotes the values of an educational community. Events such as Family Game Night bring together students, peers, parents, teachers, the families of the teachers, and community members. Establishing relationships between all stakeholder groups models how making connections strengthens a community (Zins, et al., 2007).

The fifth and final essential characteristic of effective SEL programming is that the program design includes continuous improvement, outcome evaluation and dissemination components (Zins, et al., 2007). As with any program or curriculum, it is imperative to monitor and assess practice, process, delivery, and outcomes. These outcomes should be closely monitored and shared with major stakeholders. Program evaluations can provide structured insight using relevant data. Focus groups can provide a humanistic narrative offering insight from firsthand experience. School culture and climate surveys, such as the CSCI, can indirectly inform whether an SEL program has impacted overall student and staff conceptions of SEL in key dimensions of the survey, such as social and emotional security, social media, and physical safety and security. The results of all of these suggested forms of program assessment and monitoring should be used to identify successes, challenges, and most importantly, inform stakeholders of ways to continuously improve program delivery for optimum growth and development (Zins, et al., 2007).

**Person-Centered SEL Practices and the Five Competencies of SEL**

Most often, equally as important as the “what” we are teaching, is “how” we are teaching it. SEL is unique in that, when done correctly, it requires the practitioner to take the personal journey to explore and understand their own self-awareness, self-management, social awareness,
relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills (CASEL.org, “What is SEL” n.d.). When teachers are practicing self-awareness and self-care, they are more available to genuinely help others do the same. In this section, I will share what practitioners in the field deem as best practices, or in this case, most effective SEL teaching practices.

Zins and colleagues wrote about the importance of SEL being person-centered (Zins et. al., 2007). In their article, Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg (2007), define SEL as the process through which children enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaving to achieve important life tasks (Zins et. al., 2007, p. 6-7). This is quite different from CASEL’s definition of SEL as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set, and achieve positive goals, feel, and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.). That said, there is definitely agreement on the five competencies of SEL set forth by CASEL ("What is SEL,” n.d.), and it is upon these competencies that Zins and colleagues stage their argument for person-centered practices.

SEL is described by Zins and colleagues (2007) as a person-centered practice, so the person-centered approach to teaching SEL is a natural fit. Some of you may be wondering, what does it mean to be person-centered? I will define this approach using the parallel of person-centered therapy, also known as Rogerian therapy, named after the work of the American psychologist, Carl Rogers. Rogers believed that all people are different, and that our realities are based on our experiences. In essence, knowing what we know about ourselves makes us an expert in self, and as such, better equipped than anyone to manage ourselves and our lives. Rogers postulated that as experts of self, clients have deeper knowledge and insights to solve
problems for themselves, and that puts them in the position to make changes that suit their goals and pursuits in life (Hazler, 2016).

Person-centered therapy, sometimes referred to as talk-therapy, altered a therapist’s traditional role from expert to more of a facilitator. According to Hazler (2016), the success of person-centered therapy is dependant on the following conditions: the therapist must demonstrate unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence. In other words, the therapist should not pass judgment on the client, but instead be empathetic, accepting, and trusting of the client’s thoughts and feelings. The condition of congruence means that the therapist should not interject authority or hierarchy in terms of being an expert, rather present themselves as an equal by being fully available, transparent and honest (Hazler, 2016).

So, how does this connect to teaching SEL? Just as Rogers deemed clients to be experts of self, teachers must also recognize that students are experts of self. Students come to school each day with their unique set of collective experiences which form their reality. SEL sets the stage for congruence in a classroom, meaning, nonjudgmental, unconditional positive regard for all members of the group, teachers, and students alike, to discover and share; who they are, what makes them unique, how they relate to themselves and the world around them, what problems they face, the goals and dreams they have, and how the decisions they make can help or hinder those goals. The person-centered approach nurtures the creation of the optimal classroom environment, where everyone feels that they are on a level playing field, that they belong, and that they matter. Person-centered SEL practices build a stronger learning community in that they are designed to connect with students individually, as well as help them find their place in the larger group.

Teachers as facilitators, instead of experts of SEL, are in a prime position to help students
learn more about the world around them, and themselves. To guide this person-centered journey of self, Zins and colleagues (2007) suggest the use of CASEL’s five competencies of SEL: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management, and responsible decision making (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.). In the paragraphs that follow, I will take a deeper look at how using a person-centered approach for teaching the Five Competencies of SEL is an effective practice.

Through self-awareness SEL programming encourages students to take an introspective journey through their history of being, and to look for clues that shed light on their uniqueness. Self-awareness promotes students to become observers of themselves. Taking on the role of observer not only helps students to recognize patterns, strengths, and challenges, it helps them to see themselves as others may see them.

Self-awareness is typically aligned with emotions, self-perception, self-efficacy, spirituality, and the ability to recognize strengths, needs and values (Zins, et al., 2007). Allowing students to learn about themselves is one of the greatest gifts we can give them. Students should be well versed in their emotions. As they begin to identify their own emotions, they begin to recognize emotions of others, and this develops empathy. Students begin to understand the causes and consequences of emotions, and this helps them manage themselves and relate to others. Knowing that emotions interfere with thinking helps them to use strategies when making important decisions in life. Self-awareness is, as Valon Murtezaj (2014), a professor of leadership, diplomacy, and negotiation, stated in a Tedx Talk, “Self-awareness is the foundation of growth and personal success” (Murtezai, 2014).

CASEL’s (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.) second SEL competency is social awareness. As I have previously discussed the vital role that self-awareness plays in our lives, of
equal value is social awareness. Social awareness is the ability to take the perspective of others, also known as empathy. Empathy is a skill that requires perspective taking, respect for others, and an appreciation for diversity. Social awareness requires the ability to perceive social and ethical norms for behavior (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.). This skill can be a difficult skill to grasp as our world is becoming more diverse, and more high-tech. Traditional norms are changing based on the unprecedented times that we find ourselves living in. That leads me to the last facet of social awareness which is the ability to identify and seek out support from resources in one’s family, school, and community. Social awareness moves thinking from “me” to “we” and seeing the everyone in the world as connected in some way. Service projects have an uncanny ability to teach students firsthand what kindness and caring for others feels like. As Mary Ryerse wrote in her blog post, increase social awareness and build culture, “As schools across the country seek to integrate SEL strategies, increasing social awareness is an integral component. This is particularly true because social awareness is a prerequisite for treating all people with respect and building strong relationships” (Ryerse, 2017, para. 1).

CASEL’s third Competency of SEL is Self-Management which is the ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations. Being able to manage oneself consists of effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.). Also included in self-management is the ability to set academic and personal goals, and work toward achievement of those goals. Self-discipline plays a big role in self-management as well as organizational skills and understanding what motivates one’s behavior. Self-management is a prime example of how SEL can be just as beneficial for the teacher as it is for the students. In a world where stress is ever present and, on the rise, and we are bombarded by information and media from all directions, skills such as impulse control,
stress management, goal setting, self-discipline, self-motivation, and organizational skills are critical skills for our self-care and well-being (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.).

CASEL’s (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.) fourth competency of SEL is relationship management. This competency can be described as the ability to establish and maintain healthy, meaningful, and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. In addition, relationship skills involve the ability to communicate thoughts and ideas clearly, listen to others, work, and live cooperatively with others, make healthy decisions when confronted with inappropriate social pressure, handle conflict in constructive ways, seek out help when needed, and offer help when you see that it is needed (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.). The main skill sets that are addressed within the competency of relationship management are; communication, social engagement, building relationships, and teamwork (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.). Communication is quintessential in relationship management in terms of expressing oneself with confidence, being able to engage meaningfully with others socially, and working cooperatively with others. The ability to communicate affords students skills such as negotiation, refusal, and conflict management. Interpersonal skills are detrimental in the way that one is able to present themselves, receive others, and navigate the chaos of social interactions both in person and virtually.

The last of CASEL’s (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.), five competencies is responsible decision making. CASEL (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.) describes responsible decision-making skills as the ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.). Students should be able to realistically evaluate consequences of various actions, and a consider their own well-being, and the well-being of others. Important skills
within this competency are identifying problems, the ability to analyze situations, problem
solving, evaluating a situation, reflecting on one’s behavior and choices, and demonstrating
ethical responsibility (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.).

Teaching CASEL’s (CASEL.org, “What is SEL,” n.d.), Five Competencies of SEL using
person-centered practices is defined by Zins and colleagues as an effective practice (Zins, et al.,
2007). This approach acknowledges that the teacher is the leader, but not necessarily the expert.
The teacher as the “knower,” must set that leadership aside so that the students feel a congruence
among all members of the group. The idea that we are all in this together provides a space where
students can delve deeply into the most important subject they will ever study, themselves.

**Mindfulness, an Effective Classroom Teaching Strategy That Supports SEL**

In this section, I will share how mindfulness is an effective teaching and classroom
strategy that support SEL. John Kabat-Zinn (2017), PhD, is internationally recognized for his
work as a scientist, writer, and meditation teacher engaged in bringing mindfulness into the
mainstream of medicine and society (Kabat-Zinn, 2017). He is Professor of Medicine emeritus at
the University of Massachusetts Medical School. In 1979, Kabat-Zinn founded a world-
renowned Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts, and in
1995, he founded the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society (Kabat-
Zinn, 2017). He describes mindfulness as, “the awareness that arises through paying attention, on
purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally,” says Kabat-Zinn. “It’s about knowing what
is on your mind” (Kabat-Zinn, 2017).

Educators understand that when students feel safe, calm, present, and a sense of
belonging, they are more available for learning. Sharing the practice of mindfulness with
students is a way of teaching self-awareness through awareness of thoughts and breath, and self-
management by knowing when one needs to take a moment to center oneself. Mindfulness, just as SEL, is as good for the teacher as it is for the students. Giselle Shardlow, author of yoga books for kids explains the following:

Teaching mindfulness in the classroom is a necessity. Our children are stressed and anxious. Teachers and parents are stressed and anxious, too. Our lives are busy, and we often find our thoughts buzzing over the past or worrying about the future. We need mindfulness because it teaches us to live in the present moment, enjoying and experiencing what’s in front of us” (Shardlow, 2015).

In a recent article Shardlow (2015), shares four ways to incorporate mindfulness into the classroom. First, is Mindfulness Through Breath. “When we are stressed or anxious, we often take shallow breaths into our chests. By breathing deeply into your belly, you can use your breath to calm both your body and mind” (Shardlow, 2015, para. 4). The second way is through sensory experiences. Sensory experiences are a range of activities that help children focus their attention using their five senses. Some examples of sensory experiences are; listening to relaxing music, taking students out for a walk in nature, playing I Spy, or creating mind jars (Shardlow, 2015, para. 4). The third way Shardlow (2015) incorporates mindfulness in the classroom is through guided imagery. There are a multitude of free mindful applications available online that contain an array of prerecorded guided imagery meditations. The final way that Shardlow (2015) suggests incorporating mindfulness into classroom practices is through movement. When speaking to the incorporation of movement, Shardlow remarks that,

Humans are born to move. Our distant ancestors spent their days running from predators or hunting for food. Movement is a natural part of human life that has become a luxury in modern times. Introducing movement into your classroom allows your students to tap into their
natural way of learning. Yoga is a simple strategy for adding movement to your school day (Shardlow, 2015, para. 7).

In my examination of tier 1, school-based psychosocial interventions, two approaches surface to the top in demonstration of positive evidence-based results: SEL programs (Durlak, et al., 2011) and mindfulness-based interventions for schools (Burke, 2010; Zenner, Herrmleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014; Waldemar, Rigatti, Menezes, Guimarães, Falceto, & Heldt, 2016). A mounting body of research (Durlak, et al., 2011) suggests that mindfulness and SEL programs not only help promote well-being, social and emotional skills and competencies, and cognitive skills, they also prevent mental health risks, and enhance children’s success in school and life (Diamond & Lee, 2011; Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg & Harris, 2012). Based on the assertion that mindfulness supports development of the five SEL competencies that are targeted by SEL programming, namely self-awareness and self-management, infusing mindfulness into SEL curriculum serves to enhance the effectiveness of the SEL programming. (Felver et. al., 2013).

As the two disciplines of SEL and mindfulness continue to grow and strengthen their presence in our schools, supporting research continues to mount.

A recent study that tested an intervention using MindUP curriculum, incorporating mindfulness practices into an SEL program, found encouraging results for a variety of SEL competencies (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015). In this study, the MindUP curriculum was delivered to fourth and fifth grade students through weekly lessons over a 4-month period of time. The results of the study reported that the treatment group, or students who participated in the MindUP curriculum, showed significant improvements in the areas of self-restraint, self-reported depression, emotional control, optimism, and self- and peer-reported prosocial behavior (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).
It is important to distinguish that mindfulness programs should not be used in place of SEL programs, rather, as an addition to a SEL program. The MindUP curriculum functions very effectively and efficiently as a supplementary curriculum in that it only contains 15 lessons. The MindUP program is grounded in neuroscience, positive psychology, mindful awareness and SEL, and boasts over 10 years of research backing the program’s effectiveness.

Similar to the MindUP study mentioned above, there are a plethora of studies assessing the impact that mindfulness programs have on student performance and well-being and all allude to the verity that mindfulness programs cultivate healthier psychological functioning and overall well-being for both students and teachers. One such study, a nonrandomized trial evaluating the impact of a 9-week mindfulness program for a sample of high school students resulted in a significant reduction in depression compared to the control group (Kuyken et al., 2013). Researchers conducted a 3-month follow up with this group of students which demonstrated further promise as to the benefits of the mindfulness program in that there was a significant decrease in stress, as well as an increase in well-being in the experimental group as compared to the control group (Kuyken et al., 2013).

The next body of research investigates the impact of combining mindfulness and SEL programming with fifth graders in a Brazilian public school setting. This study verified the effects of a mindfulness and social–emotional learning program in mental health problems and quality of life in fifth graders in Southern Brazil. A total of 132 students participated in this research. Sixty-four students received 12 sessions of combined mindfulness and SEL curriculum over a five-month period. This group was compared with a control group of 68 students. The intervention combined mindfulness practices and SEL lessons based on the five competencies of SEL set forth CASEL. Outcomes were measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
(Fleitlich, Cortazar, & Goodman, 2000), the Youth Quality of Life Instrument (Salum et al., 2012), and the Swanson, Nolan and Pelham–IV (Mattos, Serra-Pinheiro, Rohde, & Pinto, 2006) questionnaire (Waldemar et al., 2016). In comparison to the control group, the students who received mindfulness and SEL curriculum significantly improved in most mental health domains including; emotional, conduct, relationship, and prosocial behavior, as well as in quality of life scores. These results suggest the potential psychological contribution of combining mindfulness and SEL programming (Waldemar et al., 2016).

Mindfulness practices help teach students how to reduce emotional distress, promote emotional balance, improve attention, and motivate learning (Barseghian, 2013). Another study on mindfulness programming found that teaching first through third graders mindfulness practices twice a month for 12 months improved selective attention, anxiety, and social skills, compared with a control group who did not receive the intervention (Napoli et al., 2005). Similarly, a randomized controlled trial involving elementary school students using the mindfulness program InnerKids, an 8-week program, significantly impacted the cognitive and executive functioning of the students in the experimental group (Flook et al., 2010).

What we may gather from this research is a sense that teaching students to tap into their thoughts has beneficial outcomes academically, socially, and emotionally. Patricia Broderick, Ph D., and author of Learning to Breathe: A Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents to Cultivate Emotion Regulation, Attention, and Performance, states, “The inner reserve of mindful awareness is available to everyone, and these faculties of mind, developed with practice, have direct relevance to burgeoning self-awareness, to self-regulation, and to the emotional balance that supports fully engaged learning and well-being” (Barseghian, 2013, para. 14). As schools plan adoptions of SEL curriculum, research supports the addition of supplementary mindfulness
Enhancing SEL in Children Through Improving Teacher SEL Competence

Teachers play a very important role in the social-emotional development of children under their care (Durlak et al., 2011). Lawrence Lam and Emmy Wong (2017) set out to better understand how improving teachers’ SEL competence could impact student SEL competence (Lam & Wong, 2017). In their research, they found that teachers are not only an integral part of student SEL development, but they also can be an active agent in enhancing social and emotional well-being of their students (Lam & Wong, 2017). That said, in order to contribute to the SEL of their students, there must be adequate attention and training to support teachers in development of their social-emotional competence and well-being.

Lam and Wong’s research included a random sampling of 990 students ages 3-6 years old enrolled in Hong Kong’s pre-k through kindergarten public and private school educational programs. The intervention, a specifically designed program containing three essential components: (1) assessment of the social-emotional well-being of young children using a validated and standardized assessment instrument; (2) emotional literacy of early childhood teachers and skills to communicate emotional experiences; and (3) skills in the design and delivery of an evidence-based curriculum to enhance the social-emotional well-being of young children (Lam & Wong, 2017). The teacher training intervention program duration was 8 weeks and included interactive seminars and discussions in SEL. Participating teachers engaged in self-assessment of emotional literacy and communication followed by training in these areas in an effort to strengthen their own levels of emotional intelligence (Lam & Wong, 2017). The teacher training centered around the following major areas of focus: assessing the function of children’s behavior; helping children to manage their own behaviors; promoting positive social interaction
through the use of the environment and activities; promoting positive peer social interactions; positive behavior support; using functional communication techniques to replace challenging behavior; helping children to express their wants and needs; and helping children to express warmth and affection through modeling (Lam & Wong, 2017).

Using pre- and post-assessment data, Lam and Wong (2017) saw the following results. Comparisons of all outcome variables yielded significant results with an increase in the mean social competence scores, and a reduction in both the anxiety-withdrawal and anger-aggression mean scores after the intervention (Lam & Wong, 2017). As such, Lam and Wong (2017) have surmised that “in order for teachers to be an ‘agent of change’ for young children under their care and develop a ‘responsive relationship’ with them, it is important for teachers to be resourceful in terms of their own internal strength and resources” (Lam & Wong, 2017, pg. 10). In order for teachers to effectively teach SEL, there should be careful consideration of the social and emotional skills and competencies of the teachers themselves. Being well versed in SEL makes it more likely for teachers to establish meaningful relationships with their students by teaching and modeling the very skills and competencies that lead to well-being in school, career, and life.

Current Research and SEL Program Outcomes

In this section of the Literature Review, I will be presenting SEL program outcomes. Perhaps the most renown, scientifically rigorous, and widely cited research in terms of the benefits of SEL, is the 2011 Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger’s meta-analysis of 213 school-based SEL programs (Durlak, Weissberg et al, 2011). This review of studies published through 2007 includes school, family, and community interventions designed to promote SEL in students between the ages of 5 and 18. The research is divided into three main
areas: studies about (a) school-based interventions, (b) after-school programs, and (c) programs for families. For the purpose of this change leadership plan, I will be focusing on results of the school-based interventions research, which included 207 studies of programs involving 288,000 students (promoteprevent.org, 2016).

Durlak and Weissberg’s research revealed that SEL can have a positive impact on school climate and promote a host of academic, social, and emotional benefits for students (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 3). Specific results were as follows:

- 9% decrease in conduct problems, such as classroom misbehavior and aggression
- 10% decrease in emotional distress, such as anxiety and depression
- 9% improvement in attitudes about self, others, and school
- 23% improvement in social and emotional skills
- 9% improvement in school and classroom behavior
- 11% improvement in achievement test scores (Durlak et al., 2011, p.14)

The research conducted by Durlak et al., has been, and continues to be, a driving force in promulgation of SEL. It is difficult to argue the benefits of SEL with the size and scope of this research, hence the popularity of the findings. Who can dismiss this vast body of research?

**Six Years Later**

As described above, the 2011 meta-analysis of 213 school-based SEL programs (Durlak, Weissberg et al, 2011) suggests that SEL programming had a host of positive outcomes for students academic, social, and emotional learning. Six years later, a team that included most of the original authors of the 2011 meta-analysis, completed a new meta-analysis. This follow-up study analyzed results from 82 different interventions involving more than 97,000 students from kindergarten to high school. The effects were assessed six months to 18 years after the programs
ended (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak & Weissberg, 2017, p. 1156). The research revealed the following results:

- 3.5 years after the last intervention the academic performance of students exposed to SEL programs was an average 13 percentile points higher than their non-SEL peers, based on the eight studies that measured academic performance. “Although based on only eight studies, these long-term academic outcomes are notable,” the research said.
- At other follow-up periods, conduct problems, emotional distress, and drug use were all significantly lower for students exposed to SEL programs, and development of social and emotional skills and positive attitudes toward self, others, and school was higher. (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak & Weissberg, 2017, p. 1164-1166).

It has been suggested that the key competencies of SEL set for by CASEL; self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, may help students progress further in their education and may also enhance personal, economic and social well-being in youth and adulthood (Belfield, Bowden, et al. 2015). These competencies relate to “soft skills” and personality traits that, according to Heckman and Kautz (2012), predict success in school, the labor market, and in life. The competencies also foster personal satisfaction and growth, help individuals become better citizens, and reduce risky behaviors like violence and drug use (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Durlak, Weissberg & Pachan, 2010).

**The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning**

The next body of research is an investigation of the economic value of SEL from Columbia University. Often times the standard academic core curriculum is the area in which schools focus all of the attention, after all, historically, it has been deemed the main pipeline that
will provide the biggest return of investment. In this section, there is another perspective to consider. The Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education in New York, assisted the Columbia University research team in their quest to assign a dollar value to teaching SEL in schools. In this study, researchers analyzed the economic impact of six widely-used SEL programs and found that on average, every dollar invested in SEL programming yielded $11 in long-term benefits, ranging from reduced juvenile crime, higher lifetime earnings, and better mental and physical health (Belfield, Bowden, Clapp, Levin, Shand, & Zander, 2015).

Cost-benefit analysis is a tool for evaluating the economic profitability of an investment. It has been used in education since the 1960s to determine the rate of return on both individual and social investments in education (Belfield, et al., 2015). In other words, a reduction in high school dropouts equals costs to the students in that they sacrifice income by staying out of the labor market and in schools. Likewise, there are gains to students who stay in school in terms of higher income potential, better health, and lower probability of being involved in the criminal justice system. This all can be measured in terms of a monetary return on investment (Belfield, et al., 2015).

In the educational setting, we seek to make investments that have the highest return to taxpayers and to society at large (Belfield, et al., 2015). In the past, benefit cost studies have been focused largely on increases in educational achievement and growth in cognitive test scores. As of recent, SEL is being recognized as a factor that can be just as important, if not more important than standardized test scores (Belfield, et al., 2015). SEL is now being linked to significant developmental and life outcomes (Durlak, et al., 2011; Heckman and Kautz 2012; Levin 2012)
SEL Policy and Implementation at the Local and State Level

The 2015 CASEL State Scan, reported that all 50 states had some form of preschool SEL guidelines, learning goals, or standards (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017). Beyond preschool, the number of states that have SEL guidelines, learning goals, or standards changes dramatically. According to CASEL’s State Scan, “only six states have SEL benchmarks that extend from preschool into the early elementary grade levels, and only three additional states currently have adopted free-standing standards or competencies for SEL (with developmental benchmarks) that extend all the way from kindergarten through high school” (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017, pg. 2).

Illinois was the first state to adopt K-12 SEL standards in 2004, despite the fact that there was not federal legislation requiring such action. Following suit at the local level, D1234 adopted School Board Policy 6:65 in 2010. SB 6:65 states, “Student social and emotional development shall be incorporated into the District’s educational program and shall be consistent with the social and emotional development standards to be contained in the Illinois Learning Standards” (Retrieved from district website, name omitted for anonymity). D1234 adopted local SEL policy six years after the state of Illinois adopted SEL standards. As such, it would appear that state policy drove local policy.

Kansas and West Virginia were the next states to adopt SEL policy in 2012 by articulating goals for student SEL. In recent years, as SEL research continues to be in the spotlight of educational journals, there appears to be growing momentum of states taking interest in adopting SEL standards. CASEL reports that four more states have drafted K-12 SEL benchmarks and are in currently in the approval process (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017). As such, CASEL is responding to these opportunistic times by offering to assist states in their efforts
to adopt SEL standards.

In an effort to advocate for and promote the adoption of SEL state standards, CASEL has recently developed a Collaborating States Initiative (CSI). The objective of this initiative is to guide and support SEL initiatives in states and school districts. Essentially, CASEL aims to partner with states to facilitate implementation of SEL state standards, and support SEL district policy. This CSI offers states a scaffolded approach to building a framework for incorporation of SEL in schools statewide. I am pleased to report that 40 states have expressed interest in participating in the CSI, n.d.). The end result of this work is that preschool to high school students across the nation are afforded the essential and vital SEL skills and competencies that promote academic, social, and emotional success in school, work and life (CSI, n.d.)

**SEL Policy at the National Level**

As you have read, SEL is gaining momentum at the local and state levels. In this section, I will describe how SEL policy implementation is faring at the federal level. As we have seen in the past with educational legislation such as NCLB, and Race to the Top (RTT), federal policies drive conditions that shape state and district policy. The most recent influential federal educational legislation signed into law by President Obama in December, 2015 is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

CASEL and other proponents of SEL see the new provisions of ESSA as supporting SEL. New provisions of the law have helped to leverage the argument for SEL. The new provisions present a broader more comprehensive definition of student success.

While ESSA does not mention SEL, the law did replace references to “core academic subjects,” instead calling for a “well-rounded education” for all students (Rosales, 2017). Not only does ESSA call for a well-rounded education, there are also new funds available under the
legislation for professional development in this area. ESSA has bolstered the status of SEL in schools, districts, and the nation. “The emphasis for so long has been placed on academic performance and academic content mastery,” said Rebecca Snyder of the National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY), “I’m really encouraged by the shifts (in teaching) where we are taking more of a whole child orientation (while) focusing on social and emotional learning” (Rosales, 2017, para.10).

The new provisions of ESSA allow states and districts more flexibility in the definition and assessment of student success. One such adjustment in addition to the state’s current accountability system is that states are allowed at least one additional “non-academic” indicator of school quality and student success. For consistency and reliability, indicators must be valid, comparable, and statewide. Examples of such indicators are school climate and culture surveys such as the CSCI which is used in D1234, or the five essentials, also known as the 5 E’s, that is used by the majority of schools in Illinois. Beginning SY 2018-2019, the indicator weighing scale will consist of 75% Core Academic Indicators and 25% Student Success/School Quality Indicators (SSSQ) (US Department of Education, 2017).
Section Five: Data Analysis and Interpretation

To gauge an “As Is” (Wagner, et al., 2006) snapshot of where D1234 is in terms of understanding and teaching SEL, I administered an SEL audit in the form of a survey in the winter of 2016 (see Appendix B). Up until this point, most principals argued that there is no need for district wide SEL programming because D1234 teachers are already teaching the SEL standards. The results from this survey are telling and have been used as a springboard to launch a new initiative for implementation of a district-wide SEL program.

In review, the 13-question anonymous survey was completed by 142 of the 159 teachers in D1234. The survey was a combination of open and closed questions. In this section I will be focusing specifically on the results of the survey allowing me to dive deeper into the meaning, significance, and implications of the results. This section includes a series of figures that display the survey results.

To begin, teachers were asked to rate both their level of knowledge of the Illinois SEL standards, as well as their level of confidence in teaching the standards. As you can see in Figure 3, the percentage of teachers who reported “Not at All Knowledgeable” (21.1%) and “Slightly Knowledgeable” (42.3%) comprise a stunning 63.4% of the teaching staff. This figure stands out in contrast to the 7% of teachers who reported to be “Extremely Knowledgeable” (1.4%) or “Very Knowledgeable” (5.6%). Likewise, the level of confidence in teaching the SEL standards had similar results. A total of 55% of teachers reported to be “not at all confident” (25.4%), or “slightly confident” (29.6%). This percentage is in blunt comparison to the 14.8% of teachers who reported to be “extremely confident” (2.8%) or “very confident” (12%).

One can see that over half of the teachers in D1234 reported being not at all to slightly
knowledge of the Illinois state SEL standards. It comes as no surprise that as a result, 55% of teachers lack the confidence in teaching these standards. This revelation stands in stark contrast to the notion that principals have that teachers are teaching the SEL standards on a regular basis. How can teachers teach the SEL standards if they do not know them?

Figure 3. Level of knowledge and confidence in teaching the Illinois SEL standards.

Figure 4 depicts a visual representation of how many opportunities for professional development in SEL were given to teachers over the last 3 years. When asked how often teachers received professional development in the area of SEL in the past three years, 67.6% reported that they had not received any professional development in the area of SEL. 25.4% of teachers reported to have received professional development 1–3 times, and 7% reported to have received professional development in SEL four or more times. This question provides great insight as to the accountability of the district in supporting the implementation of SEL. How can teachers be expected to implement SEL if districts are not providing professional development to teach them how to embed and directly teach the SEL standards?
When asked how often teachers referred to and integrated SEL standards into lesson planning in SY 2015-2016, a total of 72.5% of teachers responded “not at all” (53.5%), or “every trimester” (19%). As evidenced in Figure 5, only 4.2% of the teachers in D1234 reported to integrate SEL standards into daily lesson planning. Truth be told, although we have state learning standards for SEL and have had these standards since 2004, and local board policy since 2010, teachers in D1234 have not been held accountable for integrating SEL standards into lesson planning. A lack of teacher training and development in SEL has impacted the incorporation of SEL into lesson planning. The delivery of SEL content in D1234 is discrepant and inconsistent at best.
Figure 5. During SY 2015-2016, how often did you refer to and integrate the SEL standards into lesson planning?

D1234 has an extensive school board policy addressing bullying prevention and awareness. Within this policy, it is stated that bullying awareness and prevention will be taught at all grade levels. By the looks of the survey results, this policy is not being adhered to. Figure 6 shows the results of the question, in SY 2015-2016, how often did you teach a lesson that addressed bullying awareness, prevention & intervention, a stunning 55.6% of teachers responded, “Not at All” and 22.5% responded “Trimesterly.” Combined, we see a total of 78.1% teachers in D1234 who are teaching little to no bullying curriculum at all. In addition to their not being a clear expectation for teachers to teach bullying awareness, prevention and intervention, there is also a lack of viable curriculum and resources. Students in D1234 receive a brief bullying awareness lesson in health class; however, some students do not have health until their third trimester. Should bullying curriculum be reduced to a one-day isolated lesson in health and wellness class?
Figure 6. How often have did you teach a lesson that addressed bullying awareness, prevention, and intervention?

The next question, as seen in Figure 7, asked teachers, during SY 2015-2016, how often did you directly teach social emotional skills through standards-based lessons? 62% of teachers responded “Not at All,” 16% responded “Trimesterly,” for a total of 78%. Only 2.8% claimed to directly teach social emotional skills through standards-based lessons on a daily basis, 7% weekly, and 12% monthly. This comes as no surprise in that we are seeing a general trend of lack of knowledge, lack of professional development, lack of expectation, and lack of confidence in teaching SEL standards.
Figure 7. How often did you directly teach social emotional skills through standards-based lessons?

Figure 8 shows a side-by-side comparison of how important staff feels it is for students to develop SEL awareness and competencies, and how important the need for teachers to develop a greater understanding of SEL standards and competencies. Let’s begin with how important teachers feel it is for students to develop greater SEL competencies and awareness. An outstanding 82.4% of teachers believe that there is an “extreme or very important” need for students to develop SEL awareness and competencies. 17.6% of teachers reported a moderate to slightly important need, and thankfully, no one responded that it is “not at all” important. This information is very promising in that it shows that despite the fact that the majority of teachers do not have a deep understanding of SEL, they understand the value SEL and feel that students will benefit from it.

The next question had similar findings. It delved into the self-perception of teacher’s
belief about their own need for developing a greater understanding of SEL standards and competencies (See Figure 7). As it turns out, 73.2% of teachers feel that there is an “Extreme or Very Important” need for staff to develop a greater understanding of SEL standards and competencies. 26% of teachers feel that there is a slight to moderate importance, and only one teacher reported that it is not at all important.

These two questions are important in gauging the culture of the district in terms of our shared values. Do teachers in D1234 value SEL? According to this survey, the majority of teachers do value SEL. Do teachers think it is important just for students, or for staff as well? According to the survey, the majority of staff value SEL for students and staff. If staff values SEL, then what are they willing to do about it? Here is the important question in terms of next steps. If D1234 teachers say that they value SEL, are they willing to make the investment of time and commitment to the process?

*Figure 8. How important is the need for students to develop greater SEL awareness and*
competencies, and how important is the need for staff to develop greater understanding of SEL standards and competencies?

An open-ended question, “What specifically would help you successfully implement SEL Standards” elicited much response. To summarize these findings, I have grouped the responses by theme. The major themes that surfaced were knowledge, time, and resources. In terms of knowledge teachers resoundingly responded that more professional development in the area of SEL is needed. A few direct quotes from my data collection were, “Training and practical resources for implementation that do not require extensive additional prep time,” “More available PD for understanding of concepts,” “More direction,” “Professional development on how to weave standards into curriculum already used, rather than just adding one more thing we need to try to cover,” “inservice on embedding the standards into current curriculum/lessons,” and “PD to improve my skills to improve my own proficiency.”

Likewise, teachers stated that they need more time to be able to learn and implement these standards. A few direct quotes from my data collection were, “more minutes,” “Time designated to implement the SEL Standards,” “Permission from administrators to schedule this in... but something needs to be taken off our plates. It’s hard fitting everything in,” “More time and research based resources,” “A designated day/time (perhaps monthly),” and, “Finding the time for implementation in the day.”

Lastly, teachers said that an organized curriculum would be helpful. A few direct quotes from my data collection were, “Resources, lesson plans, and activity ideas,” “curriculum and resources, time,” “if we were given lessons/a curriculum, a designated time in our schedule to teach it,” “Specific lesson ideas that could be offered in a ‘menu-type’ format,” “Tools to use,
school wide or district wide expectation that all classrooms use them,” “Organized curriculum that helps meet those standards,” and, “A Tier 1 program delivered regularly may help reduce the number of referrals to school specialists. This would also help with common language used across the grades when addressing specific situations, reinforcing appropriate behavior, etc.”

There were a small number (27) of teachers responded to the last prompt which was left open for additional thoughts, comments, and suggestions. Again, in an effort to communicate the main ideas, I have grouped the responses by theme. The main themes that surfaced were that of gratitude, feeling overwhelmed, the notion that they are already teaching SEL but this is not driven by the standards, and the fear of another new curriculum.

Many teachers expressed their thanks because they see the work as an integral part of educating our students. A direct quotes from my data collection were, “I am glad we are thinking about, and addressing this! Thank You”, “Thank you for looking more closely at this important area of student learning!”, and, “Thanks! These are so important, so excited to dive into them!”

Other teachers expressed that they are feeling overwhelmed in general due to new curriculum adoptions in math, inquiry, reading, and writing. A direct quote from my data collection was, “It is important but with all that is on our plates something needs to be taken off. Everything's important.”

A fair few teachers reported that they feel that they are already teaching SEL despite the fact that they are unaware of the standards. A few direct quotes from my data collection were, “We have not received formal PD and the standards have not really been ever referred to directly. That being said, we do integrate SEL learning daily, but we do not reference the standards with the students. It is more just what we KNOW students need to know and do.”, “We integrate social emotional learning throughout our day but it is tied to classroom needs and
infused into our lessons; not directly taught through a research-based, standards aligned curriculum,” “We teach it but it is not driven by the standards,” “I can and do teach emotional wellness within my class and integrate it with learning. However, I am not aware of the SEL standards and do not refer to them with my students. If I received Professional Development and resources to use to teach emotional awareness, I am confident that I would do so,” “I integrate and teach these standards in my daily daily instruction and routines, but have not referred directly to the standards when planning my lessons,” “Our team does infuse social emotional learning on a daily basis due to the nature of Kindergarten students. However, we are not very familiar with the standards and cannot say that we specifically plan our lessons around these standards,” and, “We integrated SEL learning in our curriculum, but we do not teach the specific standards.”

Lastly, there was a fear that any work in SEL would be a store bought, “canned program” that would not be meaningful for our students and teachers alike. A few direct quotes from my data collection were, “I would address them more integrated in what the students were learning instead of being isolated lessons,” “We cannot use a stand alone program and expect it to be implemented with integrity. We are fighting for time to implement our core academic curriculum. Adding more would lead to frustration for teachers and students.”, and “Professional Development, time in our schedule, and an engaging, developmentally appropriate curriculum would be helpful in teaching the SEL standards. I don’t think that canned programs are the best solution. Can we create something appropriate for our students’ needs?”
Section Six: A Vision of Success (To Be)

As stated in Section 2, “As Is” (Wagner et al., 2006) the problem exists that D1234 does not have SEL programming. In this section, I will further outline the implementation plan I have constructed to resolve the “As Is” problem and move to the “To Be” (Wagner et al., 2006) solution (See Appendix D). The plan is twofold. First, to conduct an SEL audit district-wide to gauge staff knowledge and current teaching practices of SEL skills and competencies. Second, was to construct a well-conceived plan to implement SEL programming at the district level. The second phase of the plan is the “To Be” (Wagner et al., 2006) and includes; engaging key stakeholders in an SEL governance committee, providing SEL professional development and experiential training for staff, conducting a needs analysis, SEL program vetting, SEL program(s) selection and adoption, creating an action plan for program implementation which includes, program piloting, ongoing assessment of implementation for continuous improvement, and assessment of program outcomes. Throughout the lifespan of this plan, there needs to be ongoing discourse with staff, administration, the Board of Education, and parent community in relation to the importance of affording students and staff SEL skills and competencies that serve as the tools for academic, social, and emotional well-being in school, life, and career.

Context

The current context of D1234 would be impacted in a very positive way if we are able to implement a district wide SEL program. If my goal of implementing an SEL program district wide was realized, the future context of D1234 would improve in that the social emotional needs of the students, staff, and greater community would be met with institutionalized SEL support. In an affluent community such as River Woods, the overt pressure and stressors that affect students,
staff and parents alike are detrimental to a socially and emotionally healthy culture. By tending to the needs of all stakeholders, everyone stands to potentially benefit from SEL programming. Because of the vital role that staff and parent community play in the roll out of a program, the implementation plan includes engaging key stakeholders in an SEL governance committee, and investing in SEL professional development and experiential training for staff.

**Culture**

In the “To Be” (Wagner et al., 2006) scenario the culture of D1234 will look very different. First and foremost, the district will prioritize, value, and support the SEL initiative. There will be no doubt that the district believes that SEL plays a critical role in the development of students. To be clear about this initiative, the administration will set the expectation for all staff to implement the SEL program with fidelity. In doing so, all staff will be expected to walk the talk, meaning, lead by example. In order to lead by example, district personnel must be personally and professionally engaged in SEL practice and programming.

I envision D1234’s plan being so successful that other schools will benefit from modeling our implementation process. With critical focus being on staff growth and development in the area of SEL, and combining mindfulness practices in the adopted SEL curriculum, the hope is to implement transformational SEL programming that serves to elevate the quality of learning, relationships, and well-being, for all stakeholder groups. D1234 aims to be a model district in the arena of SEL.

**Conditions**

Conditions that would be changed in D1234 for the better include the implementation of an SEL program consisting of meaningful curriculum with scope and sequence that would be taught universally. That is to say, no matter what school your teach in, or what school a child
attends, the district-wide expectation is that all students will receive the same quality SEL instruction. In order for this to happen, district administration will work together with teachers to determine an appropriate time for delivering this curriculum. As we know from research, the most effective SEL programs are a combination of both embedded content as well as direct teaching of SEL. Planning for this type of instruction will take time, and administration is willing to give teachers time to plan for this implementation.

In addition to upholding teacher expectations for teaching SEL and providing adequate time to do so, another condition that will serve to optimally support district-wide implementation of an SEL program is a healthy budget. In order to move forward with this initiative, there will be ample and accessible funding to support the growth and development of the program. If we decide to adopt an existing curriculum, there will be a sizeable cost. The district and school board will be on board as we move forward and financial needs arise.

With funding comes accountability. My “To Be” (Wagner et al., 2006) plan entails an action plan for program implementation which includes, program piloting, ongoing assessment of implementation for continuous improvement, and assessment of program outcomes. As the Board of Education will be providing funding, we will be transparent and hold ourselves and others accountable to professional expectations. We will move forward at a pace in which we can monitor expenditures, assign roles and responsibilities, state clear expectations, and hold true to D1234 values. We are in the business of educating children, therefore, all decisions that we make in regard to implementation of a SEL program must be primarily in the best interest of students.

Speaking of accountability, we will institute a formal means of assessment of SEL skills and competencies. This is no small task. There are many teams of researchers working diligently to try to find a reliable and valid form of assessing SEL skills and competencies; however, SEL
skills are not that easiest thing to assess. Many of the assessments out there are student self-assessments. Skeptics such as Angela Duckworth and Camille Farrington argue that this is not a valid assessment of skills and competencies. Another form of assessment is relying upon teacher feedback using standards-based reporting. As things stand, D1234 will aim to implement a combination of the two, student self-assessment and teacher reporting, in an effort to give the most accurate measure of student SEL skills and competencies.

Lastly, a condition that will be in place is that the SEL program that will be in place in D1234 will have a viable and meaningful scope and sequence that will be implemented with fidelity. The program will be implemented with the acronym SAFE (CASEL, 2015); sequenced, active, focused, and explicit. The lessons will be sequenced, connected, and coordinated to foster skills development. The lessons will be active so that students are engaged during the lessons to help them master new skills and attitudes. The lessons will be focused on the skills and competencies needed to develop personal and social skills. Lastly, the lessons will be taught explicitly so as to target specific social and emotional skills (CASEL.org, “What is SEL Approaches,” n.d.). The curriculum will be designed to encourage learning and growth that will engage students on all levels. Explicit SEL goals and standards will be driving all lessons. Students, staff, and the greater community will all benefit from this programming.

**Competencies**

The competencies that will be in place as a result of the district-wide implementation of a SEL program are professional development, allotted time for curriculum delivery, and the adoption of a research-based program. First and foremost, all staff will receive intensive professional development preparing them to competently and confidently deliver the SEL curriculum. That being said, administration will be participating fully in the SEL program
implementation by providing meaningful feedback to teachers. This form of administrative participation will demonstrate commitment and support of the initiative. Over time, the professional development offerings by the district will build a repertoire of SEL skills and positively impact student learning. Lastly, all professional development offerings are job embedded, continuous, and collaborative. In other words, the district will use institute days, staff meetings, and school improvement days to infuse SEL PD opportunities for staff. These PD sessions will be responsive to the needs of the students and teachers. Feedback will be solicited prior to PD sessions so that the district can respond directly to staff needs and requests in terms of providing applicable support.

Section Seven: Strategies and Actions for Change

In an effort to bridge the “as is” and the “to be” conceptualizations, I begin by describing the 3-5 Year Action Plan that was written in SY 2016-2017 (see Appendix D). This plan was drawn up by the Executive Director of Student Services and is complete with responsible persons, timelines, evidence of completion, and outcomes. The overarching goal in 2016-2017 as evidenced by the 3–5 year action plan was for all students to demonstrate social/emotional learning skills. This goal supports the D1234 achievement milestone of every student attaining significant social and emotional growth. As time has progressed, and positions have changed, so too have D1234’s plans for SEL. Following an outline of the 3-5 Year Action Plan of 2016-2017, I will describe the Strategies and Actions for Change Chart (Appendix F), the more aggressive 2017-2018 SEL Committee Action Plan (Appendix G) and the 2017-2018 SEL implementation plan (Appendix H).

The main strategies outlined in the Strategies and Actions for Change Chart (Appendix F), are data collection, collaborative development of program, professional development,
program pilot, and implementation. The Strategies and Actions for Change Chart offers a more detailed account of the actual work that has transpired to date toward achievement of the goal to implement SEL district-wide. Examples of this work include: proposal of EW Mentor stipend increase, proposal of K-8 SEL summer curriculum writing, usage of data to help guide growth and development of SEL program and gathering information and consultation from experts in the field. The actions related to these strategies will be the focus of the timelines described in the 2017-2018 SEL Committee Action Plan (Appendix G), and the 2017-2018 SEL Implementation Plan (Appendix H).

Beginning with the 2016-2017 3-5 Year Action Plan, the first action step (3a), addressed the culture and competencies of the 4 C’s chart (Wagner et al., 2006, p.117). The first step was to survey teachers on their current practices in embedding SEL standards into lessons. This was accomplished by administration of the district-wide SEL audit. The evidence of completion of this action step was a summary of the survey results which was reported out to staff, administrators, and the Board of Education. The outcome of this survey gave a clear understanding of the current situation of SEL in D1234 including the knowledge and current practices. This insight has helped the SEL Administrative Team to identify the “As Is” (Wagner et al., 2006) and further develop a “To Be” (Wagner et al., 2006) improvement plan.

The second action step (3b), also addresses the competencies of the 4 C’s chart (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 117) in that the action was to identify SEL standards for explicit and implicit instruction. During a district institute day in SY 2016-2017, I presented SEL PD to all district staff which provided a definition of SEL, a brief history of SEL, explained the five competencies of SEL and described how these 5 competencies form the basis of the Illinois State SEL standards. This PD proved very effective and informative. Many staff members remarked in their
feedback that they were not aware that there were state standards in SEL. The Illinois state SEL standards continue to serve as the north star to guide guaranteed and viable SEL curriculum in D1234.

The third action step of the 2016-2017 3-5 Year Action Plan (3c), once again addresses the competencies area of the 4 C’s chart (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 117). This action step called for exploring ways to assess and report SEL standards to students and parents. The assessment and measurement of SEL skills and competencies continues to be a hot topic of conversation locally, nationally, and internationally. As such, D1234 has not settled on an assessment tool to measure growth and development in SEL skills and competencies. When this is decided upon, evidence of completion will be the addition of an SEL component in the “Portrait of a Graduate,” an SEL report card strand. We will continue to use the CSCI and possibly add new questions to reflect and assess the new SEL standards and programming. A student self-assessment tool is a viable option for measurement although self-assessments have been called into question by researchers due to their subjective nature. A teacher rating scale with an SEL standards Rubric is another option for assessment of SEL skills and competencies. The outcome of this action step would be the development of a reporting system which provides students, parents, and staff with feedback on student progress toward attainment of SEL standards.

The fourth action step (3d), also falls under Wagner’s competencies section of the 4 C’s chart (2006, p. 117). This step, arguably the most important, calls for the education of all staff on SEL programming. According to this 3-5-year plan, the persons in charge of this step are the members of the Instructional Leadership Team. This leadership team is comprised of building principals, the Executive Director of Student Services, and the Associate Superintendent. The timeline was set for 2017-2018. The evidence of completion would be that the principals, the
Executive Director of Student Services, and I would hold meetings with stakeholder groups and help shape instructional planning in SEL. The outcome of this action step would be professional development for the delivery of a guaranteed and viable SEL curriculum. Staff training and development in SEL remains a top priority in D1234 and a key factor in SEL program success (Durlak, et al. 2011).

The last action step (3e) of the 3-5 Year Plan is to begin to implement instruction of SEL standards across grade levels throughout the district. This action step addresses the competencies, culture, and conditions (Wagner et al., 2006) in D123. This is where the rubber meets the road. In order for this to happen, the staff must be competent, the culture must be supportive and positive, and the conditions such as allotment of time, and provision of resources to teach SEL must be taken into consideration. The persons responsible for carrying out this step were the members of the Instructional Leadership Team. The timeline was set for the 2017-2018 school year. The evidence of completion would have been linking SEL standards with appropriate lessons in Atlas Rubicon, D1234’s database for curriculum and standards. This action step calls for the beginning of initial implementation, refinement, and additions to programming over subsequent years. According to the plan, the outcome of this action step would have been the creation of conditions for students to exhibit SEL core competencies.

As one might surmise, despite the good intentions of the 3-5 Year Action Plan, the action steps were rather broad and set forth somewhat of an unrealistic timeline. That said, the significance of this plan is that it was the first documentation in the district in recent years to put SEL back on the radar of district stakeholders. Although this documented plan did not last more than a year, it did address the competencies, culture, and conditions needed to get the ball rolling. This plan laid the groundwork for new plans such as the 2017-2018 SEL Task Force Action Plan.
In the following paragraphs, I will be discussing the 2017-2018 SEL Task Force Action Plan (Appendix G), and the 2017-2018 SEL Implementation Plan (Appendix H). The 2017-2018 SEL Task Force Action Plan states that SEL implementation impact will help students develop an understanding of, and be able to demonstrate skills to manage emotions, show empathy for others, develop, and maintain positive relationships, set positive goals and make responsible decisions (CASEL, “What is SEL,” n.d.) The SEL Task Force will develop an SEL scope and sequence, scale SEL targets, research SEL resources, and ultimately select resources to be used in D1234 for K-8 SEL instruction. This work aligns to the D1234 milestones in achievement, instruction, assessment, and partnership.

The SEL Task Force Action Plan (Appendix G) program outcomes entail both short and long-term goals. The short-term goal is to have a K-8 SEL scope and sequence SEL curriculum with scaled targets by SY 2017-2018. By November 2017, the task force will decide on purchase of program and resources staying within a budget of $15,000.00. This funding will be used to purchase SEL program(s) and related materials; cover substitute cost for two full days of pull out of SEL members for curriculum writing. In addition to purchase of a program, an SEL screener will also be purchased.

According to this plan, the SEL program(s) will be piloted in the spring of 2018. Once a program is selected, teacher training becomes a priority and will be planned for accordingly. I will by lobbying for an extension of time for teacher training and development in SEL skills and competencies because, as you have read, research informs us that teacher training is quintessential for successful implementation of SEL. By February, the task force will determine how to fully implement SEL programming in D1234 for SY 2018-2019.
According to the SEL Task Force Action Plan (Appendix G), the long-term goals for D1234 extend through spring 2020. These long-term goals include full implementation of SEL programming district-wide, and a multitudinal system of SEL learning and assessment. Assessment of SEL skills and competencies will not only be used as a screening tool to identify students needing more support, it will also help determine growth and development of SEL. Success will be measured by SEL assessment tools that have yet to be identified.

The calendar section of the plan calls for monthly SEL Administrative Team meetings, two full days of pull out for the K-8 SEL Task Force, and monthly facilitator meetings. The work of the task force will be communicated through the following channels; all school staff meetings via SEL facilitators and members, the district online newsletter, and district-wide communication to all stakeholders. All communication needs to clarify distinctions between Foundations versus SEL, EWC versus SEL, and should look to incorporation of Digital Citizenship as part of interpersonal/social interactions and communication.

Lastly, I will be describing the most recent plan, the 2017-2018 SEL Implementation Plan (Appendix H). This plan was written over the summer of 2017 and acts to archive of the work we have done to date, as well as plan for the work we hope to accomplish in the near future. The plan starts with the first meeting of the SEL Administrative Team in August, 2017. At this meeting, a Google Team Drive was created to house all documents and artifacts for the team. The administrative team was charged with researching options for district-wide SEL programming and resources. A google document was created by the Executive Director of Student Services that would be used for SEL program and curriculum vetting. A follow-up meeting was scheduled for September 13 where we would present our top three SEL resource choices.
At the September meeting, the SEL Administrative Team Reviewed the SEL resources using the Google Doc program vetting guide. All possible options were discussed at great length. The finalists for further review were; Second Step, Lions Quest, and RULER. We also decided to include the supplementary SEL curriculum options of MindUP and Facing History and Ourselves. Representatives from each company will be presenting to the SEL Task Force on November 29, 2017.

On September 22, 2017, D1234 held its first SEL Task Force Workshop of the 2017-2018 school year. The work of the task force built on their work from the previous year of unpacking the SEL standards, determining appropriate learning targets, and powering the targets. Using SEL resources from the Illinois State Board of Education such as SEL standard Performance Descriptors, the task force moved forward with scaling the targets K-8 using a scale of 1-4. At the upcoming SEL Task Force Workshop on November 29, the task force will be doing a gallery walk to check for a sensical scope, sequence, and continuum of standards across the grade levels. Feedback will be collected, documents will be revised, and our final product will be an adoption of K-8 SEL standards and targets.

As mentioned above, at the SEL Task Force Workshop on November 29, task force members will be attending presentations from Second Step, Lions Quest, RULER, MindUP, and Facing History and Ourselves. Following the presentations, task force members will be using guiding questions in a small group format to delve deeper into each program offering. Following this discussion, they will be asked to fill out a Google Form to provide feedback on the SEL program presentations. Results will be analyzed by the SEL Administrative Team and programming will be determined. This information will be shared out to the district via the Instructional Leadership Team.
In January, D1234 will begin piloting select SEL resources. A pilot cohort will be decided upon by the SEL Administrative Team with an equal representation of stakeholders. Pilot teachers will be asked to attend the SEL Administrative Team meetings to report their experiences. According to the 2017-2018 SEL Implementation Plan, D1243 will have a recommendation of program adoption before March 1, 2018. On March 1, there will be a formal adoption of the SEL program via School Board Presentation.

According to the 2017-2018 SEL Implementation Plan, March through June will be staff training on SEL resource and full-scale implementation of the program is set for SY 2018-2019. This is where I would like to interject my opinion on the matter. After having researched multiple angles of SEL programming and implementation, I feel that it is imperative to provide intensive training including staff development in SEL skills and competencies. I would propose that in order to have adequacy in SEL skills and competencies, a yearlong staff training and development is needed. During this time, the pilot cohort can present to staff on their experiences with the program and the administrative team can make any adjustments that we deem necessary. I, of all people, want SEL programming in D1234 schools as soon as possible; however, caution must be taken in the implementation process, and teacher training must be a top priority so that the program is set up for success.

In conclusion, as I have stated throughout this writing, the change leadership plan that I propose is to implement district-wide SEL programming. By doing so, all students and staff in D1234 will be equipped with SEL skills and competencies that will enrich their well-being in school, in life, and in their future careers. The Illinois State Board of Education instituted statewide SEL standards over a decade ago. This legislation affords every student in the state the right to SEL skills and competencies as part of their educational program. We have witnessed
that where there is no accountability, districts in Illinois have failed to comply with SEL programming. With ESSA reminding the nation that schools must educate the whole child, SEL has gained ground. As stewards of public education, it is our job to monitor and ensure that students across the state of Illinois are consistently, systematically, and comprehensively learning social and emotional skills and competencies. Join me in this effort to advocate for accountability and monitoring of SEL programming in schools. Our students deserve to learn the essential school, life and career skills that are inherent in SEL and the basis of well-being.
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10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00603


Appendix A: 4 C’s “As Is” Chart
Appendix B: SEL Audit

School District 1234
I am a:
K-4 Teacher
5-8 Teacher
Both

1. Rate your level of knowledge of the Illinois Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Standards:
Not at all knowledgeable
Slightly knowledgeable
Moderately knowledgeable
Very knowledgeable
Extremely knowledgeable

2. Rate your level of confidence in your ability to teach the IL SEL Standards??
Not at all confident
Slightly confident
Moderately confident
Very confident
Extremely confident

3. How often have you received professional development (PD) in the area of SEL within the past 3 years? Please do not include Foundations training in your response.
I have not received PD in the area of SEL
I have received PD 1-3 times in the area of SEL
I have received PD 4 or more times in the area of SEL

4. If you participated in SEL PD, how well did it prepare you for implementing the standards? (If you did not participate in SEL PD please choose the final response)
Not at all prepared
Slightly prepared
Moderately prepared
Very prepared
Extremely prepared
I did not participate in SEL PD

5. In the 2015-2016 school year, how often did you refer to and integrate the SEL Standards into your lesson planning?
Not at all
Trimesterly
Monthly
Weekly
Daily

6. In the 2015-2016 school year, how often did you teach a lesson(s) that addressed bullying
7. If you taught bullying awareness, prevention, and intervention in 2015-2016, please share a brief overview of: topics you covered, curriculum used (if any), and when you taught this (during what class time & what time of year)
Text-box response

8. During the 2015-2016 school year, how often did you directly teach Social and Emotional skills through standards-based lessons?
Not at all
Trimesterly
Monthly
Weekly
Daily

9. Do you currently use elements of a research based, published SEL program as primary resource in teaching SEL skills? If yes, please list program(s) you are currently using where it says “other” *
No
Other:

10. How important would you say the need is for students to develop greater Social Emotional awareness and competencies?
Not at all important
Slightly important
Moderately important
Very important
Extremely important

11. How important would you say the need is for staff to develop greater understanding of Social Emotional Learning Standards and competencies?
Not at all important
Slightly important
Moderately important
Very important
Extremely important

12. Has anything hindered your implementation of SEL Standards? If yes, please select "other" and list reasons in the space provided.
No
“Other” Text box for response

13. What specifically would help you successfully implement SEL Standards? (Please share specific suggestions below)
Text box for response

Additional thoughts, comments, suggestions:
Text box for response
## Appendix C: Essential Characteristics of Effective SEL Programming

| Addresses affective and social dimensions of learning | • Builds attachment to school through caring, engaging, interactive, co-operative classroom, and school-wide practices  
• Strengthens relationships between students, teachers, other school personnel, families, and community members  
• Encourages and provides opportunities for participation  
• Uses diverse, engaging teaching methods that motivate and involve students  
• Promotes responsibility, cooperation, and commitment to learning  
• Nurtures sense of security, safety, support and belonging  
• Emphasises cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity |
| Leads to coordinated, integrated and unified programming linked to academic outcomes | • Offers unifying framework to promote and integrate social-emotional and academic development  
• Integral aspects of formal and informal academic curriculum and daily routines (e.g., lunch, transitions, playground)  
• Provided systemically to students over multiple years, pre-kindergarten through high school.  
• Coordinated with student support services efforts, including health, nutrition, service learning, physical education, psychology, counselling, and nursing |
| Addresses key implementation factors to support effective social and emotional learning and development | • Promotes a safe, caring, nurturing, cooperative, and challenging learning environment  
• Monitors characteristics of the intervention, training and technical support, and environment factors on an ongoing basis to ensure high – quality implementation  
• Provides leadership, opportunities for participation in planning, and adequate resources  
• Institutional policies align with and reflect SEL goals  
• Offers well planned professional development, supervision, coaching, support, and constructive feedback |
| Involves family and community partnerships | • Encourages and coordinates efforts and involvement of students, peers, parents, and educators, and community members  
• SEL-related skills and attitudes modelled and applied at school, home, and in the community |
| Design includes continuous improvement, outcome evaluation and dissemination components | • Uses program evaluation results for continuous improvement to determine progress toward identified goals and needed changes  
• Multifaceted evaluation undertaken to examine implementation, process, and outcome criteria  
• Results shared with key stakeholders |

Appendix D: 4 C’s “to Be” Chart

4 C’s “To Be” Analysis for limlia Corea

Context
- Affluent Community
- High Achievement/High Pressure
- High social emotional needs being met with institutionalized SEL support

Culture
- District prioritizes, values, and supports SEL and Character Ed
- District believes that SEL plays a critical role in the development of students
- District Admin sets expectation that all staff will implement SEL/Character Ed program with fidelity
- All district personnel “walk the talk”
- Admin and staff are professionally engaged in SEL, practice, and programming

Conditions
- Structured SEL with scope and sequence being delivered consistently and meaningfully across district
- Time allotted in schedule for SEL curriculum delivery
- Budget allotted for SEL curriculum & resources including PD opportunities for staff
- Explicit expectations around roles and responsibilities
- Monitor SEL proficiency
- Program is developed using
  - Sequence
  - Active forms of learning
  - Focus on SEL
  - Explicit SEL objectives

Implementation of SEL/Character Ed Program

Competencies
- Staff members are consistent in teaching SEL
- Administration provides meaningful feedback to staff regarding SEL delivery
- PD offerings by district build repertoire of SEL skills and knowledge that influence student learning
- Ongoing development opportunities in SEL are job embedded, continuously constructed, and collaborative
Appendix E: 2016-2017 3-5 Year Goal

Milestone Area(s):
Achievement
Assessment

3-5 Year Goal
All students will demonstrate Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) skills.

Why is this goal important for District 67?
This goal supports the D67 Achievement Milestone of every student attaining significant social and emotional growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Step</th>
<th>Responsible Person(s)</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Evidence of Completion</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>Survey teachers on their current practices in embedding SEL standards into lessons</td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>Summarize survey information and report out to teachers and administrators</td>
<td>Identify current practices and develop improvement plan where needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Identify SEL standards for explicit/implicit instruction</td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>Written document with standards identified for each grade level</td>
<td>Create guaranteed and viable SEL curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c</td>
<td>Explore ways to assess and report SEL standards to students and parents</td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>SEL component of Portrait of a Graduate Report card strand CSCI Self-assessment tool Teacher rating scales Standards Rubric</td>
<td>Develop a reporting system which provides students, parents, and staff with feedback on student progress toward attainment of SEL standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d</td>
<td>Educate all staff on SEL programming</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>Principals, Ingrid, and Emilie to hold meetings with stakeholder groups and shape instructional plan</td>
<td>Professional development for the delivery of a guaranteed and viable curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3e</td>
<td>Begin to implement instruction of SEL standards across the grade levels</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>Link SEL standards with appropriate lessons in Atlas Rubicon, begin initial implementation, refine and add over subsequent years</td>
<td>Create conditions for students to exhibit SEL core competencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix F: Strategies and Actions for Change Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposing EW Mentor Stipend Increase</td>
<td>Presentation to the Stipend Review Committee</td>
<td>Evolve efforts to include more substantive practices Shape PD in SEL Delve deeply into CSCI results Move the needle where needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Curriculum writing K-4 5-8</td>
<td>Submitted 2 proposals for SEL Summer Curriculum Writing</td>
<td>Convey urgency (site CSCI results) Comprehensive district-wide, evidence based, SEL scope and sequence “I Can” statements D1234 Character Traits Anti-bullying Curriculum/Pro-social relationships Mindfulness Alignment to Illinois state SEL standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use data to suggesting how to grow and develop program</td>
<td>Presented to Board of Education</td>
<td>Accountability for SEL District-wide Expanding the Dept. of Student Services to include more support for whole population (not just 504 &amp; IEP) Funding Expand role of EW Coordinator (.5 to 1.0) Create comprehensive Social Emotional Wellness Program K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff survey</td>
<td>Administered SEL Audit</td>
<td>All certified staff in district to take survey Gauge staff knowledge and current practices in SEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather information and consultation from experts in the field</td>
<td>Met with a representative from CASEL, along with D1234 Associate Superintendent, Executive Director of Student Services, and Charmm’d consultant</td>
<td>Meeting centered around the current situation in D1234 and what needs to be done to move forward with district-wide implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate staff in SEL</td>
<td>Presented district-wide SEL PD</td>
<td>Used district institute days to present SEL PD to staff K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL Task Force</td>
<td>Invited 30 staff members to be part of the SEL planning, leadership, and governance committee</td>
<td>Created a governance group to help inform the process of district-wide implementation of SEL Staff members represent a cross section of K-8 educators from all subject areas and grade levels Group has officially met 3 times Articulation and Powering of the SEL standards Scale SEL standards Write a scope and sequence continuum of SEL standards for D1234 K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL Program Vetting</td>
<td>SEL Administrative Team vetted top SEL programs</td>
<td>Top SEL programs were vetted SEL Admin team came up with a list of finalists that will present to the SEL Task Force November 29 Second Step Lion’s Quest Ruler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Piloting</td>
<td>SEL Task Force members to pilot chosen program</td>
<td>When final program is chosen, SEL Task Force will set out to pilot program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Adoption</td>
<td>Presentation of program to BOE for approval of adoption</td>
<td>Once program is selected and piloted, district-wide program adoption will be presented to the BOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Training</td>
<td>Teachers will be led through intensive SEL practice, training, and development</td>
<td>Intensive teacher training and development during district institute days. Ongoing support and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Implementation</td>
<td>All schools will adopt SEL programming</td>
<td>Time will be designated in school schedules for the delivery of SEL programming. Content will be taught with fidelity using SAFE teaching strategies. Program will be monitored for effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix G: 2017-2018 SEL Task Force Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Name</th>
<th>Social Emotional Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Impact</td>
<td>To promote social and emotional learning (SEL) for students to develop an understanding of and demonstrate skills to manage emotions, show empathy for others, set and maintain positive relationships, set positive goals and make responsible decisions (CASEL). The group will develop a Social Emotional Learning Scope and Sequence, scale all the SEL targets, research SEL resources, and ultimately select resources to be used for K-8 SEL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Short Term: (Spring 2018) To have a Scope &amp; Sequence K-8, scale all the targets, pilot and determine a resource (e.g. Second Step or another program) Nov- Feb 2018 decide on purchase of resources $15,000.00 determine how to do full implementation for 2018-19; select program &amp; train teachers Purchase and implement SEL screener Long Term: (Spring 2020) Implementation of SEL Program; establish a multi-tiered system of SEL learning and assessment, screening tool to identify students needing more support and determine growth of SEL and interventions to support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Facilitators:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will be involved?</td>
<td>Membership:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>Demonstrate success of SEL with use of Social Emotional Assessment tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will success be measured?</td>
<td>SEL scope and sequence K-8 Implementation of SEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Plan</td>
<td>Monthly SEL Committee meetings 2 full days of pull out for the K-8 SEL Task Force to write curriculum November 29, 2017 8:00 -am 4:00 pm Monthly facilitator meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the major tasks of this committee?</td>
<td>Budgetary Considerations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendar</td>
<td>Milestones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When will this committee meet?</td>
<td>How does this work align to the milestones?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will the work of this committee be shared?</td>
<td>All School Staff meetings via SEL facilitators and members, District wide communication to all stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication needs to clarify distinctions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foundations vs SEL</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EWC vs SEL</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-Tiered System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorporation of Digital Citizenship as part of Interpersonal/Social Interactions and Communications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix H: 2017-2018 SEL Implementation Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Person Responsible/People Involved</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/25/2017</td>
<td>SEL implementation meeting with Ingrid, Angela, Rebecca, Renee, Jackie, Emilie and Lynn</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Research options for resources and prepare to present top 3 resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Renee--create Team Drive for SEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/13/2017</td>
<td>10:30 @ AC--SEL resource planning meeting with Ingrid, Angela, Rebecca, Renee, Jackie, Emilie, Lynn</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Review top possible options to bring forward to the SEL task force. This will be a mini review of potential resource options, the standards they align to and what they offer. Schedule visits to schools?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/22/2017</td>
<td>SEL scaling work with the SEL task force</td>
<td>Rebecca/Renee (build day)</td>
<td>Pull ISBE scaling resources to prep for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/29/2017</td>
<td>SEL work group full day. Top 3 resource presentations to the task force. Lunch. Feedback and discussion about the resource presentations. Filling out forms to gather feedback.</td>
<td>Emilie--pull resources</td>
<td>Present the choice to CCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January-February 2018</td>
<td>Pilot of chosen resource (pilot cohort will be decided upon by the team, however equal representation of stakeholders will be required)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Get pilot teachers with 2-3 dates on the calendar to join the Director’s Meeting. Have a recommendation before 3/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1 2018</td>
<td>SEL day--Feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal adoption of resource via Board presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>March - June 2018</td>
<td>Training of staff on SEL resource</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-2019 School Year</td>
<td>Formal implementation of SEL resource across the district</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Long term goal=what do our assessments look like and how do we report out*