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Increasing School Social Worker Supports for Schools in Illinois: Policy Recommendations for Supporting Student Learning and Growth.

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INCREASING SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOLS IN
ILLINOIS: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING STUDENT
LEARNING AND GROWTH

by

Kizawanda A. Olowe

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National Louis University

Education Leadership Doctoral Program

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Document Origination Statement for Digital Commons @ NLU

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).

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ABSTRACT

Administrators and board members at the Illinois State Board of Education recommended that schools with certain demographics hire one social worker for every 350 students. The policy has yet to be implemented despite high rates of student poverty, lagging test scores, school bullying, suspensions, and an increased number of school shootings. The Illinois State Board of Education's social and emotional learning standards guide educators and policy makers to interact and educate each student. School social workers equipped with the necessary skill set provide services, implement district wide social and emotional learning programs, and work with various stakeholders to monitor progress. A growing number of students in America grapple with social and emotional issues that are impeding their ability to make sound decisions, successfully navigate society, and make positive contributions to their families and community. Each child educated in a public school in Illinois should receive high quality school social work services and social and emotional support from preschool throughout high school. Implementing high fidelity social and emotional learning programs in schools would produce better outcomes for all stakeholders. Social and emotional learning infused into a school's culture and climate helps produce well-rounded individuals. The Illinois State Board of Education's school social work recommendations should be enforced with urgent speed.

PREFACE

Every child in society deserves the opportunity to attend a high-quality school that provides both academic and social supports. Students and staff members are dealing with psychosocial issues that impede their ability to function both in and out of school. More demands are being placed on students to increase test scores, enroll and persist in college, and manage their own social and emotional issues in the academic environment. Teachers are ill equipped to deal with the myriad of challenges students and families in society face.

School social workers are trained to implement the Illinois State Board of Education social and emotional learning standards. In addition, they are equipped with skills that could help infuse the skills into the culture and climate of the school and advocate for resources that support overall student development. Receiving adequate social and emotional support in schools is an issue of equity and also necessary in society. If we want students to have an opportunity to thrive in society, then it is our duty to implement the Illinois State Board of Education's school social work ratios across the state. This issue is important to me because of my experience as teacher, school social worker, and director of special education. I have hospitalized over 200 students for suicidal and homicidal ideations and managed several completed suicides.

Students have dropped out of high school, run away from home, abused substances, and engaged in many other unconventional behaviors because they grappled with social and emotional issues that impeded their ability to function in their academic and social environments. Society has an opportunity to do the right thing and implement

preventative services that could alter the lives of students, parents, teachers, and the community at large. We must stand together and be the voice of the muted and disenfranchised populations in America. Everyone deserves an opportunity to be educated, healthy, and happy.

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SECTION ONE: VISION STATEMENT

Introduction of the Problem

My experience in the field of education has spanned over 17 years and during my tenure, opportunities to educate and interact with students from various backgrounds have been abundant. During my tenure as a preschool teacher, some students reported to school unkempt, hungry, and stressed. Their caregivers frequently appeared detached and anxious. While working as a high school teacher, my work entailed educating students, who were teen parents, lacked social skills, dealt with conflict in atypical manners, and were contending with adult responsibilities. My career as a school social worker began after teaching for eight years.

The students in my school were stressed; dealing with diagnosed and undiagnosed Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5 (DSM-5) issues, and faced a host of problems that were hampering their ability to function in their academic and social environments. Medical and mental health professionals have used DSM-5 as a resource to determine if a client is suffering from clinical issues that might be interfering with their ability to fully function in society (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). As the Director of Specialized Services at a charter school, my work entails educating the most disadvantaged and at-risk students in the country African-American males. Every student should be taught skills that could help him or her to become good-natured and contributing members in society. The state's keen focus on academics should shift to a well-rounded emphasis that includes providing services that educate the whole child.

My first epiphany occurred when several crises occurred during the same time as scheduled meetings and testing for individual education plans (IEPs). While feeling overwhelmed with my unmanageable job responsibilities, there were noted impediments that interfered with my ability to provide services to students who had experienced high degrees of trauma, were wards of the state, and had expressed multiple homicidal and suicidal ideations. When I recognized the gaps in services my students received, I felt the obvious course of action was to research state guidelines and best practices in the field of school social work. The investigation led to the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) *School Social Work Manual* (2007), which outlined the number of school social workers that were required to service students in schools with particular demographics. In line with these standards, my district should have employed six school social workers instead of one (ISBE, 2007).

The ISBE recommended schools with high poverty levels, minority concentrations, and federal impact issues have a ratio of one social worker for every 350 students (ISBE, 2007). The policy recommendations were astounding, because despite the data and recommended guidelines, schools were not being held accountable for adhering to them. The emotional well being of students was not considered as important in many districts as test scores and academic benchmark data.

Durlak (2015) stated that adolescents' social and emotional learning (SEL) had become an important topic because of its direct correlation with children's academic readiness and success, school adjustment, social relations, personal well being, mental health, and resilience in the face of stressful situations. Districts across the state should be

given adequate resources to implement the ISBE school social work ratio guidelines. The benefits would outweigh the financial cost, and society would grow and thrive because children and adults could be physically and emotionally healthier.

Critical Issues

As the provider of social work services for over 1,900 students, there was an expectation that all crises would be managed immediately, students would be tested well before eligibility meetings, all IEP related meetings would be attended, stakeholders would be consulted on an on-going basis, individual and group services would be provided on a weekly basis, and all documentation would be precise and entered into the system at the close of business the same day. The above tasks were very overwhelming for one individual and burnout set in during my first year operating as a school social worker. The love for the job, students, and the ability to advocate for the most at-risk students kept me in the position for six years. Despite my passion for the work, it was too much for one person to handle.

In order to advocate for more school social workers, a meeting was requested with the school superintendent to review district data, service allocation, research, schedules, and state mandates. Concrete documentation that outlined concerns, ethical guidelines, best practices, and the ISBE school social worker policy recommendations were shared with the superintendent and the two other school social workers in the district. At the conclusion of the meeting, the superintendent stated that he would look into the situation. Unfortunately, a response was never provided, and the district never hired another social worker during my 6-year tenure in the position.

This policy issue was not central to one school or one district in the State of Illinois. Being a member of a south suburban school social worker organization, and after consulting with other social workers, I found that my district was not the only one that required one social worker to administer services to an entire school. Without adequate services, students attempted and completed suicide at higher rates. Suicide was the third leading cause of death among persons aged 10–14, and the second among persons aged 15–34 years (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). An absence of adequate social and emotional services in schools led to higher detentions rates, suspensions, low attendance, and academic progress (Olowe, 2017a). Constable, McDonald, and Flynn (2002) reported that school social workers have the training to counteract the negative messages students receive about race, gender, disability, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. Sufficient school social work services had a positive impact on students, parents, and the entire community.

SEL that takes place in the academic environment gives school social workers a platform to address both academic and social and emotional issues. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) model in Appendix 1 outlines the SEL framework. This model should be used in schools across Illinois to teach students self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship, and responsible decision-making skills. SEL services should be a Tier 1 intervention in every school (ISBE, 2007). In this day and age of school shootings, community violence, lesbian gay bisexual transgendered questioning disparities, Senate Bill 100, IEP, Section 504, and

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) plans, school social workers have had more responsibilities in schools.

Schools had more students on the roster who have probation officers, multiple hospitalizations, and DSM-5 diagnosis. Zins and Elias (2007) reported that in addition to educating students, schools were seen as an important and central arena for health promotion and primary prevention. School social workers were the first responders to school crises, and students were not receiving a satisfactory amount of services to help them learn evidence based SEL skills. An SEL framework was known to enable and assist administrators in creating programs that address issues of equity, bullying, and a myriad of other problems that help to remedy stressors that negatively impact learning.

Recommended Policy and Envisioned Effect

The ISBE offered their policy recommendation that schools hire at least one social worker for every 350 students in schools that have high poverty rates, students with IEPs, and students who do not identify as Caucasian (ISBE, 2007). The Illinois General Assembly had already required that all schools in Illinois develop SEL standards and implement them. Although the policy has been written, most schools have not implemented the standards as intended. Low student to school social worker ratios in the State of Illinois and lack of awareness about the impact school social workers and SEL standards have on student outcomes resulted.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is the largest school district in the country, and 83% of the students that attend CPS live below the poverty line. Milner (2015) reported that despite the fact that teachers tend to have good intentions, they do not have the

capacity to support all aspects of student learning. An adequate amount of school social work services would help students receive the social and emotional support they need to access the general education curriculum, reduce the impact of trauma, and help students learn how to manage their emotions. The current policy should be enforced to guarantee that the ISBE school social worker recommendations are implemented in the State of Illinois (ISBE, 2007).

School social workers' goals for students were typically drafted based on the ISBE SEL standards. Elias (1997) stated that how students experience and perceive their school and classroom climate was significantly related to their psychosocial and academic development, school adjustment performance, and education outcomes. Staffing schools with more social workers would create more opportunities for SEL standards to be implemented and taught with fidelity throughout the school environment.

Psycho-education and preventative services decreased problematic behaviors and increase on-task behaviors in schools. Milner (2015) stated that teachers needed education, support, and learning skills that helped them understand the psychological, social, emotional, and mental health challenges students dealt with on a day-to-day basis. School social workers were trained to facilitate workshops for teachers and parents, which connected families to community agencies that would help address issues that impact the family system. Increasing the number of school social workers in Illinois would lead to better outcomes for students, and the community at large.

School district administrators reported that they were having a difficult time implementing Senate Bill 100 and MTSS plans because of capacity and staffing issues,

since its mandated enactment. School social workers were trained in restorative justice practices and dissecting academic from social and emotional issues. A lower school social worker to student ratio would help increase freshman-on-track rates, high school graduation rates, decrease the school to prison pipeline, suicide attempts and completions, and help to produce more productive members of society. Milner (2015) suggested that schools that admire students and their talents should implement programs that promote student success. To counteract the myriad of problems schools experienced due to the implementation of state mandates, schools should hire more school social workers who are skilled enough to address the social and emotional issues that impeded student and school success.

SECTION 2: NEEDS ANALYSIS

Policy recommendations that were not implemented led to confusion and questions about whether or not the policy was worth the effort. Several issues arose when I pondered the lack of follow through from the ISBE. Is there a lack of funding? Were the recommendations drafted to appease the school social workers? Was there an imminent plan to hold districts accountable for the implementation of school social work and SEL services in all schools? The ISBE school social work recommendations were considered important for the academic, social, and financial advancement of society. The educational, economic, social, political, moral, and ethical dilemmas involved in implementing the recommended ISBE school social work policy recommendations should be scrutinized.

Educational Analysis

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study's researchers highlighted the impact childhood trauma can have on life experiences. From 1995 to 1997, researchers with Kaiser Permanente's Health Appraisal Clinic collaborated with researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to conduct a study about the roots of risk factors that have harmful health and social consequences on the lives of people with traumatic experiences (Leitch, 2017). Researchers determined the negative experiences many youth face in society could be counteracted. For example, staffing schools with trained social workers who could assess students and implement proactive supports and programs that teach students how to cope with stressors and trauma.

Leitch (2017) advocated for the ACE study findings and recognized elevated rates of childhood trauma existed in incarcerated populations and offender groups. Gathering information during early childhood and young family experiences enabled researchers to design early intervention programs that specifically targeted violence and neglect. The program design focused on the importance of collecting trauma histories. Youth groups, such as groups invested in juvenile justice, raised awareness of associated early childhood trauma, offender behaviors, and offender needs.

All students should have access to emotionally sound educators and SEL supports built into their school day. Milner (2015) reported that the states play a greater role in education funding to school districts with the biggest challenges. Despite the research being clear that students who receive more support services and high-quality instruction in schools achieve at higher levels, school districts continued to receive most of their funding from property taxes. Odden (2015) stated that schools that embraced accountability for student results, regardless of the size of their budget, demonstrated they used education dollars more effectively and efficiently. Students required a rigorous and well-rounded education in order to function in our fluctuating society.

Test scores do not determine whether or not a student would enter or persist in college (Goleman, 2005). Social and emotional skills have been found to be a better indicator of success than test scores. According to Schmidt (2008) the main purpose of providing SEL services in schools was to help students achieve academically, reach higher levels of functioning in basic skills, and make evidence-based decisions about future careers. Children who had more psychosocial pressures tended to have behavioral

or emotional problems in schools (Haynes, 2002). Students should be emotionally available for learning in order for the goals to be realized. Receiving adequate services from school social workers would reduce the number of students that have mental health issues.

Although schools focused on test scores, these test scores did not correlate with academic achievement or with one's ability to obtain and retain a job. Students who had emotional intelligence were able to make evidence-based decisions, were self-aware, and had the ability to appropriately interact with a variety of individuals (Goleman, 2005). There was a positive correlation between academics and social and emotional skills. Goleman (2005) recognized that the most common disability among teenagers was mental illness. Students who reported to school with untreated mental health issues were more likely to engage in unconventional behaviors. Elias (1997) indicated that educators recognized the critical role that social and emotional skills played in fostering productive members of society, and state departments of education have established core curriculum standards accentuating their growth. Emotionally sound individuals were more likely to persist through college and have the necessary skills to obtain and retain employment.

Economic Analysis

Students who grew up in high poverty and crime areas reported to school ill equipped to deal with the trauma and other social issues they struggled to process on a daily basis. Durlak (2015) recognized SEL programs that taught students about substance use produced an \$18 return on every dollar invested and saved the government an estimated 1.3 billion on substance abuse related services.

The CPS District 299, 2016–2017 Illinois Report Card, listed 382,929 students were educated, and \$10,427 was spent providing instruction for each student (ISBE, 2017a). Eighty-three percent of the students were low income, 11% had disabilities, 4% were homeless, 18% were English language learners (ELL), 34% were chronically truant, and 11% had high mobility (ISBE, 2017a). Conversely, a north suburban single high school district had an enrollment of 3,285 students and spent \$12,340 providing instruction for individual students (ISBE, 2017b). Forty-one percent of students were low income, 12% had disabilities, 5% were homeless, 4% were ELL, 13% were chronically truant, and they had a 7% student mobility rate (ISBE, 2017b). Disabilities and homelessness were reported equally between the two districts, but inequities persisted between the two districts.

CPS spent less money, had a higher mobility rate, more low-income students, ELL, truancy, and a higher mobility rate. Despite the fact that CPS schools educated more at-risk students, the north suburban high school district employed eight school social workers and had a one to 365 social worker to student ratio (ISBE, 2017b). The north suburban high school may have better outcomes because they have more school social workers to provide social and emotional support for students.

Students who lived in the city of Chicago were more likely to be victims of crime, drop out of high school, and end up in the penal system. Durlak (2015) reported that SEL programs reduced the cost for reactive programs and services, such as special education, dropout, juvenile arrest, and substance abuse programs. The north suburban school district appeared to have enough social workers on staff to provide services that

addressed social and emotional issues that impeded academic performance. CPS employed 318 school social workers and had a one social worker to 1,204-student ratio.

Providing social and emotional support for all students, from Kindergarten through 12th grade, would reduce the amount of money tax payers have to spend on jails, public assistance, substance abuse programs, and a host of other reactive services. Society was paying the price for not intervening and addressing the mental health issues of students. The public was paying for schools and reactive services instead of funneling dollars towards preventative services (Haynes, 2002). Schools that had more students living in poverty should have received additional funding to employ more school social workers.

Poverty, incarceration, lack of health care, and crime cost the United States trillions of dollars each year. Durlak (2015) reported that a student's failure to graduate from high school could result in early drug use and delinquency, which could be costly outcomes that reduce individual and community well being, and could create a high financial burden. The cost of not providing adequate social and emotional support in schools was astounding. Students with high ACE scores and those who did not complete high school were more likely to end up in the juvenile justice system, spend their lives in poverty, and have a lower life expectancy of 20 years (Leitch, 2017).

The ISBE had not made funding school social work positions a priority in Illinois. The most affluent school districts in Illinois had multiple school social workers, school psychologists, professional school counselors, and nurses. Students who attended schools with more SEL support have more protective factors, and thus, better test scores and

outcomes. Durlak (2015) reported that building protective factors to promote mental health could lessen the probability that students could have health issues and more problems when they become adults.

Ultimately, the most at-risk schools in Illinois were understaffed with counselors and lacked sufficient social and emotional resources to address student deficits and clinical issues. Leitch (2017) stated the more negative events a child experienced, the higher the likelihood he or she would suffer as an adult from a variety of health and behavior problems, including alcoholism, chronic pulmonary disease, depression, substance abuse, and unwanted pregnancy. Our economy and communities suffered when students were ill equipped to respond properly to traumatic events.

Durlak (2015) recognized SEL inequity existed as policy makers had difficulty evaluating and making decisions on behalf of the students directly. The missing component in evaluating the needs of the students was the potential for economic benefit of analyzing the social and emotional education. Educating the educators and policy makers would extend beyond the SEL economic evaluations, when consideration is afforded to the needs of the student.

All students should be given equal access to resources, services, and high-quality instruction. Odden (2012) stated that all schools should hire one support staff member for every 250 students in middle and high school. Unfortunately, the most affluent suburbs were typically part of a few schools in the State of Illinois that had the capacity to catapult students to high levels of academic and social success. Milner (2015) confirmed that some students would not learn from teachers who had not established relationships

with them, and that schools were not well equipped to educate students who relied on them to help them deal with their traumatic experiences.

Schools were the best place to deliver mental health services to children and families, because children are mandated to attend school, and it's where they spend a large portion of their day (Haynes, 2002). Enforcing the school social work recommendations would help level the playing field for some of our most at-risk students and continue to provide high quality services for students who attended schools in middle and upper-class areas.

Social Analysis

Students did not have the skills needed to navigate their social environments. In the last several years, gun violence has taken the lives of hundreds of high school students. At risk students had a difficult time acquiring the necessary skills that would assist them in becoming productive members of society. Milner (2015) reported that students who grappled with poverty sometimes needed to be taught social skills before they were available for learning. If schools operated under the notion that they were primarily an academic institution, then many of our students, especially students from impoverished backgrounds were going to flounder in society and become part of the penal system. Elias (1997) stated that the more emotionally troubled the student may be, the more care was required in the school environment. Society has an obligation to educate future generations and impart strategies that would help them make sound and judicious decisions.

The ISBE and other policy makers should acknowledge the positive impacts SEL has had on student learning and decision-making skills. Durlak (2015) stated that there is convincing evidence SEL factors, not academic test scores, explained positive adult employment outcomes, health, and positive contributions to society. More school social work services in schools would demolish the stereotype threat, break the school-to-prison pipeline, and alter the lives of future generations. Although social-economic status had a larger impact on students who live in poverty, affluent children were not exempt from peril (Goleman, 2005). The ACE study was mainly normed on white middle- and upper-class families (Leitch, 2017). All students benefitted from receiving adequate social and emotional supports in schools.

Society must acknowledge a duty to provide an adequate education for each student. Unfortunately, students who have grappled with more adult stressors had a more difficult time navigating society because of changing demographics, access to social media, and other perils. Durlak (2015) stated that a student's success in school and in life was dependent on acquiring knowledge and skills gained with social and emotional competence. All students did not have access to the same supports and social work services during school hours. Milner (2105) reported that schools should focus on teaching student academic and social and emotional skills because they are deeply connected. In order to level the playing field and equip our most at-risk students with skills and strategies, the ISBE should mandate that every school hire at least one social worker for every 350 students.

Political Analysis

Policy makers recognized the need to improve upon policy; the ISBE policy changes reflected the board's decision that schools should hire one social worker for every 350 students (ISBE, 2007). The ISBE members reported that the guidelines were written to help maintain high expectations for all students, promote equity, and provide comprehensive supports for the most at-risk students. Society had pushed schools to focus on academics, placing students in advanced placement courses, and linking success to high stakes testing. Ginwright, Cammarota, and Noguera (2005) stated students who live in urban areas experienced social isolation that often led to self-destructive behaviors and reproduced values that perpetuated a sense of hopelessness.

Ultimately the ISBE board stipulated that school social workers who have a one to 350-student ratio would be able to complete the following tasks:

1. Teacher consultation,
2. Crisis intervention,
3. Education system assessment and program development,
4. Outside agency referral,
5. Home-school-community liaison,
6. Staff in-service training,
7. Large group (classroom) intervention,
8. Ongoing intervention,
9. School social work program planning and evaluation,
10. Research,

11. Interdisciplinary teaming,
12. Social assessment,
13. 504 services, and
14. Special education services (ISBE, 2007).

This model provided the school social worker with opportunities to service all students in the school. As experts on SEL and evidence-based interventions, they would have opportunities to support teachers and other staff members, create a culture and climate that celebrated the ISBE standards, and implement them throughout the entire school. Ginwright et al. (2005) stated that psychological theories of human development should emphasize emotional health, empowerment, and exploration. Conversations around SEL, emotional intelligence, and other non-cognitive variables that determine the overall outcomes of student success have not been an acute focus in education. The ISBE should follow through and accept this opportunity to enforce their policy and create better outcomes for our students, families, and communities.

Students who have not had an opportunity to experience a well-rounded education often grow up in environments where they do not learn appropriate coping, self-regulation, decision-making, and self-awareness skills. This in turn had a negative impact on society. Students who lacked protective factors were more likely to end up incarcerated. Noguera and Pierce (2016) reported that for the first time in American history, most students who attended public schools were living below the poverty line. Politicians were faced with proposals to build more jails and create more stringent laws that impacted low income and minority populations. Lindsey, Terrell, and Robins (2009)

stated that the system of oppression had existed for decades because individuals who benefitted from the prison industrial complex structures refused to create systems of equity and equality.

Affluent districts had the financial capital to invest in social and emotional supports for students. The students from low-income backgrounds did not have adequate supports available to them, they were forced to cope with issues they did not have the ability to process. Mental health services for children remained crisis oriented and reactive because schools did not have enough school social workers to provide services (Haynes, 2002). Students who lived near, and attended, schools in impoverished neighborhoods had limited opportunities to learn how social and political capital impacts future opportunities.

Lindsay et al. (2009) stated that when a student's environment was in sync with their perception of the world, there was no need for them to question the status quo. Social emotional learning challenged worldviews and gave students opportunities to assess their political, ethical, and social beliefs. Social workers were trained to create safe spaces for students, so students could process the injustices in their environment and brainstorm solutions that would help them to overcome obstacles.

The Illinois Children's Mental Health Act (Public Act 93-0495) was passed in 2003 to provide schools with guidance about nurturing the social and emotional well being of students (Zins & Elias, 2007). This act should be an integral part of every school's mission to promote academic readiness and overall school success (Zins & Elias, 2007). The one social worker to 350-student policy would allow school social

workers multiple opportunities to work in tandem with school personnel, progress monitoring student behavior, provide on-going feedback, modifications, and implement the ISBE SEL standards with fidelity.

Politicians cut budgets for social services across the country. At-risk students typically suffered the most when services that were once available in the community were dismantled. Personnel from the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights stated that students of color were given harsher punishments for engaging in the same behaviors as students from cultural and ethnic backgrounds that were more embraced in American society (Noguera & Pierce, 2016). Students who received SEL support were less likely to engage in noncompliant behaviors that led to academic problems and issues with the legal system.

Politicians were aware of the issues facing the social and emotional standing of students, but have not created policies that rectify the situation. Some politicians feared the political backlash they might encounter from their constituents. Noguera and Pierce (2016) reported that state and federal education policies ignored the impact of growing economic inequality and demographic change on public schools. Inequalities existed in education that perpetuated systems and continued to handicap the most at-risk students.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

Educators and society have been tasked with a moral and ethical responsibility to ensure all students have an opportunity to receiving a high-quality education. Students who were taught SEL standards and skills were more available for learning. Milner (2015) reported that schools have an obligation to teach students conflict resolution,

communication, collaboration, adaptability, and study skills. We could not assume that students were being taught these skills in their homes and community (Milner, 2015). Students who attended schools that were affluent rarely had an opportunity to interact with students from different races or socio-economic backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds should have the same access to mental health services in schools.

SEL programs provided students with opportunities to develop empathy for others, raise their social consciousness, and understand the importance of interactions with individuals on their interactions with them, despite media influences. Social and emotional problems interfered with a student's ability to make use of educational opportunities and were considered disabling (ISBE, 2007). Schools should accept a moral obligation to help students gain the skills they need to make positive contributions to society. Inadequate social and emotional services have handicapped students from both impoverished and affluent backgrounds.

Noguera and Pierce (2016) stated that society takes a *color-mute* approach to education, because they refused to acknowledge that a policy or practice unfairly impacts a specific population of students. They asserted that the students were the ones who typically lost resources, because all students were not given access to the same support. Providing a service to one student, but not another is immoral and unethical. Educators who provided a subset of students with adequate and high quality social and emotional services during the school day, while neglecting to ensure that all students have the same opportunities for academic and social support, should be brought to understand the implications of this inequity.

SECTION THREE: ADVOCATED POLICY STATEMENT

ISBE members reported that schools with high poverty rates, students with IEPs, and schools that educate students from diverse backgrounds should hire one social worker for every 350 students. Although drafted over a decade ago, the ISBE has never enforced this policy. Smith and Miller-Kahn (2004) stated that students in poor schools and poor areas had less access to academic materials. Unfortunately, the same is true for social and emotional services. Affluent schools have had more school social workers and other supports to help students cope with mental health issues and learn evidence-based skills to overcome obstacles.

The school, community, and society at large would benefit from students receiving social and emotional support in the school setting. Schools in Illinois were given complete autonomy in determining how many school social workers were required to meet student needs. Smith and Miller-Kahn (2004) reported that politics make it difficult to determine which research studies were funded because of researchers' and policy makers' hidden agendas. The political banter in the United States made it difficult for some research-based initiatives to gain the support of government and school officials because of concealed agendas. The focus should shift to student learning and success.

The school social work policy recommendations in the State of Illinois were not enforced despite conclusive research that states that students who received SEL support achieved at higher academic levels and learned non-cognitive variables that helped them to achieve success after they left school (Olowe, 2017b). Schools in the State of Illinois did not receive equal funding, so schools might not implement recommended policies

because of funding inadequacies. Public and political leaders appeared to be unwilling to raise taxes to fund public services and provide an adequate education for all students (Odden, 2012). State funding remains a political issue that has yet to be resolved.

Payne (2013) reported that federal spending on education was not being used to create sustainable programs in schools. In most CPS environments, school social workers reported to a school one or two days per week to attend meetings, test, and provide services to students with Individualized Education and 504 Plans. Students who were entrenched in negative emotional states often had difficulty learning and retaining information. Unless students had services that were protected under Section 504, or the Illinois with Disability Education Act, they were unlikely to receive school social work services in some schools.

Policy reformation in the United States had been stagnant for many decades. Most reforms were unsuccessful because of poor resources, support, teacher buy-in, and forward thinking. Payne (2013) reported that some of the most popular reforms implemented within the last 15 years were built on the notion that all students could learn, but policy makers demonstrated that they did not believe administrators, teachers, and students had the capacity to acquire the intended results. Political bodies that used statistical procedures to establish baseline parameters and implement policies were sometimes unsuccessful because of political power tussles (Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004). As a result, new policies were unsuccessful, and students continued to suffer because of disagreements between politicians and policymakers.

No Child Left Behind and whole school reform have been two of the most important education initiatives in the last two decades (Payne, 2013). Neither reform realized its anticipated outcomes. During the 1990s, over 40 reforms were drafted and implemented (Payne, 2013). Although some reforms had the best intentions, without adequate resources, human capital, strategic professional development, buy-in, and systematic progress monitoring, the reforms would continue to fail.

The ISBE board recognized that more school social work services were needed. The ISBE (2007) outlined the school social work load, priority tasks, and service delivery. Implementing the ISBE school social work policy would be imperative because over a decade of research supported that implementing SEL standards in schools and providing students with trained staff members who could help them learn skills, yield positive outcomes both in and out of the school setting (CASEL, 2007).

Elias (1997) reported that memory was coded to specific events and linked to social and emotional situations within the brain, and that emotional situations were integral parts of larger units of memory that make up what children learn and retain in the classroom. Implementing evidence-based SEL strategies in the academic environment would create opportunities for all students to reach their full potential, despite their current social and emotional status, and other variables that could be counteracted with intentional and research-based strategies.

School reforms were often unsuccessful because enough time is not allocated for professional development; there was a lack of support for the initiatives, problem solving, and the programs were not evaluated to determine if they are effective (Payne, 2013). In

order for the school social work policy to be implemented, the ISBE and each school district should develop an implementation plan. School social workers were trained in implementing targeted intervention that helped students process traumatic experiences and learn coping strategies, so they could work within their circle of influence.

Elias (1997) stated that effective schools had an SEL component built into the school environment. School social workers bridged the gaps between home, school, community services, and support. School social workers had the training and skill-sets required to help schools implement SEL policies and school-based therapeutic services for students, who experienced the negative impact of academic and clinical issues (Haynes, 2002). Every school in the State of Illinois should have at least one social worker for every 350 students to help students develop emotional intelligence and learn how to overcome debilitating obstacles that could have a negative impact on academics and overall life success.

The goals of the policy advocacy statement were presented as follows:

- To ensure that all students in Illinois are taught the ISBE SEL standards and equipped with strategies to combat psycho-social issues that interfere with academic attainment and success.
- To ensure that school social worker in Illinois has the ability to implement individualized education plans and progress monitor Tier 2 and Tier 3 behavior interventions with fidelity.
- To ensure that every student with mental health issues in Illinois who needs social and emotional support has the ability to obtain the necessary

social and emotional support required to thrive both socially and academically.

- To ensure that school social workers in Illinois have opportunities to collaborate with all stakeholders, implement evidence-based SEL programs, and facilitate preventative psycho-education as a Tier 1 intervention for all students in the school.

Many stakeholders would benefit from policy implementation. Psycho-education was used in schools to educate students about stress management, anxiety, coping-skills, depression, and a multitude of other topics. Wessely et al. (2008) stated that psycho-education involved educating students about symptoms and what to do about them. Psycho-education could occur before or after exposure to stressors. The purpose of psycho-education was to ameliorate or mitigate the effects of exposures to extreme situations: psycho-education is a form of psychological first aid (Wessely et al., 2008).

Students, families, community, government, and society as a whole, would reap the benefits of having emotional sound and employable individuals in Illinois. Emotionally sound individuals were more likely to obtain and retain employment, raise children who contribute to society, obtain higher levels of education, and less likely to enter the penal system. There were many barriers that impeded a student's ability to receive counseling services outside of the school day. Co-pays, the parents' ability to transport pupils to services before 6:00 p.m., and the pessimistic paradigm that surrounded receiving outside counseling services negatively impacted access to services.

Elias (1997) reported that promoting social and emotional competence was essential to preparing young people for their future and building resistance to drugs, teen pregnancy, violent gangs, truancy, and dropping out of school. The goals were aligned with the ISBE's *School Social Work Manual* and the ISBE's social and emotional learning standards. Society could thrive if we had more social and academically sound individuals who could make evidence-based decisions and contribute to its productivity. There was an array of pros and cons to implementing the ISBE school social work policy. The following policy argument outlines the promising and undesirable outcomes of enacting the policy.

SECTION FOUR: POLICY ARGUMENT

Policy makers recommended that schools adopt a one social worker to 350-student policy (ISBE, 2007). Policy recommendations were both positive and negative. The pros and cons of implementing the policy should be summarized and scrutinized. In the following argument, the current ISBE recommendations, student outcomes, and financial obligations, and consequences were examined.

CASEL (2007) researchers have done extensive research that outlined the impact and outcomes of SEL services in schools. Students were more likely to excel in school and become contributing members of society, if they participated in evidence-based SEL programming (CASEL, 2007). School social workers could help teachers learn various skills and strategies that assist them in infusing the standards into their lesson and the culture and climate of the school (Haynes, 2002). Implementing the ISBE SEL standards and school social work recommendations also had financial and personnel drawbacks. In order to fully staff every school in the State of Illinois, more school social workers would have to enroll and persist in accredited programs. Furthermore, the state and school districts would have to reallocate state funding to staff the positions. States, schools, and districts should redistribute funding to enhance student learning, whether or not the budget remains stagnant or is reduced (Odden, 2012).

A statewide policy initiative would require financial, political, human, and social capital. Funding would have to be reallocated to fund the positions; this redistribution might channel funding from other programs and services that were having positive impacts on the well being of students. Stakeholders across the state would have to buy

into the initiative, and more ISBE school social workers would be needed to fulfill the positions. The outcomes outweighed the pitfalls of implementing the ISBE policy to staff each school with an adequate number of school social workers. Requiring all districts in Illinois to implement the recommendations would be in the best interest of our students and community.

Illinois State Board of Education Recommendation

The ISBE (2007) board members reported that school social workers were the best individuals to address innumerable student needs. They stated that school social workers have the theoretical knowledge required that is essential to the Americans with Disabilities Act, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 1973 Rehabilitation Act, the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act, Illinois Children's Mental Health Act, and many other laws, policies, and procedures that schools should understand and follow. School social work was the only certificated school employee with an understanding of the practical interrelationships of all these laws and requirements (ISBE, 2007). School social workers were pivotal to the school setting, and had a great impact of the implementation of SEL standards and laws within the academic setting.

The recommended one social worker to 350-students ratio should be implemented and enforced within the next few years. Ginwright et al. (2005) stated that school districts in America have implemented numerous policies that mirror the appearance of juvenile detention centers, and that schools were not addressing the social and economic problems students deal with in schools, instead, they are implementing punitive measures. The

ISBE should take steps to enforce their policy recommendations, so that all students in the state have access to the same services in schools.

Student Outcomes

A host of positive benefits would be reaped, if the ISBE school social work policy recommendations were implemented. The school, community, and society at large would attain the benefits of implementing the recommended number of school social workers. Universal SEL interventions had intense and permanent effects on student health, norms, skills, and the attitudes of the entire population (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2017). Schools would benefit because students would exhibit more on-task behaviors, obtain better grades, test scores, and the culture and climate of the school would be more conducive to the learning (Olowe, 2017a).

Educational institutions would be able to train students in environments where pupils have learned decision making skills, how to manage their emotions, sustain relationships, and interact with peers and staff in a more positive manner. Arincorayan, Applewhite, Garrido, Cashio, and Bryant (2017) reported that both younger and older children who live in chronically adverse situations tended to be more resilient when they received emotional support in school. Students would experience more success in schools, learn how to set goals, and regulate emotions when they are taught how to cope with detrimental situations (Olowe, 2017a).

Students, parents, and school staff faced stressors related to trauma, financial issues, mental and physical health issues, as well as verbal and physical aggression. Access to school social workers would decrease these experiences, because students

would acquire skills that would help them make better decisions and focus on academic tasks. Students would be emotionally available for learning, which would decrease the likelihood that they would drop out of school, abuse substances, and end up in the penal system. Arincorayan et al. (2017) confirmed that teachers, coaches, and mental health workers could serve as a protective factor for vulnerable children. Protective factors increased the likelihood that a student would thrive in their academic and social environments. Ultimately, school social workers had a positive impact on student outcomes.

School social workers were trained to identify student, school, and community needs. Their unique training helped them identify deficient necessities, gaps in services, faulty delivery systems, and policies that impacted student emotional and academic needs (ISBE, 2007). Schools that adhered to the researched-based ISBE guidelines were better able to meet student needs. Students who had a host of unmet needs tended to engage in socially unacceptable and risky behaviors. Adhering to the guidelines would also produce more sound adults that would help contribute positively to the community and world. Arincorayan et al. (2017) reported that many students benefitted from supportive relationships that could help build resilience and mitigate the negative effects of childhood trauma. School social workers provided supports that impart skills that ameliorate trauma and other external factors that counteract productivity.

Emotionally stable individuals who have completed high school were more likely to be employed and less likely to rely on government programs to sustain their emotional and physical well being. Durlak (2015) stated that SEL benefitted students from affluent

and poor backgrounds, had positive effects on school attendance and graduation, standardized test scores, overall academic performance, college preparation, workforce readiness, and citizenship. School and communities benefitted when students were academically capable and emotionally sound. Teachers have a high regard for SEL programs because of the above outcomes. Most teachers from preschool to high school believed that social skills benefitted all students (Durlak, 2015). All stakeholders would realize the outcomes, if the ISBE enforced their one social worker for 350-student ratio. Given the opportunity, all students in Illinois would thrive and lead physically and emotionally healthy lifestyles.

Financial Obligation

The ISBE board members wrote this policy over a decade ago and most schools in the State of Illinois have not adhered to policy recommendations. Odden (2015) reported that relocating existing resources could improve learning and teaching. Illinois has spent over one trillion dollars on government health care, education, welfare, and the juvenile justice system (United States Government Spending, 2018). We live in a time where students have brought weapons to school, and mass shootings have become a common discussion in the media and households – more leadership effort is needed.

Attempts to address the emotional and physical needs of youth have not proven to be effective; money should be spent on preventative services instead of reactive ones. Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, and Durlak (2017) reported that using effective universal interventions could substantially reduce societal problems related to poor social

and emotional skills. The ISBE should provide funding for the positions to schools across the state to ensure that schools are able to adhere to their recommendation.

Zins and Elias (2007) stated that the cost associated with providing SEL services in schools were spread out across many students at the prevention and advancement level, which resulted in a relatively small cost. Early intervention has been shown to reduce future costs when students have access to services before academic and emotional issues escalate to a level where multiple agencies are required to implement services. Odden (2012) reported that resources should be aligned to execute evidence-based programming, and that a specific and strategic plan of action should be used to improve student outcomes. There should be a clear link between student necessities, resource allocation, and staffing needs (Odden, 2012). The ISBE could use current SEL research and their own school social work policy recommendations to determine how to best funnel resources to staff school social work positions.

Consequences of ISBE Policy Implementation

Implementing the ISBE school social work policy could cause potential backlashes in several capacities. Funding from reactive programs would be reallocated to give districts money to staff school social work positions. Services that are currently available could be cut and some individuals might not be able to access supports because of the financial redistribution. The ISBE could not guarantee that the state would have enough school social workers to staff all open positions. Most school social workers in the State of Illinois should complete a 60-hour program, two internships, and take three tests. It is very difficult for people who have families to take time off work to go to

school and complete internships at the same time. The state could end up with a shortage of school social workers.

Schools have been academic institutions since inception. Some individuals felt that it is not the schools job to provide social and emotional supports to students during the school day. Parents have been given full autonomy to determine if they want their child to receive and participate in social and emotional services. Mental health laws could negatively impact services. School social workers could provide counseling services to students under the age of 17 for eight, 90-minute sessions without consent of a parent or guardian, unless a lack of services would not be detrimental to a minor's well being (Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code, 2018). Both parents and students were given the right to decline counseling services in schools.

Implementing policy initiatives could be problematic because of lack of buy-in from stakeholders. All districts in the State of Illinois would be required to hire one social worker for every 350 students. Some cultural groups do not believe that mental health issues exist and believe services should not be provided in schools. Payne (2013) reported that many reforms fail because of lack of adult cooperation. School-based services had positive impacts on students' social and emotional well being when they were implemented with a high level of fidelity (Haynes, 2002). The ISBE and school districts would have to educate the state and community on the benefits of providing more social work services in schools to ensure the policy's efficacy.

In order for policy implementation to be efficient, the ISBE should construct a plan of action that outlines state, district, and school responsibilities. The policy

implementation plan below supplies the state and school districts with concrete guidelines that would assist them in supporting the policy, create uniformity, and utilizing mechanisms that would be essential for successful operation. Stakeholders would be educated about successful policy implementation, so the state and school districts in Illinois could use the information to implement evidence-based practices in schools.

SECTION FIVE: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Adhering to the ISBE, school social work ratio policy guidelines would allow school districts the opportunity to provide more evidence-based strategies for students, create a culture more conducive to learning, and produce better outcomes. Zins and Elias (2007) reported that schools play a key role in health promotion, education, and prevention. The ISBE should inform all schools in the State of Illinois that they would be given three years to adhere to the one social worker to 350-student ratio. Durlak (2015) stated that all students should receive SEL in schools, and that services should be a fundamental part of education.

The first course of action requires the ISBE to enforce the policy they recommended in 2007; each school in Illinois should have one social worker for every 350 students (ISBE, 2007). The success of the policy implementation should start with the ISBE, guidelines should be put into place that would help support adult learning and growth (Drago-Severson, 2009). School social workers should work in conjunction with school wide initiatives so that children could interact with adults who use the same language, promote skill development, and know how to implement evidence-based practices (Greenberg et al., 2017).

The ISBE should ensure that every school social work position is funded, and the state and academic intuitions that train school social workers are aware of the 3-year implementation plan, before the recommendations are enforced. The ISBE should monitor the parameters to ensure that school social workers have the support necessary to focus on the social and emotional well being of students. School social workers would

not be used as substitute teachers, hall monitors, or for other tasks unrelated to supporting the emotional well being of students.

Durlak (2015) stated that school districts might be the ideal venue to promote new educational program and approaches, because federal and state initiatives want to ensure the success of all students. Over a decade ago, the ISBE members outlined that academic institutions and other stakeholders advocate for the implementation of school social work policy recommendations. School social workers have the indispensable skills that could lead to the implementation of school wide SEL programs. Zins and Elias (2007) reported that the following parameters should be considered when implementing a SEL program:

- Conduct school and community risk and needs assessment for program planning,
- Consult with school personnel,
- Be a champion for SEL,
- Promote organizational support,
- Act as a liaison to coordinate and integrate school-family community SEL efforts,
- Help ensure maintenance and sustainability, and
- Engage in program monitoring and evaluation services.

The ISBE and school districts in the State of Illinois could use the suggestions to assist in the development and implementation school social work services. Inefficient communication between policymakers and reformers resulted in a myriad of problems in urban schools (Payne, 2013), even though school social workers had the training and

skill-set to provide services and implement a school wide SEL program. Drago-Severson (2013) reported that there is a direct correlation between supporting adult learning and student success. School social workers had the time and capacity to ensure that SEL programs were being implemented with fidelity. They were trained to work with various stakeholders and designed school wide interventions that had a positive impact on student learning and emotional intelligence. School districts should have an adequate number of school social workers to provide services for students and the community. School social workers, administrators, and stakeholders should expect the ISBE to develop a school district implementation model for the state.

SEL implementation guidelines could be used to implement the ISBE school social work recommendations with fidelity (ISBE, 2015). Table 1 outlines how districts could execute the ISBE school social work guidelines.

Table 1

Example of District Level School Social Work Implementation Plan

1.	Partner with local universities to obtain resumes of potential candidates. Hire school social workers to adhere to the ISBE school social work recommendations.
2.	Work with Director of Finance to align budget and staffing to support additional school social workers.
3.	Attend several professional development workshops facilitated by CASEL on the SEL standards, how to implement them in a school setting, and how to use data to determine if evidence-based services are having a positive impact on student learning and school climate.
4.	Review SEL standards, school social work responsibilities outlined by the ISBE, and evidence-based practices.
5.	Establish a shared SEL vision with stakeholders.
6.	Create a long-term plan for district wide school social work and SEL implementation.
7.	Integrate district wide policies and activities to foster the social, emotional, and academic learning of all students.
8.	Determine which district level administrators would lead each school in analyzing monthly school and yearly school report card data to evaluate the effectiveness of social work services and the SEL program.
9.	Consult with school social workers to determine what SEL resources would be needed to implement services.
10.	Create or modify building space so that each school social worker has a space for group and individual services.
11.	Cultivate SEL focused partnerships with schools.
12.	Using forums and social media outlets, communicate with stakeholders about school social work initiatives and the full implementation of SEL standards.
13.	Conduct program evaluation meetings once every six weeks to monitor district data and use information to determine future practices.

Ensuring School Social Worker Availability

A representative or team from the ISBE should contact academic institutions across the State of Illinois that prepare school social workers and inform them that they

would be enforcing the recommendations. Communicating the timeline with colleges and universities would allow schools an opportunity to create and implement plans to offer more seats in the program, recruit more students, and inform past, current, and future students of the ISBE changes. Implementation would be impossible if districts do not have licensed candidates to satisfy open positions.

Representatives from the ISBE should send a memo to each Superintendent in Illinois, stating that the recommendations should be adhered to, along with a timeline for implementation. Individuals who have master's degrees should be encouraged to follow a path of social work, return to school to obtain their ISBE license, and practice in schools. The Illinois Association of School Social Workers, National Association of Social Workers, and the School Social Work Association of America should be sent correspondence stating that State Board of Education is giving all public schools in Illinois three years to fully implement the one social worker to 350-student ratio.

Financial Parameters

The ISBE members recommended that schools hire one social worker for every 350 students because of the distinct skill set they bring to the school systems. Social workers linked academics with SEL and implemented policies and procedures that supported every aspect of development: intellectual, physical, social, and emotional (Olowe, 2007a). Some of the funding for reactive programs should be used to fund school social work positions. Schools spent money on alternative schools, deans, security guards, and other reactive practices that could be alleviated, if students received adequate SEL support. School social workers relied on the ISBE to provide the necessary funding

because they have reported that the ratio of one social worker for every 350 students was needed in schools that have a special education population, poverty, minority concentration, and federal impact issues (ISBE, 2007).

Most schools that educate students, who were non-English speaking or from low-income families, performed below benchmark standards (Odden, 2012). In order to provide an equitable education for all students, schools should reallocate resources so the at-risk students receive the resources and supports they need to reach their full potential (Odden, 2012). The State of Illinois should take an active role in ensuring that funds would be distributed in a manner that is conducive to student learning. Governor Bruce Rauner signed Public Act 100-0465 or the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) for Student Success Act on August 31, 2017, which altered the way school districts received the majority of the finances necessary to educate students in the state of Illinois (ISBE, 2018b).

EBF created equitable funding and provided under-resourced schools with more assets to deliver a safe, rigorous, and well-rounded education to a multitude of at-risk students in Illinois. Schools in Illinois that required more financial support from the state would receive additional money in 2018 to hire more staff and purchase more resources to support student learning. Some funds from EBF would be used to staff schools with more school social workers.

The ISBE created an adequacy target for staffing multiple school positions in the state of Illinois to help alleviate the equity and achievement gap (ISBE, 2018a). The adequacy target for guidance counselors that worked in elementary schools was one for

every 450 students and one for every 250 students in high schools (ISBE, 2018a). School social workers had the necessary training to support student learning and provide trauma informed care. Sherman (2016) reported that school social workers were an invaluable resource and should be involved in policy and program development that bridges the gap between education and psychosocial well being. Some of the funding for guidance counselors would be reallocated to adhere to the ISBE school social work one to 350 student ratio recommendations. Instead of hiring five guidance counselors in a high school of 1,250 students, schools would reorganize and hire school social workers to comply with ISBE guidelines.

The one social worker to 350-student model encompassed SEL services that were recommended to guarantee that students and teachers were equipped with skills and strategies that would help them thrive in schools and other social environments (CASEL, 2007). Funding the policy recommendations would require a shift in priorities in the State of Illinois. The State of Illinois would utilize EBF, reallocate money from state funding, juvenile detention centers, and other reactive services to fund this proactive measure that they proposed in 2007.

The National Conference of State Legislatures (2011) stated that the 2005 annual cost of housing one juvenile in a detention center was \$70,827. According to the 2005 rates, the average state paid \$194 a day to house a juvenile. In 2012, 109 juveniles spent over 91 days in juvenile detention centers (Kaba, 2014). The funds spent to house several juveniles during the course of one year should be spent to employ school social workers across the state of Illinois. Students who received preventive school social work services

and learned evidence-based strategies to deal with adversity were less likely to be retained in juvenile detention centers (Olowe, 2017b). Reallocating dollars from juvenile detention centers and using the funds to provide school social work services in schools would decrease the number of students who entered the system and the amount of money required to fund the reactive program.

The United States Government Spending Report stated that Illinois had a 7.1 trillion dollar budget for fiscal year 2018 (2018). Appendix B breaks down the state of Illinois' budget for fiscal year 2018. One hundredth of a percent of all state funding should be reallocated to fund school social work services in Illinois. Once implemented, the ISBE would receive an additional \$7,000,000 to provide funding to school districts to hire school social workers, purchase resources, and provide professional development.

The EBF and the .01% reallocation of state funding would provide school districts in the state with additional monies to fund the endeavor. Additionally, some schools in Illinois would not require as much funding because they have several school social workers on staff and would not need to hire as many as some of the underfunded schools in urban and rural areas. School social workers would participate in the bargaining unit and placed on the teacher salary scale because they are ISBE licensed, and have to take some of the same tests as members of the collective bargaining unit. In addition, most school social workers currently receive the same benefits and salary as teachers.

Policy Implementation

The recommended social work guidelines would be fully implemented within three years of state schools receiving correspondence from the ISBE. Zins and Elias

(2007) stated that the focus of most SEL programs were teaching students skills that promote social and emotional competence, and preventing problem behaviors as a positive outcome. Recommendations have been outlined for the next three years: During the first year, the ISBE would enforce a one social worker for every 750 students; the second year, schools would hire one social worker for every 500-student ratio; and the final year the ISBE would enforce a one social worker to 350-student ratio. Table 2 outlines an example of the ISBE implementation plan for school districts in the State of Illinois.

Table 2

Example of Illinois State Board of Education 3-year School Social Work Implementation Plan

Year 1	one social worker for every 750 students
Year 2	one social worker for every 500 students
Year 3	one social worker for every 350 students

Implementing a slow rollout would allow districts an opportunity to hire and train staff every year or all at once. SEL programs should enhance the development and growth of all students and prevent maladaptive and unhealthy behaviors (Zins & Elias, 2007). The 3-year implementation plan would provide state and school districts with the opportunity to review budgets, reallocate resources, rewrite job descriptions, post positions, attend job fairs, embed school social work services in schools, and provide high quality professional development at the district and school level.

Many organizations within the community would be able to assist school districts in providing social and emotional support to stakeholders in the area. Baker (2013) stated that providing mental health services in schools and the community emboldens systems to work in cooperation to address the multifaceted issues and diagnoses that we see in child and adolescent mental health. Churches, community counseling agencies, and in-patient mental health facilities would partner with school districts to educate stakeholders and execute supports for the implementation of the ISBE school social work recommendations.

Baker (2013) reported that community clinicians could help bridge gaps between schools and outside resources through services such as case management, mentor

programs, wraparound services, and psychiatric consultation. Mental health organizations, churches, and universities could assist local districts and provide meeting spaces for individual and group therapy sessions. These organizations could be beneficial in connecting individuals to other community resources, when school social workers are unavailable because school is not in session.

Professional Development

District administrators would participate in professional development that is specific to the implementation of the ISBE school social work recommendations and SEL standards. Community agencies would assist schools with implementation so that more services could be offered to students, parents, and other stakeholders. The partnership established between local mental health inpatient facilities, counseling agencies, and school districts would provide more insight and support for school staff and community members about the mental health issues facing students and society. The agencies would work together to facilitate professional development workshops and educate school staff, students, and district members about the importance of community based supports, preventative services, and the signs of symptoms of mental distress.

Savina, Simon, and Lester (2014) stated that schools are one of the major post-discharge environments children encounter, and that smooth school reintegration following psychiatric hospitalization is vital for children's post-discharge adjustment. Educating all stakeholders about mental health issues, and providing supports both in and outside of the school, would help facilitate buy-in from community members and create a culture and climate in the vicinity where multiple individuals understand the importance

of educating the whole child. Partnering with outside agencies would help the entire school community participate in services and realize their importance.

District and school-based administrators would use the four pillars of Drago-Severson's (2009) learning-oriented model: teaming, adult leadership, collegial inquiry, and mentoring. The ISBE administrators would develop a school social work professional development plan that school districts could use to educate and train staff. School districts would be required to develop a professional development plan for each school and create a school based SEL team for each site. Durlak (2015) reported that high quality professional development was critical to the success of new programs. All staff members would attend at least one professional development per month to examine and apply SEL standards.

Teachers with high levels of self and social awareness understood how their emotions impact the culture and climate of their classroom and school (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). Providing teachers with psycho-education about how emotional intelligence was intertwined with on-task behaviors and academic abilities that would provide them with concrete skills to help students reach their full potential. Staff members would work in teams to discuss the importance of school social work services and the implementation of the SEL standards throughout the school. Teaming would support adult learning, allow staff members a safe space to have discussions that support implementation, and help develop professional and personal responsibility in faculty members (Drago-Severson (2009).

Schools in every district would develop a mentoring community that would help support staff and student growth (Drago-Severson, 2009). School social workers would receive mentoring and support on a monthly basis from doctoral level social workers and post-doctoral clinical psychologists, who work at mental health counseling agencies, universities, in-patient mental health facilities, and social emotional learning think tanks. Partnering with third-party organizations would allow school social workers to stay abreast of best practices, establish relationships, and inform how universities prepare school social workers to provide services in academic settings. The SEL team would meet once a month to counteract adaptive challenges and discuss strategies to support growth and development. Table 3 outlines professional development schedule could be implemented in each school in the State of Illinois.

Table 3

Example of Social and Emotional Learning Team Professional Development Schedule

August	Purpose of SEL team, school social work services, goal and agenda setting for current school year. Create observation schedule and individual support plan for staff. Disseminate presentation schedule/activities for school year and designate individual(s) to complete tasks.
September	Develop and disseminate quantitative survey for stakeholders.
October	Analyze and present baseline data to staff.
November	Use school wide data to discuss school social work services, academic progress, concerns, and solutions to problems.
December	Review school wide data metrics: Create presentation.
January	Present and review semester one findings to staff. Group staff into teams to discuss data and how to use it to inform practices.
February	Use school wide data to discuss school social work services, academic progress, concerns, and solutions to problems.
March	Create qualitative survey for stakeholders.
April	Disseminate quantitative and qualitative survey for stakeholders. Use school wide data to discuss school social work services, academic progress, concerns, and solutions to problems.
May	Analyze baseline and current data and present to staff.
June	Review data and use it to create a professional development plan for next school year with program evaluation team.

Teachers would work in subject matter and grade level teams to generate ways to instill SEL strategies into their lesson plans. Placing teachers in teams would build strong learning communities, allow teachers opportunities to engage in reflective practices, lead to greater understanding of school social work services, and the development of concrete strategies that are used to implement SEL standards (Drago-Severson, 2009). Each teacher would be given poster size charts illustrating feelings, anger management, and

stress management to post in their classrooms. Charts would also be posted in the halls, offices, lunchroom, and other accessible areas.

During professional development workshops and mentoring, school social workers would demonstrate strategies staff members could use to infuse the charts into their lesson plans. Staff and students would become more aware of their feelings and how to cope with anger and stress. Durlak (2015) stated that SEL professional development should teach facilitators how to modify and adapt strategies to meet the needs of student learners. School social workers would be given a grade level or alpha slice based on the number of students in the building. School social workers would be considered the experts on SEL in schools, and would work with administrators to educate teams, implement professional development plans, and improve practices.

Principals would assist school social workers in obtaining resources, implementing best practices, planning, and creating a professional learning environment (Drago-Severson, 2009). School social workers would train administrators, teachers, and other staff members to implement the ISBE SEL standards, restorative justice practices, and mitigate bullying behaviors in schools. Social workers would operate as resource providers, instructional specialists, classroom supporters, learning facilitators, change agents, and ongoing learners (Drago-Severson, 2009). They would model appropriate practices and work with teams to build strong and collaborative relationships. Adults with leadership roles in schools would be in a position to facilitate change, build capacity, increase morale, and improve staff retention (Drago-Severson, 2009). These processes could only take place if the ISBE school social work policy is implemented and enforced.

School social workers would serve as leaders and mentors to staff. In order to monitor and implement the plan with fidelity, school social workers would consistently meet with grade level teams, subject matter teams, facilitate school wide professional development workshops on SEL standards, strategies, and observe classrooms to provide feedback to students, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. Zins and Elias (2007) outlined the following processes that should follow program implementation:

- Adopt specific SEL curricula,
- Infuse SEL activities into regular academic curricula,
- Develop supportive, caring learning environments,
- Alter instructional processes,
- Reinforce SEL skills as part of the informal curriculum,
- Promote school-family-community partnerships,
- Engage students actively and experimentally in the learning process,
- Reflect SEL in behavior management and discipline practices and policies,
- Integrate SEL methods into extracurricular activities.

School social workers would educate and train all staff members on the ISBE SEL standards, their importance, projected outcomes, and how to infuse them into various subjects matters. Staff would be trained and supported in the use of evidence-based skills that would improve the culture and climate in the school. In order for the SEL program to be successful, educators should be supported in learning and developing skills that would lead to cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competences (Drago-Severson, 2009). Educators would be taught SEL standards and how

to implement these competencies into their own lives. School social workers and other team members could help facilitate this process, creating a professional development plan that would provide staff with evidence-based skills to meet the needs of students within the school environment, and help curtail problematic behaviors that might manifest themselves in the community.

School social workers would serve as key team members in policy implementation and help train staff in executing standards throughout the school. Staff members would engage in collegial inquiry to improve student outcomes (Drago-Severson, 2009). Schools would establish SEL teams to develop clear-cut behavioral norms and expectancies for students and staff, and to enforce discipline when rules are violated (Greenberg et al., 2017). SEL teams would meet with staff members to have conversations about student progress, discuss implementation pitfalls, brainstorm solutions, and review data (Drago-Severson, 2009). The SEL teams would be comprised of several stakeholders who could provide domain specific input and insight into the implementation of the ISBE school social work policy recommendations. Table 4 identifies the members of the SEL team.

Table 4

Example of Building Social and Emotional Learning Team

District level administrator
Building level administrator
School social worker(s)
General education teacher(s)
Special education teacher(s)
Support staff
Parent(s)
Student

The team of school social workers and stakeholders would reinforce a positive school culture and climate. The social and emotional competence of staff members would become enhanced because of the on-going professional development, teaming, mentoring, feedback from evidence-based practitioners, and district wide initiatives that support the enactment of the SEL program (Greenberg et al., 2017).

Durlak (2015) reported that schools should infuse the information into their SEL professional development plan. Having an outline for the school fiscal year would help stakeholders plan and implement school social work services and SEL standards in schools. Drago-Severson (2009) stated that the constructive developmental theory provided insight into adult human behaviors and how relationships were nurtured and supported in the school environment. Implementing parameters outlined in the constructive developmental theory would lead to high quality professional development, on-going staff support, skill building, and program implementation. Staff members would learn skills that would help them build and sustain relationships with students, colleagues, families, and community members.

Each school's SEL team would facilitate professional development. Staff would be educated about the importance of school social work services, the ISBE SEL standards, and receive on-going support from the SEL team. Professional development would take place one a month for 1.5 hours during an early release day for students. Table 5 illustrates the monthly professional development each school might receive.

Table 5

Example Topics for School Wide Professional Development Schedule

August Professional Development	District Vision: SEL and how school social workers could help improve student outcomes.
August Professional Development	SEL school-wide team building activity. Team would discuss SEL standards, restorative justice practices, and infusing both into school wide practices. SEL team would assist staff in setting clear goals and expectations.
August Professional Development	Engage in dialogues about SEL standards, school social work services, skill building, and practice.
August Professional Development	Helping students to cope with anger, stress, and their feelings: Implementing the feelings, angers, and stress management charts into the entire school culture.
August Professional Development	Fostering healthy staff-student relationships. Staff members divide into SEL groups to establish connections and discuss strategies.
September	SEL goal of the quarter: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success. Teachers and staff meet in grade level/subject matter groups after presentation to brainstorm ways to infuse goal into curriculum.
October	Classroom management and implementing SEL standards to support student behaviors.
November	Stress management and mindfulness for school staff.
December	SEL goal of the quarter: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships. Teachers and staff meet in grade level/subject matter groups after presentation to brainstorm ways to infuse goal into curriculum.
January	School wide data review for 1 st Semester
February	District Vision: SEL and how school social workers could help improve student outcomes. Teachers and staff meet in grade level/subject matter groups to brainstorm ways to infuse SEL standards into curriculum
March	SEL goal of the quarter: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts. Teachers and staff meet in grade level/subject matter groups after

	presentation to brainstorm ways to infuse goal into curriculum.
April	Teachers and staff meet in grade level/subject matter groups to brainstorm ways to infuse SEL standards into curriculum
May	School wide data review for 2nd Semester.
June	School Wide discussion about services, supports, and suggestions for next school year. End of the school year potluck

SECTION SIX: POLICY ASSESSMENT PLAN

Administrators from the ISBE would monitor the implementation of the student to school social work ratios through the ISBE Web Application Security System (IWAS). The ISBE would create a system descriptor in the IWAS system that would allow schools to submit student enrollment and the names of the school social workers they hired to comply with the ISBE policy. Districts would not be allowed to hire school social work interns to count towards the one social worker for every 350-student ratio. School districts would create an interview team that consisted of various stakeholders and individuals with previous training in SEL, to ensure that they hired qualified and licensed school social workers to fulfill the positions. All school social workers should be ISBE licensed.

Assessment Plan

Using school report card data, administrators would assess the outcomes for students to gauge whether or not school social work services were having a positive impact on the student success and the school's culture and climate. To help determine the effectiveness of the services, the state would review the school report card and compare baseline data with data obtained after ISBE recommendations are implemented. Table 6 outlines an example of a policy assessment plan that could be used to evaluate school social work services throughout the State of Illinois.

Table 6

Example of Policy Assessment Plan

#	Implementation	Assessment	Staff Responsible
1.	Adopt specific SEL curricula.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Program Evaluation • Grades • Attendance • Discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Point Person • Principals • School Social Workers
2.	Infuse SEL activities into regular academic curricula.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Walks • Professional Development • Student Grades • Student Test Scores • School Report Card Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals • Teachers • School Social Workers
3.	Develop supportive, caring learning environments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Leadership • Teaming • Collegial Inquiry • Mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals • SEL Team • Teachers
4.	Alter instructional processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Program Evaluation • Professional Development • Teacher observations • Teaming • Collegial Inquiry • Student Grades • School Report Card Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals • SEL Team • Teachers
5.	Reinforce SEL skills as part of the informal curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Program Evaluation • Professional Development • School-Wide Charts • Teaming • Mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Staff

6.	Promote school-family-community partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap-Around Services from outside agencies • SEL Team Evaluation • District Wide Communication via Social Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District • Principals • SEL Team
7.	Engage students actively and experimentally in the learning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Program Evaluation • Student Grades • Student Test Scores • Restorative Justice Practices • Behavior Logs • Attendance • School Report Card Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Administrators • Principals • SEL Team • Teachers
8.	Reflect SEL in behavior management and discipline practices and policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Program Evaluation • Restorative Justice Practices • Discipline Logs • Attendance • Student Grades • School Report Card Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Administrators • Principals • SEL Team • Deans • Teachers •
9.	Integrate SEL methods into extracurricular activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collegial Inquiry • Staff Leaders • SEL Team • Mentoring • Teaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Administrators • SEL Team • Principals • Coaches • Activity Sponsors

Greenberg et al. (2017) reported that SEL programs were effective defensive interventions that had positive effects on the behavior and academic performance of students. The following data from the school district's report card would be used to ascertain the effectiveness of school social work services:

- Chronic truancy rate,
- Attendance,
- Parent contact,
- Teacher retention,
- Principal turnover,
- Teacher attendance,
- Academic performance,
- Ready for college course work,
- Percentage of students who met high stakes testing benchmarks,
- College enrollment,
- Freshmen on track,
- Advanced course work, and
- Post-secondary remediation.

Gender, race and ethnicity, limited English proficiency, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students would disaggregate all data.

Administrative stakeholders in each district would meet quarterly to review each school in the district's freshman-on-track rate, attendance, academics, and student discipline. The schools would disseminate surveys to parents, staff members, and

students to collect baseline data before the number of school social workers is increased in the district. Once services have amplified, and met or exceeded state recommendations, additional survey data would be collected once every school year for at least three years to establish whether or not school social work services have had a positive impact on student and school outcomes.

Team members would meet once a month to review progress, monitor data, make recommendations, and brainstorm solutions to any impending problems. A school social worker would lead each team, convene, and set the agenda for the meeting. Prior to the meetings, the school social workers would meet with administrators to discuss the agenda and any pertinent topics that need to be discussed during the meeting. The committee would serve as a gatekeeper for SEL implementation, data collection, review, and evaluation. The SEL team and district level administrators would review and analyze the school report data several times during the academic school year. Analyzing the data would allow the district to alter practices before issues or concerns impeded the progress of school social work services and the implementation of SEL standards.

ISBE SEL standards would be monitored and executed to ensure that the district and schools are analyzing school data and evaluating SEL services every month. The SEL team, district, and building level administrators would facilitate this process. Table 7 summarizes how school social work services and the implementation of the ISBE SEL standards would be monitored.

Table 7

Example Policy Data Evaluation

September	Quantitative surveys disseminated to all staff, students, and parents.
October	Data compiled, analyzed, and shared with all stakeholder during district PD
November	Monthly review of school report card data.
December	Monthly review of school report card data.
January	Monthly review of school report card data.
February	Monthly review of school report card data.
March	Monthly review of school report card data.
April	Quantitative surveys disseminated to all staff, students, and parents.
May	Data compiled, analyzed, and shared with all stakeholder during district PD.
June	Evidence-based modifications and program planning for following school year with SEL Team.

School leaders would participate in data reviews each month. After each review, administrators would meet to discuss how the data has impacted student performance and the culture and climate of the school. Staff members would be kept abreast of findings and educated about its implications during professional development workshops. The information would be used to determine if the districts needed to make any modifications to services, professional development, or support.

SECTION SEVEN: POLICY IMPACT STATEMENT

Implementing the ISBE school social work policy would alter the existing paradigm that has occurred in the field of education for hundreds of years. Academic institutions have only been held accountable for test scores and other academic metrics. Haynes (2002) stated that the keen attention to test scores and the neglect of the social and emotional needs of children resulted in a disquieting education and the development of other issues that have impeded academic performance. Implementing state wide policies and procedures would enforce the one social worker to 350-student ratio, communicate to society that we have acknowledged systematic insufficiencies, and implement a plan to address documented factors that have adversely impacted academic and emotional intelligence.

This policy was appropriate for students who received social and emotional support in school, who faired better than those who did not (Haynes, 2002). Administrators and board members at the ISBE proposed the policy recommendations over a decade ago, when they recognized schools that served at-risk students needed more school social workers in the building because of their unique training and skill-set. SEL practices that have been repeatedly infused into a school's standards and skills have improved academic achievement, reduced noncompliant behaviors, and had positive impacts on students, staff, the workforce, and the community at large.

African-American students were suspended and expelled nearly three times the rate of Caucasian students (Payne, 2013). School social workers were trained to work with administrators, teachers, deans, and students to counteract some of the inequitable

policies that have been enforced in schools for many years (Haynes, 2002). The ISBE school social work policy would help fuse academics with SEL in schools. African-American males have underachieved in the United States for many decades, and it was either a great mystery or a blatant disregard for the significance they add to society (Payne, 2013). American values, including freedom and opportunity, insinuated that everyone has an opportunity to receive a high-quality education, access to post-secondary, and equal access to housing and jobs.

Some schools in Illinois have the financial and human capital that had permitted them to provide an abundance of academic and social and emotional supports for students. Payne (2013) reported that low achieving students who participated in good extracurricular and community-based activities had higher rates of academic achievement, better school and college attendance, and were less likely to drop out of school or engage in antisocial behaviors. Having the school social work ratios implemented across the State of Illinois would give all students' access to high quality social and emotional services that could counteract poor academic performance and mental health issues.

Reactive societies have spent more money on conundrums instead of deterrence. The reallocation of resources would save the State of Illinois money. Society would benefit from having more emotionally stable, productive, and contributing members, who participate in raising future generations. Haynes (2002) stated programs that were well implemented, funded, and staffed, were effective because the large number of students and families participated when school services were available. As educational leaders, we

should shift our efforts from a reactive society to a proactive stance that would give students an advantage in society.

School reform would be apparent when we see a greater commitment to the equitable distribution of human and other resources, when there is more support for reform, and when systematic changes occur that perpetuate good teaching, instead of focusing on test scores (Payne, 2013). The vision of this policy was consistent with its implementation; all students would receive high quality social and emotional support services in schools.

School social workers would work with all stakeholders to teach evidence-based skills, assess progress, and implement school wide initiatives that counteract bullying, teen suicide, poor decision making, academic difficulties, and other perils that plague our schools and communities. All stakeholders would have a voice and the opportunity to work with schools and community members to address student and family scarcities. Stakeholders would have opportunities to sit on committees, complete surveys, and attend professional development workshops that would focus on skill building and empowerment. The ISBE school social work policy has lasting implications for all schools in the state. Adults should be the change agents in schools. The fundamental obstacle in our schools was adult learning (Payne, 2013). Change should occur if we are to alter the trajectory of our most at-risk students and all other students who would benefit from school social work and SEL supports in schools.

Conclusion

Implementing the ISBE school social work policy recommendations should be a priority in the State of Illinois. Reactive processes have proven ineffective; proactive SEL services produced outcomes that would benefit society as a whole. All children and families should be given the opportunity to participate in research-based services that could help them reach their full potential. SEL services decreased traumatic experiences and their long-term effects. We should take responsibility for our communities and society, and ensure the future is stable for upcoming generations. SEL services helped all students and families who participated, therefore, the state should forge ahead and implement the policy they designed.

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Appendix A: CASEL Framework for Systemic Social and Emotional Learning



Appendix B: State Spending for Illinois- Fiscal Year 2018

