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Policy, Practice, and Perceptions of K-12 Social-Emotional Learning

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of K-12 school staff who participate in social-emotional learning (SEL). Since the global pandemic, several school districts have included SEL as part of the school curriculum. Teachers, counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and school administrators participate in SEL instruction and/or practices. Classroom teachers instruct students in SEL instruction and other school staff practice the SEL components of self-awareness, self-management, decision-making, social awareness, and relationship skills through their daily interactions with students. This study was conducted in various schools throughout the Los Angeles area using open-ended interview questions that utilized focus groups and individual interviews according to their school positions. The schools were invited to participate in purposeful sampling. The participants were invited and selected to include the diversity of student population, size, location, and SEL programs. Interview questions examined the participants' perceptions of the SEL program, practices, and school policy. Data collection involved note-taking and/or voice recordings.

Introduction

The Learning Policy Institute (DePaoli & McCombs, 2023) recommends that effective strategies and supportive school communities improve school safety. The research report entitled *Safe Schools, Thriving Students: What We Know About Creating Safe and Supportive Schools* (2023) includes the importance of security cameras, controlling access to schools, and school safety officers as effective strategies to increase school safety. Additionally, social-emotional learning, mental health services, restorative practices, and positive relationships build supportive school communities (DePaoli & McCombs, 2023). The importance of social-emotional learning in schools has become a national and state policy focus. In California, anxiety and depression have risen 70% since 2017, and adolescents experienced a 20% increase in suicide rates between 2019 and 2021 (Palma, 2023). The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital Association declared a National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health (2021). The Bipartisan Safer Community Act (2022) provided 73.6 million for school-based mental health programs. Social-emotional learning (SEL) and mental health supports help to reduce behavior problems, suspension rates, bullying, absenteeism, physical violence, and substance abuse (DePaoli & McCombs, 2023). SEL improves emotional management, empathy, decision-making and develops supportive relationships. Meeting social-emotional needs

helps to motivate and prepare students for success in academic learning. SEL complements academic standards and required state instructional mandates (Kaspar & Massey, 2022).

Schools should address the mental health challenges of students through positive and safe environments, expanding social and emotional programs, and providing a continuum of support (U.S. Surgeon General Advisory, 2021). Schoolwide instruction of SEL provides several short-term student outcomes including positive social behaviors, reduced emotional distress, and fewer discipline problems. The long-term student outcomes may lead to high school graduation, college readiness, healthy relationships, better mental health, and reduced criminal behavior among other benefits (Greenberg et al., 2017).

School-based professional development has been identified as an important strategy for the improvement of SEL in schools. Counselors, physical education teachers, and school psychologists are in the position to collaborate in mental health and physical activity (Greenspan et al., 2022). Several students have experienced trauma or adverse childhood experiences (ACES). Professional development provides training for school providers of SEL to learn strategies to assist students with adverse childhood experiences (Kaspar & Massey, 2023).

In a meta-analysis of universal school based SEL interventions, students improved significantly in behavior, peer relationships, and academics. The study included 424 studies from fifty-three countries including 575,361 students (Cipriano et al., 2023). SEL has the potential to assist students in creating safe environments for all students regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity (Lemke & Rogers, 2023). The integration of SEL and academics provides an inclusive culture that is culturally responsive to all students (Greenberg, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study utilizes Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory and self-regulation. The social cognitive theory focuses on learning through social modeling. Learning is achieved through attention, retention, reproduction, and modeling (Slavin, 2021). Increased self-efficacy leads to self-regulation which increases motivation (Nelson, 2021). Self-efficacy is the belief that your behavior or actions make a difference. Social learning is the experience of learning by doing and the consequences of those actions. This stems from learning that comes from the result of adult or peer modeling which leads to positive social norms and empathy toward others (Legg, 2023).

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) has become a required curriculum in most California school districts. Federal, state, and local policies have supported SEL through funding, materials, professional development, and other curriculum supports. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines social-emotional learning (SEL) as part of the five competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). Educators and other school staff members including counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and school administrators are providers of SEL instruction and practice. Bandura's social cognitive theory is embedded in social learning which is the core of SEL.

Research Questions

1. How do various school providers (counselors, teachers, school psychologists, social workers, or administrators) implement social-emotional learning?
2. What challenges do school, district, or state policies face in implementing SEL, and how can they be improved or revised?
3. What aspects of the social-emotional curriculum seem to be the most effective?
4. What aspects of the social-emotional curriculum need improvement?

Policy

Federal, State, and local school boards have developed several policies recommending social-emotional learning. The expansion of the providers of the school-based mental health workforce includes more training and additional hiring of counselors, psychologists, nurses, and social workers (U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, 2021). The California Department of Education Health Standards include mental, emotional, and social health instruction for students in elementary, middle, and high school grades. The California Multi-Tiered System of Support utilizes the whole child domain to include SEL, mental health, trauma-informed, and restorative practices. Tier I represents all students and their instructional support for academics and SEL. Tier II students require additional support that may include small groups and additional support including restorative practices which may include school psychologists, administrators, and counselors. Tier III instruction is more intensive and may require a behavior plan, individual support, counseling, and other agency referrals (Kern et al., 2022).

California SB 274 (2023) prohibits school suspensions for willful defiance and suggests interventions and supports such as a restorative justice program. California legislation (SB 274, 2023) extends the previous law prohibiting suspensions to include grades 6-12. This legislation advocates for interventions and supportive interventions. Restorative justice practices promote a positive school climate and assist students in understanding the effects of their behavior (Agudelo et. al., 2021).

School administrators participate in restorative justice strategies to promote a positive climate and positive relationships. Restorative justice models utilize community circles that encourage and promote self-regulation, positive social interactions, and responsibility. Exclusionary discipline or out-of-school suspensions tend to lead to increases in dropping out of school, lower academic achievement, and the possibility of entering the justice system. Restorative justice has been found to lead to positive outcomes including increased school belonging, decreased depression, and better student-teacher relationships (Sedillo-Hamann, 2022).

The California Legislature includes social-emotional learning in the K-12 curriculum. As of January 2019, schools and school districts are required to notify students and their guardians “how to initiate access to available pupil mental health services on campus, in the community or both (Cal. Educ. Code § 49428).” In October 2021, it was required that the Department of Education “recommend best practices and identify evidence-based and evidence-informed training programs for schools to address youth behavioral health, including, but not necessarily limited

to, staff and pupil training (Cal. Educ. Code § 49428.15).” The California legislature approved in January 2022 that the CA Department of Education create protocols for addressing student mental health concerns in collaboration with the State Department of Health Care Services to design these protocols (Cal. Educ. § 49428.1). In addition, the legislature requires mental health education in schools with a health education class. (Cal. Educ. § 51925). The Los Angeles Unified School District includes social-emotional learning as part of the district policy. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is the largest school district in California and the second largest in the United States. LAUSD provides social-emotional learning (LAUSD Policy Bulletin, BUL-13307, Student Health and Human Services Division of Special Education, 2022):

- (1) provides all students with a safe, healthy, welcoming, affirming, and an inclusive environment;
- (2) the adoption of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support.;
- (3) implementation of the Multi-tiered system of Positive Behavior Interventions (PBIS) and Restorative Practices.

California Senate Bill 224 was signed and approved to revise the Health Framework for California schools to be appropriate for the use of students of all races, genders, sexual orientations, ethnicities, disabilities, and English Learners (CA Legislative Information, 2021).

Governor Newsom of California approved The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative. As part of the initiative, 4.7 billion has been dedicated to increase access to mental health and substance support. This funding supports early interventions, increases the number of school counselors, offers tuition assistance and loan forgiveness to new mental health professionals, expands remote services, and provides training for educators on trauma-informed care (California Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, 2022). California public schools are required to provide instruction in the principles of mental health (Cal. Educ. Code § 51925). According to the grade level, this may include social and cultural connectedness, problem-solving, resiliency, anxiety, depression, etc. The California Department of Education has approved California’s Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles as follows: Adopt Whole Child Development, Commitment to Equity, Build Capacity, Partner with Families and Community, and Learn and Improve (CA Dept. of Education, 2023).

Method

This qualitative study utilized a grounded theory research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The process involved the use of open-ended interview questions to focus groups and/or individual interviews. Three focus groups were comprised of teachers, counselors/social workers/psychologists, and an administrative focus group answered the research protocol questions. This research utilized purposeful sampling. Five California school districts in the Los Angeles area and three private schools that use a SEL schoolwide approach received a recruitment letter and a copy of the informed consent document. Participants who completed the interview questions were from three districts and two private schools.

Interviews included the following open-ended questions:

1. What is your position (teacher, counselor, social worker, etc.)?
2. Briefly list your knowledge of any social-emotional/mental health district policies or state laws.
3. In your position how do you implement SEL?

4. Which type of lessons or strategies have you found to be most effective?
5. Which strategies or lessons do you feel need improvement?
6. What is your role in the multi-tiered approach to student mental health support?
7. Please describe your understanding of your district's current policies or guidelines related to social-emotional support in the classroom.
8. Please provide examples of how district policies or state laws have influenced your classroom practices related to social-emotional support.
9. How do you collaborate with other educators or school staff to ensure consistent implementation of district or state policies regarding social-emotional support?
10. In your opinion, what additional support or resources could be beneficial for educators to understand and implement district and state policies on social-emotional support?

Participants

A total of 26 interviews were completed. The participants consisted of three social workers, two psychologists, five counselors, six administrators, and ten teachers. The participants were from two large school districts, one smaller district, and two private schools. The participants were from elementary and secondary schools located in Los Angeles County.

Results

The first cycle of coding resulted from analyzing the data utilizing in vivo coding to group similar ideas from the participants' words. The second cycle of coding resulted in pattern coding to group the data into focused themes (Miles et al., 2014). After the coding of the interview responses, themes emerged from the research questions (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019). Patterned codes derived from the interviews are located in Tables 1-4 and contain each research question.

Table 1. Research Question 1

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| <i>RQ1. How do various school providers implement SEL?</i> |
| Teachers: Classroom Activities, embedded SEL into the curriculum, daily check-ins, referrals to Administration or Counselors & Peer Tutoring |
| Social Workers: Threat Assessment, Indicators of Abuse, & Social Economic Needs |
| Counselors: Counseling, Classroom Lessons, Referrals & Coping Skills |
| Administrators: Referrals, Restorative Justice, Professional Development |
| Psychologists: Assessment, Counseling, Interventions, & Referrals |

As documented in Table 1, several classroom teachers expressed similar comments such as, "Daily, I greet my students at the door to provide a connection and a conversation to check in on their feelings or emotions (teacher)."

Similarly, counselors also mentioned the importance of check-ins. “When students come in to see me, I use the feelings chart to have them identify their emotions so that we can work on their coping skills (counselor)”. “Counselors model SEL lessons in the classroom through Second-Step curriculum and also provide targeted lessons based on patterns of behavior needs (counselor).” Social workers and school psychologists conduct threat assessments for the safety of students. Administrators and teachers refer students to counselors, social workers, and school psychologists for individual interventions.

Schools and districts have policies requiring social-emotional instruction and learning. Counselors, social workers, administrators, and psychologists expressed knowledge of policies whereas teachers generally mentioned their lack of knowledge (see Table 2). “I am not very familiar with specific laws or policies (teacher).” “I am not well versed in those policies (teacher).” “The district plan for Joy and Wellness requires SEL instruction and strategies because SEL affects academic success and, it is related to self-awareness, self-management, self-efficacy and the growth mindset (administrator).” “The district policy includes no bullying and a safety plan that includes social-emotional learning (social worker).” “Additional professionals are needed to support the wellness center and more emotional support for school staff who are exhausted and experiencing elevated stress (social worker).” Teachers experience overwhelming stress and teacher burnout. They also need strategies to protect their own emotional wellness (Creekmore & Creekmore, 2024). “Schools should provide educators with emotional wellness-building strategies including healthy boundaries, mindfulness, journaling, exercise, healthy habits, and educator-supportive relationships. Daily practices are needed to help students cope with issues, problem-solving, and the ability to move forward using calming activities that may include taking a walk, mindfulness, or other relaxation activities (teacher).” “Trauma informed approaches to help relieve stress and emotional triggers are necessary (social worker).” “The understanding of generational and cultural diversity is important (administrator).”

Table 2. Research Question 2

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| <i>RQ 2. What challenges do schools, districts, or state policies face in implementing SEL, and how can they be improved?</i> |
| Teachers: Lack of Policy Awareness, More support in training, Wellness centers are essential in SEL, inclusive practices, calming activities, and caseload reduction is critical |
| Social Workers: Policy awareness, Staff needs supportive strategies to reduce their stress, and trauma informed approaches |
| Counselors: Policy awareness, staff development or training, & Family Support. |
| Administrators: Policy Awareness, training, professional development, culturally diversity awareness, and trauma-informed practices |
| Psychologists: Policy Awareness, staff development, trauma informed practices & Family Support |

The interviews of the social workers, school administrators, and school psychologists elicited the importance of

culturally relevant practices, implicit bias training, and conflict resolution (see Table 3). Restorative justice programs utilize conflict resolution to prevent ongoing disputes and the promotion of safe learning environments. Restorative justice practices promote a decrease in students of color being suspended from attending school. Students of color have been overrepresented in disciplinary actions and therefore implicit bias training may improve the stereotyping of students by school staff members (Agudelo et al., 2021). Transformative SEL includes culturally and historically responsive instruction (Corelitz et al., 2024). It is centered on identity and belonging. Social workers, counselors, and school psychologists stressed the importance of family involvement. “Parent and caregiver engagement is necessary for students and parents to continue the practice of SEL problem-solving strategies at home (social worker).” “Family interventions and buy-in are important. Without family support, SEL is counter-productive (counselor).” Students should practice SEL strategies at home to solve their sibling conflicts. Supportive family involvement provides students with the ongoing practice of appropriate responses (psychologist).” “Teachers should help students become responsible adults through the practice of the SEL skills of self-awareness, self-management, self-efficacy, and the growth mindset. “Implicit bias training is an effective strategy for all staff members (administrator).”

Table 3. Research Question 3

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| <i>RQ 3. What aspects of SEL curriculum seem to be the most effective?</i> |
| Teachers: Activities of self-expression and wellness centers essential in SEL |
| Social Workers: Culturally Relevant and evidenced-based programs such as Second Step, ReThinkED, Wellness Center, InFocus & Family Involvement |
| Counselors: Wellness centers essential in SEL, social workers, and Family Involvement |
| Administrators: Implicit Bias training, Second Step, Positive impact of the Wellness Center & Restorative Justice Programs |
| Psychologists: Conflict Resolution and Scenarios & Family Involvement |

All participants expressed a need for more professionals to support students in SEL. The importance of the on-campus wellness center is reflected in Table 3 and the need for differentiated targeted strategies or interventions was voiced by counselors, administrators, and psychologists as shown in Table 4. “More authentic and targeted SEL is needed to meet student needs (counselor).” “Middle schoolers require additional targeted support because they rely on social media and the internet for answers (administrator).” “Teachers prefer SEL lessons that are modeled to assist with the expected implementation of SEL strategies (administrator).” “Additional training is needed in differentiation and modifications to support all students (psychologist).” “The wellness center has been very supportive to students and teachers (teacher).” “The wellness center assists with the de-escalation of emotions and stress (social worker).” School-based wellness center research has demonstrated that wellness centers reduce stress, support academic achievement, improve confidence, and provide positive coping strategies (Moya et al., 2022).

Table 4. Research Question 4

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| <i>RQ 4. What aspects of the Social-emotional curriculum need improvement?</i> |
| Teachers: More training & funding for additional social workers, psychologists, and counselors |
| Social Workers: More training, additional professionals needed & support for staff stress |
| Counselors: Targeted strategies for individual students, more input from counselors and school psychologists, & Training |
| Administrators: Targeted strategies for students, training, and restorative justice practices |
| Psychologists: Targeted strategies for individual students and training |

The data collected from the interviews of the participants provided perceptions of social-emotional learning in their various roles within the K-12 schools. Each participant shared their knowledge of individual implementation of SEL, school or district policies, effective curriculum or practices, and suggestions for SEL implementation improvement. The participants voiced individual and common concerns.

Implementation and Policy

Classroom teachers and counselors utilize the emotions and feelings of students whenever they meet with them to assess their current emotional state or mood. This provides teachers and counselors a check-in with students and a context for appropriate and supportive strategies to implement as needed. Social workers, administrators, and psychologists refer students for additional support services according to assessments of discipline, academics, emotional issues, abuse, or socioeconomic concerns.

Several classroom teachers mentioned that they were not aware of the social-emotional policies and suggested that more training is necessary. “More training for teachers on how to be more supportive is needed (teacher).” “I don’t know the policies, but we do have a wellness center for students to go to for support as a safe space (teacher).” “Teachers need standard strategies that are simplified and clearly articulated for use in the classroom. There are too many choices with detailed, complex suggestions for classroom use (teacher).” Social workers, counselors, administrators, and psychologists provide policy requirements for social-emotional learning.” “The district requires yearly training in social-emotional learning including results from yearly stakeholder surveys regarding social-emotional learning (administrator).” “There is district provided SEL online resources to support students, parents, and staff in strategies to promote social skills and SEL (psychiatric social worker).”

SEL Curriculum

All of the participants expressed the importance of the wellness center and programs to support SEL. Most campus wellness centers are supervised by a social worker. The wellness center offers Tier II and Tier III support. Tier II supports the Multi-Tier System of Support including restorative circles, small groups, and individual support for SEL. Tier III is more intensive and may include referrals to community resources. “The wellness center focuses

on SEL with clinical therapy skills and conflict resolution interventions (social worker).” “The wellness center is a safe place for students to connect with supportive activities, mindfulness, group/ individual counseling, and enjoyable stress-relieving activities (administrator).” “The access to wellness centers and the social worker is valued by the students and staff (counselor).” “The wellness center provides problem-solving skills, support groups, and coping strategies to practice skills in the de-escalation of emotions and stress (social worker).”

Participants mentioned that online SEL programs assist students and parents. These programs include scenarios with self-checking assessments to support SEL development and other curriculum strategies. “Our district utilizes BrainPop to support SEL (psychologist).” “The Second-Step lessons and the PBIS (positive behavior intervention strategies) lessons are effective (administrator).” “The RethinkEd MTSS (multi-tiered system of support), Harmony, Second Step, and Restorative Justice practices support students, teachers, and administrators (administrator).” “Second Step, RethinkEd, InFocus, and culturally relevant lessons are useful and valuable SEL curriculum (social worker).” “The CASEL SEL 3 Signature Playbook is a useful guide to assist with the implementation of SEL (administrator).”

Additionally, participants identified recommendations for SEL improvement to include a culturally relevant curriculum, differentiation of strategies, funding, training, and staff support. Muhammad (2023) addresses the need for a culturally relevant curriculum. This includes the areas of identity, skills, intellect, criticality, and joy (Muhammad, 2023). This framework integrates mental health and academic achievement. Differentiation provides effective attention to the needs of all students. Educators are responsive to social, cognitive, and affective needs including a curriculum that is relevant and engaging (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023). Students who experience high-quality, inspired, and supportive experiences have a better chance of successful academic achievement. “Teachers and students require more self-awareness and self-regulation activities. The wellness center is not designed for all students to drop in daily. It serves students who may be in the Tier two or three levels. Teachers should be trained to help students learn everyday problem-solving skills and coping strategies (teacher).” “Educators need more professional development to understand the triggers of behavior to include first the antecedent or event, secondly the behavior or action and finally the consequence which may be verbal or physical (administrator).”

Discussion

This descriptive study utilized the voices of school staff who participate in social-emotional learning (SEL). Since the pandemic schools in the Los Angeles area have sharpened the focus on the whole child. SEL is connected to academic success, positive relationships, and improved mental health (Greenberg et al., 2017). Participants valued the wellness centers and online programs. The participants in this study expressed the need for more awareness of SEL school policy, continuous training in SEL delivery, parent involvement, and additional professionals to support SEL. The need for the differentiation of strategies to include culturally responsive instruction was also indicated by the participants. Equity provides support, justice, and belonging to recognize and repair past injustices to provide inclusion and belonging for all students (Howard, 2024).

Childhood trauma negatively affects academic success and social interactions. Schools should become trauma-sensitive by providing safety and support. Additionally, schools should be trauma-informed and provide supportive services (McNerney, 2024). Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) or trauma includes abuse, violence, caregiver mental illness, and neglect. These experiences increase the possibility of students to experience anxiety, substance abuse, depression, and physical illnesses which affect achievement performance and positive social skills (McNerney, 2024). Suggestions for becoming a trauma-sensitive school includes a calming environment which includes speaking softly, utilizing empathy, providing adult mentors, avoidance of power struggles, opportunities for choices in activities/assignments, affective communication, and mindfulness.

Focusing on the mental health of school staff is necessary before staff provides support for the mental health of students. School staff must be well rested, self-affirming, practice self-care, prioritize their personal needs of exercise, and social connections before they can support their students (Causton & Macleod, 2020). Before filling the cups of others, individuals must have a cup of patience and happiness of their own. Empty cups lead to stress and emotional tiredness.

California has local, state, and federal policy recommendations regarding the implementation of SEL. Several districts utilize various SEL programs and provide the schools with a plethora of options for use. Classroom teachers are saturated with mandates and requirements for testing, standard-based instruction, SEL, discipline issues, special education, and family communication. SEL presents another layer of responsibility for teachers. Social-emotional learning is critical and is connected to academic success. Teachers require a standard based SEL program that is straightforward and accessible to implement. SEL staff development for teachers should include the modeling of student lessons and opportunities to build emotional wellness for educators.

Conclusion

The theoretical framework of the social cognitive theory and self-regulation focuses on social modeling. Social-emotional learning in the Los Angeles area schools is achieved through social modeling and the elements of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Most schools utilize the five areas of SEL as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). All participants in the study mentioned the CASEL model. Participant reflections included the importance of modeling, problem-solving strategies, professional development, culturally relevant instruction, wellness center programs, parent involvement, and teacher support.

There is a wealth of programs that address SEL for districts and schools. Educators require ongoing professional development and a SEL program that provides user-friendly objectives and activities that are modeled for classroom use. Participants also voiced the need for additional support, personnel, and funding. The wellness center is a tier II and tier III level of support. Classroom teachers and administrators require daily problem-solving strategies to assist students with using their own personal power to solve problems and learn appropriate coping strategies. Most participants mentioned that they are involved in all three tiers of support. "I am involved in all three tiers of support to include the Mental Health Awareness Fair for the entire school, individual assessments,

and data assessment for agency referrals (psychiatric social worker).” My role is to support all students, teachers, and families including individual education plans (IEP) therefore, I am involved in tiers I, II, and III (administrator).” “As a classroom teacher, I participate in all three tiers of support. My daily interactions with all students fall into tier I. When I refer students to administrators or counselors and meet with the stakeholders, this is tier II support. Being involved in special education parent, counselor, teacher, and school psychologist assessment and planning meetings are part of tier III (teacher).”

Recommendations

The recommendations from this study suggest that schools increase the number of professional staff members. This will better support SEL in the schools. It will provide teachers with more support in the instruction of SEL strategies. The inclusion of a culturally relevant curriculum to support all students, and the importance of the school site wellness center is vital for the success of SEL programs. Increasing the number of professionals to support social-emotional learning is critical. All school stakeholders including students, teachers, social workers, counselors, administrators, parents, and psychologists experience daily challenging issues. Funding is a never-ending need for schools. It remains imperative for policymakers to focus on our children as they are the future of our nation and our world.

Educators are in need of additional strategies and informational policy requirements to support SEL. Teachers are overwhelmed with state standards, testing, discipline, lesson plans, and other responsibilities. They require strategies and policies that will lessen their daily stressors and responsibilities. Culturally responsive teaching improves school achievement (Gay, 2018). Schools that make sure that students feel that they belong have better academic and positive mental health outcomes (Fisher & Fry, 2024). A sense of belonging includes focusing on students' strengths, culturally sustaining curriculum, addressing biases, and building positive relationships. Cultural diversity provides strength in the improvement of our personal and civic responsibility. Culturally relevant instruction utilizes culture and experiences to create relevant and motivating strategies to support students (Gay, 2018).

Wellness centers provide a critical service to our schools. The school site wellness centers address student stress with mindfulness, relaxation skills, and self-regulation techniques (Moya et al., 2022). The wellness centers provide Tier II and III interventions to support students. Schools should utilize the wellness center with strategic supportive interventions. Although all students may benefit from its services, students should learn strategies to empower their social-emotional needs to become responsible adults. The wellness centers are often comprised of a small classroom supervised by a social worker.

This study utilized the voices of teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, and psychologists regarding social-emotional learning in the school setting. This data was collected from school staff members in Los Angeles area schools. Additional studies in social-emotional learning will continue to provide suggestions for practice to support student achievement and success. Further studies in other cities, states, and countries will provide robust research data in the area of social-emotional learning.

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