Spring 2017

Teacher Perceptions of the Social Emotional Learning Standards

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

STANDARDS

By

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Prepared in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the Masters of Arts Degree in

Multicategorical Special Education

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Governors State University
University Park, Illinois
2017

Acknowledgements

I am using this opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout the course of this Master's program and final project. I am thankful for their aspiring guidance, invaluably constructive criticism and friendly advice during my graduate studies. This process has most definitely been a challenging journey, and I could not have done this alone.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my Professor Dr. Philip Boudreau for the continuous support of throughout my student teaching and research; for his patience, determination to help me succeed, and enthusiasm on the content. His continuous, prevalent guidance helped me push through the testing times. I could not have imagined having a better professor or mentor during the graduate seminar and student teaching semester.

I am particularly indebted to amazing group of graduate students I was able to work with during my time working toward my Masters'; from the classmates, I met in the first semester to those whom I will walk with at graduation. This paper and the completion of this degree would not have been possible without you support, direction, and encouragement; all of which helped me get through every day of this busy, demanding period.

Last but most importantly I want to thank my family. I have been blessed with amazing and understanding family that has stuck with, encouraged and guided me towards my goals and dreams. Thank you to my mom and dad for always believing and encouraging me to work toward my dreams, no matter how extreme or idealistic they sound. To my sister, brother and boyfriend: thank you for letting me take the time I needed to complete this and for your reassurance and unwavering belief in my success.

Each and every one of you has played an important role in my success, for that I am eternally grateful.

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Abstract

Today's students do not come to school with the traditional set of academic proficiencies and emotional competence they once used to. In recent years, Social Emotional Learning has gradually gained a positive reputation in the educational community. The purpose of this investigation was to assess teachers on their knowledge and use of the Social Emotional Learning Standards, as well as their perspectives on the importance of these standards in the educational development of their students. A small pool of licensed teachers from the Cook County, Illinois area were polled by means of an electronically disbursed, anonymous survey. The overall results were that teachers believed that Social Emotional Learning Standards are important for the growth and development of all students. However, the results demonstrated that these teachers still lack knowledge and do not implement the standards in their lesson planning. Future investigation into the inconsistency might involve educator training in application and awareness of the current topic.

Key words: Social Emotional Learning, emotional competence, Social Emotional Learning Standards, general and special education teachers

Chapter 1

Introduction

"[I]t is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education" stated by Chief Justice Earl Warren in 1954 (as cited by Lusk, 2015). Before congress passed the Education for all Handicapped Children Act in 1975, children with disabilities were not considered in the education field; "more than one-half of the children with disabilities in the United States did not receive appropriate educational services" (IDEA, 2004, p.5). This was due to many factors including: "(a) the children did not receive appropriate educational services; "(b) the children were excluded entirely from the public-school system and from being educated with their peers; "(c) undiagnosed disabilities prevented the children from having a successful educational experience; or "(d) a lack of adequate resources within the public-school system forced families to find services outside the public-school system (IDEA, 2004, p.5). With these faults in mind, this act has been modified and changed many times, but today it is known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1994.

IDEA states that (a) "all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs", (b) "to assist States in the implementation of a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families", (c) "to ensure that educators and parents have the necessary tools to improve educational results for children with disabilities by supporting systemic-change activities" (IDEA, 2004, p.8). The main focus is to identify, assist and improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities (Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006).

Table 1

Prevalence of children aged 3-21 served under IDEA by disability type for the 2013-2014 school year.

IDEA Disability Type	Percentage of children served
Autism	8.3
Deaf-blindness	>1
Developmental delay	6.3
Emotional disturbance	5.5
Hearing impairment	1.2
Intellectual disability	6.6
Multiple disabilities	2.0
Orthopedic impairment	0.9
Other health impairment	12.6
Specific learning disability	35.0
Speech or language impairment	20.6
Traumatic brain injury	0.4
Visual impairment	0.4

NOTE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, (2016).

IDEA classifies a child with a disability as one with "mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities" (IDEA, 2004). Table 1 shows the percentage of students within an IDEA disability category that was enrolled in a public school during the 2013-2014 school year. As a direct result of the reauthorization of IDEA, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was sanctioned. The NCLB was intended

to improve the academic achievement of students across the United States (Yell, Shriner, &

Katsiyannis, 2006). The NCLB aims to: (a) create a deadline for all students to become

proficient in reading and math; (b) "establish a rigorous accountability systems for states and

public schools"; (c) ensure that all students are taught by highly qualified teachers that apply

evidence-based practices in a safe and beneficial learning environment; and (d) that all students

will graduate (Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006). Legislative efforts, like IDEA and NCLB

(IDEA, 2004) have provided a basis for serving the educational needs of students with academic

and behavioral issues (Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006). According to Elias (1997), there is

accumulating evidence that shows it is not possible for students to be sincerely academically or

personally successful without social emotional learning and school-based interventions.

According to Taylor and Larson (1999), social and emotional learning is a growing topic of

discussion in the education world: most argue that students of all abilities and grade levels often

need help developing these skills. Supporters argue that social emotional learning contributes to

academic achievement, a better school environment, and successful emotional development in

individuals of all levels and needs (Zinsser, Sheward, Dehan, & Curby, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

This study examines general and special education teachers' knowledge, use, and

perceptions on social emotional learning standards in Illinois. Currently, Illinois is one of the few

states that has comprehensive, free-standing standards and benchmarks for social and emotional

learning in grades kindergarten through grade twelve (Zinsser, 2015). Social and emotional

learning (SEL) is "the process through which children and adults develop the skills, attitudes and

values necessary to acquire social and emotional competence" (Elias, 1997, p. 2). The goal of

SEL standards is to promote positive learning outcomes and teach students to problem solve both

academically and interpersonally so they will become more independent and successful individuals (Taylor & Larson, 1999).

Teachers play a vital role in assisting students in understanding and managing their feelings to perform well academically, interpersonally, and in different life tasks (Taylor & Larson, 1999). When social and emotional learning standards are implemented appropriately, they have many positive effects in the classroom: (a) they improve student to teacher relationships, (b) increase student interest and engagement, (c) produce more consistent attendance records, (d) higher academic achievement, and (e) less disruptive classroom environments (Schonfeld et al., 2015). Students in both general education and special education classrooms who display social and emotional competence are more successful students, citizens, and individuals (Taylor & Larson, 1999).

Purpose of the Study

The knowledge gained from the research may be valuable to understand the importance and efficacy of SEL standards. The information gathered will display the importance of the social and emotional learning standards in Illinois and the perceptions of general and special education teachers.

Question of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the research question, "what are the General and Special Education teachers' knowledge, use, and perceptions on social emotional learning standards in Illinois?"

Assumptions and Limitations

There is a time constraint imposed by the Governors State University graduate seminar. Due to the limited time frame to conduct the study and collect the data, the ability to generalize may be limited in its scope.

Significance of the Study

Surveying both General and Special Education teachers' knowledge and insights of social emotional learning will demonstrate a wide range of teacher knowledge and perceptions. It will also show the importance of SEL in the classrooms and how it positively effects student growth and development.

Definition of Terms

Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975. This Act was a result of the lack of education services provided to individuals with disabilities. According to IDEA (2004) "this title has been successful in ensuring children with disabilities and the families of such children access to a free appropriate public education and in improving educational results for children with disabilities".

Disability or "child with a disability". This term is described by IDEA (2004) as an individual with mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities. Additionally, IDEA states that the term refers to any individual, "who, by reason one of these 13 categories, needs special education and related services".

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA). This federal mandate revised all previous legislation and made it mandatory for children with disabilities to receive free and appropriate public education to the age of 21. This act also defines the term disability and explains who would be eligible to receive special education services. This goal of this law is to improve outcomes for students with disabilities by (a) ensuring free and appropriate education, (b) increasing parental involvement, and (c) promoting accountability for school districts (Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). According Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, (2006) this law was enacted with the intent to improve the academic achievement of students across the United States. The law focused national attention on improving academic achievement by ensuring that the nation's 48 million students would be proficient in reading and math by 2013-

2014 school year. The law also established an accountability system for states and public schools based on students' performance. They go on to explain that it resulted in a more persistent involvement from the government in educational matters, including the education of students with disabilities (e.g., AYP requirements, graduation and drop-out requirements).

Social Emotional Learning (SEL). According to Elias et al. (1997), social emotional learning is an integration process of thinking, feeling, and behaving in order to be aware of oneself and the people around, to manage one's and others' behaviors, and to take responsibility of one's own decisions. Additional, CASEL (2017) states that "social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions".

Social Emotional Learning Standards. The term standard is defined by Merriam-Webster as "something established by authority, custom, or general consent as a model for example" (2017). These standards outline and divulge what all students in public schools should know and be able to do emotionally, based on their grade level. Arslan and Demirtas (2016) state that the purpose of these standards is to define and regulate one's own emotions accurately, improving problem solving skills, and a skill to establishing good relationships with the people around.

Chapter Summary

Since 1975 there have been many legislative changes in the educational domain; such as, Education for all Handicapped Children Act, IDEA and NCLB. These changes have positively impacted educating all students no matter their skill level or disability. New policy decisions proved to be constructive steps in educating students academically, but still lack to support students with social emotional development. Social Emotional Learning or SEL is very beneficial for general education students and learners with disabilities in both academic and social settings.

Chapter II

Review of the Related Literature

The needs and entitlements of students are forever changing; today's students do not come to school with the same prosocial principles or social and emotional competence as they once did (Taylor & Larson, 1999). Elias et al., (1997) defines social and emotional competence as:

> the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development. (p. 2)

Social and emotional competence plays an important role in the academic success of students, Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, (2011) explain:

> Emotions can facilitate or impede children's academic engagement, work ethic, commitment, and ultimate school success. Because relationships and emotional processes affect how and what we learn, schools and families must effectively address these aspects of the educational process for the benefit of all students. (p. 1)

Students need help developing and maintaining these skills from preschool through adulthood; and teachers play an important role in the process (Zinsser, 2015). According to Zinsser (2015) the idea of teaching and guiding students towards successful social skills and understanding their emotions have always been apparent in classrooms; but "with an increase in research, policymakers have recognized the importance of these non-cognitive skills and have included relevant domains in standards of learning to varying degrees across the country" (Why do SEL

standards matter? Section, ¶ 1). Additional research has found more than just academic success

from teaching and integrating Social Emotional Learning, according to Elias and Arnold (2006):

> When schools implement high-quality SEL programs and approaches effectively,
>
> academic achievement of children increases, incidence of problem behaviors decreases,
>
> the relationship that surround each child are improved, and the climate of classrooms and
>
> schools change for the better. (p.5)

Similarly, Rivers and Brackett (2011) state SEL benefits a student's: (a) memory, (b) attention

span, (c) motivation, (d) learning, (e) decision-making, and (f) social relationships. The authors

(2011) go on to explain that lack of Social Emotional Learning or a SEL program can result in

"maladaptive behaviors" like bullying or school violence. Social emotional learning standards,

contributes to academic achievement, a better school environment, and successful emotional

development in individuals of all levels and needs (Zinsser, Sheward, Dehan, & Curby, 2014).

Legislation Affecting Social Emotional Learning

IDEA

Before congress passed the Education for all Handicapped Children Act in 1975, children

with disabilities were not considered in the education field; "more than one-half of the children

with disabilities in the United States did not receive appropriate educational services" (IDEA,

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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1994. IDEA states that (a) "all children

with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes

special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs", (b) "to assist States

in the implementation of a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency

system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families",

(c) "to ensure that educators and parents have the necessary tools to improve educational results

for children with disabilities by supporting systemic-change activities" (IDEA, 2004, p.8). IDEA

classifies a child with a disability as one with "mental retardation, hearing impairments

(including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness),

serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other

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reauthorization of IDEA, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was sanctioned. The

NCLB was intended to improve the academic achievement of students across the United States

(Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006). The NCLB aims to: (a) create a deadline for all students to

become proficient in reading and math; (b) "establish a rigorous accountability systems for states

and public schools"; (c) ensure that all students are taught by highly qualified teachers that apply

evidence-based practices in a safe and beneficial learning environment; and (d) that all students

will graduate (Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006). Legislative efforts, like IDEA and NCLB

(IDEA, 2004) have provided a national basis for serving the educational needs of students with

academic and behavioral issues (Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006).

Children's Mental Health Act of 2003

According to Gordon et al., (2002) a group of various educational and mental health

professionals worked together to promote the importance of social and emotional development

and "recommended that legislation was needed to create a mandate for addressing children's

mental health in this manner and to codify a number of key task force recommendations" (p. 71).

This group ran a report called *Children's Mental Health: An Urgent Priority in Illinois*, and

found that children's social and emotional development is essential groundwork for academic

success. The authors (2011) further explained that the group's findings lead to the enactment of

the Illinois Children's Mental Health Act of 2003 (Public Act 93-0495). Along with the original

requirements the act called for:

> • Development of a Children's Mental Health Plan for Illinois that provides substantive
>
> and strategic direction for building an effective children's mental health system that
>
> addresses the prevention, early intervention and treatment needs of children ages 0-18.
>
> (p. 71)
>
> • Establishment of the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership (ICMHP), which
>
> was charged with developing and monitoring the implementation of the Children's
>
> Mental Health Plan. (p.71)
>
> • Development and implementation of a plan by the Illinois State Board of Education
>
> (ISBE) that incorporates social and the Illinois Learning Standards for the purpose of
>
> enhancing and measuring children's school readiness and ability to achieve academic
>
> success. (p. 71-72)
>
> • Development by local school districts of policies for incorporating social and emotional
>
> development into their educational program; these policies would include the teaching
>
> and assessment of students' social and emotional competencies and protocols for
>
> responding to children with social, emotional, or mental health problems, or a
>
> combination of such problems, that affect learning ability. (p.72)

In 2004, Illinois became the first state in the country to adopt and implement free-standing K-12

Social Emotional Learning Standards (Zinsser, 2015). According to O'Brien & Resnik, (2009)

this act was "designed to ensure that Illinois schools (a) regard social and emotional learning

(SEL) as integral to their mission and (b) take concrete steps to address their students' social and

emotional development" (p.1). Along with Kansas, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, Illinois is

one of the few states in the country to have "comprehensive, free-standing standards that span

grades K-12" (Zinsser, 2015).

Illinois Social-Emotional Learning Standards

Defining the Standards

In coordination with the Section 15(a) of Public Act 93-0495 and the efforts from the

Illinois Children's Mental Health Act of 2003, the Illinois State Board of Education developed

the Social Emotional Learning Standards (O'Brien & Resnik, 2009). The authors (2009) explain

that when creating the standards, 5 core social and emotional skills: (a)self-awareness, (b)self-

management, (c)social awareness, (d) relationship skills, and (e) responsible decision making,

were used to formulate and create the social and emotional learning standards that were

recognized by ISBE in 2004 (p. 2). According the Illinois State Board of Education website

(2017), the social and emotional learning standards cooperatively created are encompassed

within 3 main goals:

> (1) develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success;
>
> (2) use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive
>
> relationships; and
>
> (3) demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and
>
> community contexts. (Social/Emotional Learning Standards section, ¶ 4)

These 3 goals are then broken down further into 10 learning standards and each standard has 5

benchmarks levels based on grade level categories; these benchmarks give a more detailed

description and provide a better explanation of what is expected of the student (Illinois State

Board of Education, 2017). These social and emotional standards are now a part of the Illinois

Learning Standards; thus, they must be adopted into the curriculum and taught throughout the

state (Zins & Elias, 2007). The authors explain that due to legislative efforts, the state of Illinois is also required to "respond to children who have social, emotional, or mental health problems that affect their learning" (p.51) and accurately and appropriately assess social and emotional outcomes within their school.

<center>**Social Emotional Learning**</center>

Definition

Social Emotional Learning is the process in which young children and adults acquire the fundamental skills to be successful in (a) school, (b) work, (c) social interactions, (d) relationships, and (e) individual development (Gordon et al., 2011). These fundamental skills used in the "education of the whole child", as Elias & Arnold (2006) describe it, are built from the following characteristics: (a) identifying and understanding one's emotions, (b) the ability to problem-solve, (c) caring about one's self and others, (d) building and maintaining positive relationships, (e) the decision-making process, (f) coping with difficult situations, and (g) setting and working toward practical goals (Elias et al., 1997; Gordon et al., 2011). Elias et al. (1997) explains that through the learning process children and adults obtain "the skills, attitude, and values necessary to acquire social and emotional competence" (p.2). Elias et al (1997) state that emotional competence is:

> the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development. (p. 2)

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is an organization with the goal of "establishing social and emotional learning as an essential part of education

from preschool through high school" (Payton et al., 2000, p. 179). The CASEL website (2017)

lists the 5-fundamental social and emotional proficiencies focused on when addressing social and

emotional learning: (1) self-awareness, (2) self-management, (3) social awareness, (4)

relationship skills, and (5) responsible decision-making (Core SEL competencies section). These

vital skills will assist students of all levels in becoming active and functional members of society.

The 5 essential competencies are defined in greater detail by the CASEL website (2017) as

follows:

> 1. Self-awareness is described as the ability to: identify and recognize one's emotions and
>
> values, self-assess strengths and weaknesses, and display confidence in oneself.
>
> 2. Self-management is the ability to accurately control one's thoughts and emotions
>
> through stress management, impulse control and self-motivation.
>
> 3. The ability to show empathy to other cultures and ethnicities and displaying
>
> appropriate and respectable behaviors in various settings.
>
> 4. The relationship competency is characterized by the ability to create and sustain
>
> healthy and positive relationships with others of all backgrounds. This includes: effective
>
> communication, appropriate social interactions, and being an attentive team member.
>
> 5. Responsible decision-making is the ability to break down and work through a difficult
>
> problem while maintaining one's safety, morals and respect towards others.

SEL is a term that covers a wide array of emotional and social development principles that lead

to successful individuals in many environments and aspects.

History

It is a well-known fact that the world today is a completely different environment to grow up in then it was compared to the last few decades (Elias et al., 1997; Payton et al., 2000; Zins & Elias, 2007). Zins and Elias (2007) give a specific description:

Today many role models are tarnished, unethical behavior is a commonplace; and new opportunities to develop and engage in negative behaviors abound. More than ever, students are faced with uncertainty in their daily lives and in their futures, and many feel a sense of insecurity, disenfranchisement, disillusionment, and even fear. For all of these reasons, SEL is perhaps more important than ever as an essential component of school reform. (p. 235)

Additionally, Taylor and Smith (1999) explained the need for social and emotional learning due to a similar setback; today's students don't bring the same prosocial values, effective communication or caring attitudes as they once did. Children are exposed to much more negative situations, less time with work-driven parents and media that can bring dangers right to your front door; this progression of history depicts the need for intervention (Zins & Elias, 2007).

Being emotionally competent, creating positive relationships, and being able to problem-solve are not new ideas in the education world; in fact, Elias and Arnold (2006) explain that these principles are embedded in the foundations of ancient cultures. However, it wasn't until the publication of Goldman's *Emotional Intelligence* and Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences* in the 90s that social and emotional learning became more prevalent and a topic for schools to consider (Zins & Elias, 2007). Then 2004 was the next big movement, when the Illinois State Board of Education became the first state to adopted the Social Emotional Learning Standards to their curriculum (O'Brien & Resnik, 2009). Since Illinois adopted K-12 free standing standards other

states like Missouri, Tennessee, Kansas, and West Virginia have also embraced their own social

and emotional learning standards (Zinsser, 2015). Subsequently we have seen more interest,

progress, and research in social and emotional programs, the positive effects and the successful

results (Zins & Elias, 2007).

According to Zinsser (2015) the idea of teaching and guiding students towards successful

social skills and understanding their emotions has always been apparent in classrooms; but "with

an increase in research policymakers have recognized the importance of these non-cognitive

skills and have included relevant domains in standards of learning to varying degrees across the

country" (Why do SEL standards matter? Section, ¶ 1). Zinsser (2015) goes on to explain how

these standards are influencing the curriculum; because as state standards, they provide

guidelines for teachers to follow and a way to measure student development.

Student Success

Social emotional learning standards are a fairly new set of standards for teaching that

supporters defend: contributes to academic achievement, a better school environment, and

successful emotional development in individuals of all levels and needs (Ashdown & Bernard,

2012; Elias & Arnold, 2006; Elias et al., 1997; Raver, 2003; Smith & Low, 2013; Zins & Elias,

2007; Zinsser, Sheward, Dehan, & Curby, 2014). When social and emotional learning standards

are implemented appropriately, they have many positive effects in the classroom: (a) they

improve student to teacher relationships, (b) increase student interest and engagement, (c)

produce more consistent attendance records, (d) higher academic achievement, and (e) less

disruptive classroom environments (Schonfeld et al., 2015).

School Environment

Since the adoption of these standards, schools are observing the positive outcomes with the implementation of social emotional learning programs (Raver, 2003; Smith & Low, 2013; Taylor & Larson, 1999). Social and emotional skills "are most effectively taught within caring, supportive, and well-managed learning environments" (Zins & Elias, 2007, p. 235). As a result of this learning environment students create positive relationships with peers and staff members, thus feeling relaxed and safe within their classroom. "A positive school environment promotes SEL, and SEL facilitates a supportive climate. Because social, emotional, and academic growth are interdependent, the result is synergistic progress in all of these areas" (Zins & Elias, 2007, p. 235). When teachers apply the fundamentals of a social emotional learning programs student attendance increases and learning increases because students are more willing to take learning risks because they know they have an emotionally safe environment and healthy relationships they can trust (Elias et al., 1997; Taylor & Larson, 1999).

Academic Achievement

Students that display emotional competence have a significantly superior chance at academic success compared to students who are not emotionally well adjusted (Raver, 2003). Elias et al. (1997) explain that the accumulating evidence shows that it is not possible for students to be sincerely academically or personally successful without social emotional learning and school-based interventions. Ashdown and Bernard (2011) conducted a study on elementary students to measure their social emotional development, academic achievement, and well-being. Three times a week for ten weeks, students received structured social emotional learning skills lessons; such as, confidence, persistence, organization and emotional resilience. Through the use of this social and emotional learning skills curriculum these findings, compared to a control

group, confirmed that "social and emotional competence is the foundation for the achievement

and well-being of young children" (p.404). They validated this by explaining, "the results also

support the findings of a number of other researchers who have argued that, by improving

children's levels of social-emotional competence through explicit instruction, it is possible to

improve their levels of social-emotional well-being and academic achievement" (p. 405).

According to Elias et al. (1997) when reporting educational success, studies have reported that a

predominant factor is SEL programs, and that such success is unmanageable without the balance

of social emotional learning and academics in the classroom. Academic results are often seen

due to a SEL curriculum, but there must also be focus on their emotional development and

performance (Zinsser et al., 2014).

Preventing Delinquent Behaviors

As young students develop toward adolescence they are exposed to more intense

problems that cause delinquent behaviors; such as, (a) bullying, (b) drug use, (c) substance

abuse, (d) interpersonal violence, (e) premature pregnancy, (f) truancy, and (g) dropping out or

failing out of school (Elias et al., 1997; Elias & Arnold, 2006; Zins & Elias, 2007). Smith and

Low (2013) conducted a study to test the relation between bullying and social emotional

learning; a school-wide social emotional learning program was implemented to aid and support

students in social emotional competency. Through classroom observations they (2013) found that

bullying had decreased within the school and concluded that "increased social competence may

reduce students' vulnerability to bullying by helping them gain the friends and social support that

reduce bullying and buffer its negative effects" (p. 284).

According to Elias et al. (1997) the implementation of a SEL program that successfully

promotes social and emotional proficiency and provides the students with the "skills, attitudes,

values, and experiences that will motivate them to resist destructive behaviors, make responsible

and thoughtful decisions" for their future (p.5). Raver (2003) supports idea of SEL preventative

programs and discusses that various SEL interventions like low intensity in the classroom and

"multipronged" home/school interventions are successful in lowering delinquent behaviors. Only

when students receive adequate SEL interventions and they are able to master social and

emotional competence will they have the necessary means to be successful academically, social,

and emotionally (Elias et al., 1997; Smith & Low, 2013; Taylor & Larson, 1999).

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities struggle with social interactions, relationships, and emotional

competence (Denisco, 2015; Elias, 2004). "These students have difficulty reading nonverbal and

other social cues… students with more severe cognitive impairments may lack age-appropriate

social understanding of complex interactions" (Elias, 2004, p. 53). These deficits can affect

students academically as well as interpersonally; for example, misreading a teacher's sarcasm,

not comprehending one's point of view, can affect task performance (Elias, 2004). For these

students, social emotional development may be completely absent, Elias (2004) states:

> SEL, as the missing piece, helps bridge a gap in both theory and practice with regard to
>
> improving outcomes for students with learning disabilities. SEL also addresses the
>
> confluence of individual skills and the way in which the environment promotes the
>
> development of those skills and supports their use. (p. 56)

Elias (2004) further discusses specific social emotional interventions that might help students

with disabilities become more successful individuals in all aspects of life; three areas he (2004)

described are: "students need to recognize emotions in themselves and others, regulate and

manage strong emotions, and recognize strengths and areas of need" (pp. 56-59). Students of all

abilities are able to participate and benefit from SEL programs, DeNisco (2015) explains that

similar to the special education classroom these programs might need modifications, visuals or

repetition of fundamental themes. Based on his study, Elias (2004) concludes,

> Social-emotional learning has a great deal to contribute to both theory and practice in the
>
> area of LD. SEL provides many approaches that can be incorporated into interventions…
>
> and it helps fill some of the missing pieces in understanding the difficulties faced by
>
> students… and how to reach them in ways that better prepare them for success in school
>
> and life. (pp. 62-63)

Students with special needs will learn to understand their emotions, better control their behaviors

and be more functional in the classroom and as an active member of the community as these

skills will be learned, enforced, and maintained throughout the accurate use of a SEL program

(DeNisco, 2015). When schools focus on and effectively integrate a SEL programs students with

special needs benefit in numerous ways: (a) school climate and open-mindedness of all students

improves, (b) students with disabilities learn to understand and express their emotions, (c)

students' grades improve, and (d) students receive the tools to be successful post-graduation

(Denisco, 2015). Students in both general education and special education classrooms who

display social and emotional competence are more successful students, citizens, and individuals

(Taylor & Larson, 1999).

Success of Programs

The success of SEL programs has been discussed through this review of the literature, but

for a program to be so prosperous it needs to be: (a) implemented at an early stage, (b) linked to

academics, (c) designed to cater to the need of the current population, (d) professional and

domestic support, and (e) well trained staff (DeNisco, 2015; Elias et al., 1997; Elias & Arnold,

2006; Gordon et al., 2011; Raver, 2003; Smith & Low, 2013; Taylor & Larson, 1999; Zins & Elias, 2007).

　　In Raver's (2003) article she discusses the various important topics for an intervention or SEL program to be successful and she emphasizes the importance of early intervention. The majority of her (2003) research points the success in academics as a result of early interventions of social and emotional competence; the early the child was exposed to SEL the more abundant the results. Furthermore, Zinsser (2015) states that starting to learn social emotional skills "prior to kindergarten can help set children on a path to success in grade school" (How do I evaluate my child's preschool SEL practices? Section, ¶ 3). Students must be taught early at the elementary level when they are developing and can build the foundation for these skills, so they may be more successful individuals (Elias & Arnold, 2006; Raver 2003; Zinsser, 2015). DeNisco (2014) confirms this idea by discussing a study on postgraduate success and the connection to SEL the students that were exposed to SEL programs from an early stage were more likely to have a high school diploma, graduate college, and be fully employed; as opposed to children who were not exposed to a SEL program.

　　When selecting a program, relevance to a student based on their cultural, community, and lifestyle is of utmost importance (Zins & Elias, 2007). Adequate, effective and continuous training is also a critical section in the success of a SEL program, teachers must work together and support each other to teach and enforce social and emotional learning (Elias & Arnold, 2006; Zins and Elias, 2007). Zins and Elias (2007), continue to explain that in addition to training teachers these programs must be tailored culturally and ethnically to be effective, then students will be more receptive to social and emotional learning when they can relate to and use the skills they are being taught with the opportunity to apply them. SEL must be relatable and applicable

in the academic setting as well; academics and social emotional skills can collaboratively

improve a student's educational experience (Zins & Elias, 2007). Elias et al. (1997) argues that

prevention or intervention programs where social and emotional learning is absent are

unsuccessful and useless for students. For example, an anti-drug program only discusses the

dangers or negative consequences, not how to deal with the peer pressure or how to make a

responsible decision during a stressful time. Zins and Elias (2007) state "social-emotional

competence and academic achievement are interwoven and that integrated, coordinated

instruction in both areas maximizes students' potential in school and throughout their lives" (p.

233).

"SEL programs have been shown to improve student skills, reduce problem behaviors,

and increase academic achievement" (Smith & Low, 2013, p. 280). Through the educational

implementation of effective and appropriate SEL programs, strategies, and approaches; (a)

academic success increases, (b) positive relationships provide a safe learning environment, (c)

student participation rises, and (d) the school will experience less disruptive or problematic

behaviors due to the change in the learning climate (Elias et al., 1997; Elias & Arnold, 2006;

Gordon et al., 2011; Raver, 2003; Smith & Low, 2013; Taylor & Larson, 1999; Zins & Elias,

2007).

Positions

Education is a continuously changing and demanding environment where educators,

parents and legislators are constantly trying to improve various academic aspects; but the

solution that has been over looked or considered "the missing piece" according to Elias et al.

(1997) is social emotional learning.

Teachers' Role

As previously mentioned it is imperative that teachers focus on social and emotional learning due to the fact that "students today generally do not come to school with the same pro-social values once common; they are not as respectful, caring, helpful, or cooperative as they were twenty years ago" (Taylor & Larson, 1999, p.2). Students need help in succeeding in these areas from preschool through adulthood; and teachers play an important role in the process (Zinsser, 2015).

As an educator, the list of responsibilities is endless, but specifically with social and emotional learning teachers need to create a safe learning environment, deliver the appropriate and relatable instruction and nourish student growth (DeNisco, 2015; Elias et al., 1997; Taylor & Larson, 1999; Zins & Elias, 2007). Elias et al., (1997) explains that schools have become the best place to implement behavior standards and surround children with supportive and encouraging adults as the develop important social and emotional skills. The authors go on to state that "students need significant adults and peers in their lives to work with them as a part of a community of learners" (p 9). Teachers need to nourish and develop personal relationships with students; which can increase the amount of learning achieved in the classroom (Elias et al., 1997). A safe and respectful learning environment is imperative when implementing a SEL program, the teachers need to demonstrate to the students what is expected and that they are safe to learn and grow in school (Elias et al., 1997; Taylor & Larson, 1999; Zins & Elias, 2007). Teachers must deliver the information in an appropriate and exciting way, because when relatable and reliable content is presented students have a better chance of learning the material and growing academically and socially (Elias & Arnold, 2006). Research shows that when

academics and SEL programs are combined more academic and social growth is seen (DeNisco, 2015; Elias et al., 1997; Taylor & Larson, 1999; Zins & Elias, 2007).

The structured social and emotional learning is still fairly new to some teachers and they may need coaching, support, and guidance in adapting to these standards (Elias et al., 1997). Ongoing teacher training is one way to help guide the teachers into a positive direction in the implementation of the SEL programs, DeNisco (2015) explains that administrators should provide professional training to strengthen the new standards curriculum. The work teachers do must be reinforced and encouraged in other settings like the home, Elias & Arnold (2006) state how important parental involvement is and if implemented at home "program effects are more enduring and pervasive" (p. 10), and the most effective approach is a collective one.

Teachers take on the responsibility to help students succeed on an academic level but also an emotional and social level. When the right tools and the support from administrators and parents the positive and abundant effects of social and emotional learning can be experienced.

Parental Involvement

SEL programs like other educational programs, are most successful when implemented across all areas or settings of a student's life; such as, academically, domestically and socially (Zins & Elias, 2007). Educator and parents must actively work together to encourage, demonstrate and communicate these social emotional skills and their importance (Zins & Elias, 2007). "When home and school collaborate closely to implement SEL programs, students gain more and program effects are more enduring and pervasive" (Elias & Arnold, 2006, p. 10). Additionally, Elbertson, Brackett and Weissberg (2010) discuss that effectiveness of the SEL program is heavily reliant on the conjoined participation and influence from parents and the community. They continue to explain the benefits of a communal approach; "it has become more

apparent that that children who engage in positive social interaction with the teachers, peers, and families and who participate actively and cooperatively in the learning process are more successful in and out of school" (p. 1018). When schools, parents and the community work together the students will prosper academically, socially, and emotionally (Elbertson, Brackett & Weissberg, 2010; Elias & Arnold, 2006; Zins & Elias, 2007).

Chapter Summary

The literature review in this study covered many aspects of social emotional learning; including, the history of and development of the social emotional learning standards, the need for teacher collaboration, and the academic and collective benefits of emotional competence for all students. Through the use of SEL programs with students we are teaching the "skills, attitudes, values, and experiences that will motivate them to resist destructive behaviors, make responsible and thoughtful decisions" for their future (Elias et al., 1997, p.5). According to the research presented, education is a continuously changing and demanding environment where educators, parents and legislators are constantly trying to improve various academic aspects; but the solution that has been over looked or considered "the missing piece" when educating the whole child, is social emotional learning (Elias et al., 1997).

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine general and special education teachers' knowledge, usage and perceptions on social emotional learning standards in Illinois. Currently, Illinois is one of the few states that has comprehensive, free-standing standards and benchmarks for social and emotional learning in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade (Zinsser, 2015). Social and emotional learning (SEL) is "the process through which children and adults develop the skills, attitudes and values necessary to acquire social and emotional competence" (Elias et al., 1997, p. 2). The SEL standards have the goal of promoting positive learning outcomes and teach students to problem solve academically and interpersonally so they will become more independent and successful individuals (Taylor & Larson, 1999). Quantitative survey research is used to answer a researcher's question or to test a hypothesis; more specifically, this study will collect data using a sample, or representative population (Mills & Gay, 2016). Teachers will be surveyed with the use of rankings and a Likert scale to determine their knowledge, perceptions and opinions of social emotional learning standards.

Participants

The pool of participants chosen for this survey came from various schools in the Cook County area. All participants hold a current teacher license in the state of Illinois and are currently teaching kindergarten through twelfth grade. The participants surveyed were not limited by their subject area, grade level or experience.

Instrument

Attitude scales are commonly used "to measure what an individual believes, perceives, or feels about self, others, activities, institutions, or situations" (Mills & Gay, 2016). The instrument

used was a Likert scale (Appendix B) to measure the importance and efficacy of Illinois' social

emotional learning standards. A five-point Likert scale was created to explore the perceptions of

the participants by (a) measuring the importance and efficacy of Illinois learning standards, (b) to

determine a participant's professional attitude toward social emotional learning, (c) do teachers

have a basic knowledge of the standards, (d) percentage of teachers using social emotional

learning standard in their classroom. After determining what was to be researched and a

questionnaire was formulated on Google sheets the survey was sent out to schools in the Cook

Country area. The survey consisted five demographic questions, nine Likert scale questions and

one rankings question. The survey goes from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1), each

response was assigned a numerical value to indicate a positive or negative attitude toward the

subject (Gay & Mills, 2016). Particularly, this approach will measure general and special

education teachers' knowledge and perceptions on social emotional learning standards in Illinois.

Procedure

Through the researcher's graduate level classmates, the survey was passed along to ten

different schools. An emailed link to the survey questionnaire (Appendix B) was sent to the

participants. The participants were given two weeks to fill out the Google Form; after one week,

an email reminder was sent to non-respondents. The responses were automatically entered into

the spreadsheet created in Google Drive prior to the survey. The completed survey did not

contain email addresses and the complied listed will be destroyed after all responses are

collected.

Data Collection

Through the use of Google Documents the data was collected over the period of two

weeks in March and April of 2017. The participant responses were automatically entered into a

spreadsheet that was created prior to the distribution of the survey. Using the Likert scale, each

response was given a numerical point value starting at 1 for negative responses and up to 5 for

the positive responses. Only the positive responses are reported: on a 1 to 5 scale question,

participants who responded in the 4 or 5 point value were combined to achieve the number and

then a percent was calculated.

Data Analysis

Google sheet was exported to Excel for organization and analysis. and Microsoft Word

were used to compose the quantitative data gained from the Likert scale items on the survey

questionnaire. Descriptive statistical analyses (i.e., mean scores, average mean scores, and

percentages) of quantitative data were completed in order to formulate general findings about

teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and opinions about social emotional learning standards. In

addition, comparisons on an item-by-item basis were organized by presenting the average score

and standard deviation of each subgroup of interest.

<div align="center">

Chapter Summary

</div>

This study investigated teachers' knowledge and perceptions of social emotional learning

in the Cook County area from kindergarten to twelfth grade, both special and general education

teachers were included in the survey. A Google survey was sent out to teachers in Cook County

area and a Likert scale and rankings was used to collect quantitative data and mean scores were

compared.

Chapter IV

Results

This chapter contains results of the investigation into teachers' knowledge, use, and perceptions of social emotional learning standards. The data obtained was collected through the use of an anonymous survey distributed electronically over the Internet. The purpose of this survey was to obtain information from professional licensed teachers in a variety of professional settings on three aspects of the Illinois Social Emotional Learning Standards. Three predominant questions investigated teachers' knowledge of the learning standards, teachers' use of each standard in the classroom, and their opinion on the importance of the standard in the education of their students.

The electronic survey was passed along to ten different schools. An emailed link to the survey questionnaire (Appendix C) was sent to the participants. The participants were given two weeks to fill out the Google Form; after one week, an email reminder was sent to non-respondents. The period for completing the survey spanned fourteen days in March and April 2017. At the close of the data collection period, a total of fifty-one surveys had been completed and the data logged into a spreadsheet. The return rate of the surveys is unknown due to the procedure of passing out the electronic link to the graduate level classmates' departments and schools.

Demographics

Table 1 summarizes the demographic information collected in the survey. These include gender, race, ethic background current teaching assignment, and teaching experience.

Table 1

Summary of Participant Demographics

_____

Category		Number (Percentage)	
Gender	Male:	10	(20)
	Female:	41	(80)
Racial/Ethnic Background	African American:	2	(4)
	Caucasian:	46	(90)
	Hispanic:	3	(6)
Number of years teaching	Less than 5 years:	9	(18)
	5 to 10 years:	31	(61)
	11to 15 years:	9	(18)
	20 or more years:	2	(4)
Level of Education	Bachelor's Degree:	18	(35)
	Master's Degree	33	(65)
Current placement	General Education:	21	(41)
	Special Education:	29	(57)
	Both:	1	(2)
Grade Level	EC to 3rd grade	8	(16)
	4th grade to 8th grade	16	(31)
	High School	27	(53)

_____

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

When examining the responses in Google Forms the question pertaining to the

participant's current teaching assignment, there was one participant labeled as other, but when

exported to Excel their response stated they were currently teaching both general and special

education. Thus, when reporting the scores this participant was placed in a new section of both

special and general education for their teaching assignment. When asked number of years

teaching, some participants typed the word instead of the number and this made it more difficult

to read the data chart, but it was manually fixed and tallied. Additionally, the majority of

participants had been teaching 5 to 10 years, and no participants fell in the category of 16 to 20

years, therefore that information was removed the demographics table.

<div align="center">**Self-management and Self-awareness**</div>

A breakdown of the positive participant responses to the three questions of the study: (a)

knowledge, (b) usage, and (c) perceptions of the SEL standards are found in Table 2. Social

emotional learning standard goal 1 is discussed in Table 2: Develop self-awareness and self-

management skills to achieve school and life success.

Knowledge

The survey results show that 61% of teachers feel knowledgeable about learning standard

C, regarding accomplishing personal and academic goals. Learning standard B, familiarity of

with personal qualities and external supports, is the standard teachers are least knowledgeable

about with 35%. Identify and manage one's behaviors and emotions, or learning standard A was

in between these two standards with 53% of teacher knowledge.

Usage

The percentages observed in the knowledge category only vary slightly from those

observed in the usage category. Both standards A (57%) and C (63%) only how a 2 point

increase and stand B (69%) has a 4 point increase; overall each standard % increases to indicate

that teachers are using these standards in their classroom more than they are knowledgeable of

them.

Perception

The perception category contains the highest percentages in the table, all above 70%.

Through teacher responses standard A (86%) is believed to be the most important to a student's

education and emotional development. Standards B (73%) and C (75%) are very close in the

belief of importance that teacher have for this social emotional learning goal.

Table 2

Summary of knowledge, usage and perception of respondents for Social Emotional
Learning Goal 1 by objective.

Social Emotional Standard Goal 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to
achieve school and life success. The table displays teacher's positive responses in the areas of
knowledge, usage and perception by objective.

	Knowledge	Usage	Perception
A. Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.	53%	57%	86%
B. Recognize personal qualities and external supports.	35%	39%	73%
C. Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.	61%	63%	75%

NOTE: Percentages were dichotomized by grouping higher 2 rating categories together
and reposting the positive agreement percent.

Establishing and Maintaining Positive Relationships

The below table again indicates the positive, participant responses to the three questions

of the study: (a) knowledge, (b) usage, and (c) perceptions of the SEL standards and the results

are depicted in Table 3. The participants appear to have more knowledgeable of these four

standards in comparison to the previous response in Table 2. Discussed in Table 3 is the social

emotional learning standard goal 2: use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and

maintain positive relationships.

Knowledge

Teachers are most knowledgeable of standard C (72%), using communication and social

skills to interact efficiently with others; and least knowledgeable about standard D (40%)

resolving interpersonal conflicts. Through the percentages shown, 72% is the highest indicating

that teachers are not very knowledgeable of this standard.

Usage

For this standard goal, the usage of teachers ranges from 49% to 78%. Using

communication skills has the highest percentage (78%) and D, solving interpersonal conflicts has

the lowest, 49%.

Perception

Almost all the teachers, or 98%, are in agreement that standard C, using communication

and social skills to interact effectively with others is an important skill in the education of

students. This is the highest percentage seen throughout the entire survey. In this goal, the

perception percentages range from 73 to 98.

Table 3

Summary of knowledge, usage and perception of respondents for Social Emotional Learning Goal 2 by objective.

_____

Social Emotional Standard Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships. The table displays teacher's positive responses in the areas of knowledge, usage and perception by objective.

_____

	Knowledge	Usage	Perception
A. Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.	55%	63%	80%
B. Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.	43%	59%	73%
C. Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.	72%	78%	98%
D. Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.	40%	49%	80%

_____

NOTE: Percentages were dichotomized by grouping higher 2 rating categories together and reposting the positive agreement percent.

Decision-making Skills and Behaviors

The results previously reported in the preceding tables are similar to the findings explained in Table 4. Participants believed these were important standards when educating students, but their knowledge and lack of use in the classroom do not indicate the same belief.

Knowledge

The data shown in Table 4 for the knowledge category is low percentages from 37% to 49%. The standard that teachers are the least aware of is standard A, considering ethical, safety and societal factors in making decisions. These low percentages suggest that less than half the teachers surveyed are not aware of this goal as a whole.

Usage

The standard that teachers use the most in this goal (67%) is standard B, apply decision-making skills to deal with academic and social situations. Standards A and C both have a low measurement of classroom usage with percentages in the upper the 40s.

Perceptions

Ranked highest by the teachers surveyed 82% for standard B, applying decision-making skills to deal with academic and social situations. Teachers' responses indicated that contributing to the well-being of one's school and community is the next most important standard in their education with 75%.

Table 4

Summary of knowledge, usage and perception of respondents for Social Emotional Learning Goal 3 by objective.

Social Emotional Standard Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts. The table displays teacher's positive responses in the areas of knowledge, usage and perception by objective.

	Knowledge	Usage	Perception
A. Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.	37%	45%	69%
B. Apply decision-making skills to deal with academic and social situations.	48%	67%	82%
C. Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.	49%	49%	75%

NOTE: Percentages were dichotomized by grouping higher 2 rating categories together and reposting the positive agreement percent.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contains the results of fifty-one teachers' knowledge, use, and perceptions of the Social Emotional Learning Standards. Both general and special education teachers of all grade levels were surveyed: of the 51 respondents, 41 were female and 10 were male. The majority (90%) of the participants were Caucasian, and the remaining 10% was split between African Americans and the Hispanic population. The most common years of teaching experience fall in the 5-10 year category, and 65% have a Master's degree.

The responses to each goal and the corresponding standards were reported on a table that depicts the positive responses to the knowledge, usage, and perception questions on the survey. Knowledge proved to have the lowest percentages for each goal and teachers' perceptions concerning the importance of these standards reported the highest percentages. Goal 2 Standard C (use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others) had the highest percentage of the participant knowledge, use, and perception. The data collected suggests that although teachers are not aware of or may lack knowledge in these standards, the still believe they are an important part of a student's education.

Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusion

Kagan (1996) stated,

"The most compelling reason to focus on teacher for SEL proficiency is that students

today generally do not come to school with the same pro-social values once common;

they are not as respectful, caring, helpful, or cooperative as they were twenty years ago"

(as cited in Taylor and Smith, 1999, p. 2).

Social emotional learning is a fairly new set of standards for teaching that, supporters argue,

contributes to academic achievement, a better school environment, and successful emotional

development in individuals of all levels and needs (Zinsser et al., 2014). Students need help in

succeeding in these areas from preschool through adulthood, and teachers play an important role

in the process (Zinsser, 2015).

Discussion

The survey results of teachers corresponded with the supporting literature of the

importance of teaching these social emotional learning skills to our students (Ashdown &

Bernard, 2012; Elias & Arnold, 2006; Elias et al., 1997; Raver, 2003; Smith & Low, 2013; Zins

& Elias, 2007; Zinsser et al., 2014). Teachers' responses indicated that most of these SEL

standards are necessary when educating students; however, the responses to classroom usage and

knowledge of the standard did not mirror the same outcome.

Conclusion

The data collected from the participants acknowledge the fact that teachers believe most

of these standards are necessary when educating students (79%). On the contrary, the percentage

of teachers implementing these standards was significantly lower. Thus, posing the question:

why are teachers not implementing the standards they believe to be necessary and important into their classrooms? The results indicate a lack of knowledge, making this a possible solution. Another answer to this question may be that teachers are unaware or not adequately trained on integrating these standards alongside common core and other state mandated or district requested regulations.

Educational Implications

The survey results displayed a low percentage of classroom usage; despite the research stated in the review of the literature; that social emotional learning is beneficial is numerous ways. Positive academic results are often seen due to the implementation of a social emotional learning curriculum, with a heavy focus on emotional development and performance (Zinsser et al., 2014). By mastering social and emotional competence, students will gain the skills to be successful in solving everyday problems, such as violent homes, unsafe communities, and poor attendance (Taylor & Larson, 1999). Taylor and Larson (1999) discovered through research and classroom observation, that when teachers apply the fundamentals of social emotional learning programs, student attendance increases because they have an emotionally safe environment and healthy relationships they can trust. Along with a safe environment, Smith and Low (2013) determined bullying can be decreased through the use of a social emotional learning curriculum, indicating that an "increased social competence may reduce students' vulnerability to bullying by helping them gain the friends and social support that reduce bullying and buffer its negative effects" (p. 284). Only when students receive adequate SEL interventions will they have the necessary means to be successful academically, social, and emotionally.

Recommendations for Further Research

A possible recommendation for further research would be to determine why teachers are not using or implementing the social emotional learning in their classrooms. One theory is the that lack of training, self-doubting with the content, or misuse of the Social Emotional Learning Standards.

Further examination with another larger data set or varying school districts might provide more information and include training variable. Additionally, it would be more difficult but beneficial to have open ended questions for the participants to answer some perception questions. This will allow for a better understanding of why they are using or not using these standards.

Summary

This study was designed to examine teachers' responses to three fundamental questions relating to social emotional learning throughout all grade levels and teaching positions. The questions that drove the study were (1) are teachers aware of the social emotional learning standards (2) do teachers use the social emotional learning standards to educate their students, and (3) do teachers believe the teaching of social emotional learning standards to be a necessary element in the education of students?

Upon collection of the data, the results proved that teachers do believe these standards to be necessary when educating students, but they did not have sufficient knowledge or did not use it in their classroom. The review of the literature (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Elias et al., 1997; Elias & Arnold, 2006; Raver, 2003; Smith & Low, 2013; Zins & Elias, 2007; Zinsser et al., 2014) and the participants' results to the perception question of the study both harmonize the importance of social emotional learning. According the CASEL website (2017) a meta-analysis that compared students who did not participate in SEL programs to students participating in SEL

programs resulted in many benefits. The students who participated in a SEL program displayed

(a) "improved classroom behavior", (b) "an increased ability to manage stress and depression",

and (c) "better attitudes about themselves, others, and school" (SEL Impact on Academic

Outcomes, ¶ 1). Elias (2004) explains Social-emotional learning has a great deal to contribute to

both theory and practice when educating our students with disabilities and those without. It is a

way to assist students in being successful in an academic sense, an emotional understanding and

within various social settings.

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