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Social-Emotional Learning at the East Hampton Union Free School District

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Abstract:

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) has become an essential modality in education. This study viewed how Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is perceived and applied by teachers, administrators, and support staff of the East Hampton Union Free School District. Additionally, in this study, respondents were able to identify if they applied SEL strategies in their work with students; they perceived a level of change in students' behaviors from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year. The criteria for the perceived levels of behavioral change were the student's level of aggression, the student's ability to concentrate, the student's ability to regulate emotions, and a student's general level of cohesiveness. The research was executed by doing a cross-sectional study. The results indicated that SEL was not an indicator of a student's level of perceived behavioral change. Alike, the respondent's characteristics, such as the number of years in the education field, level of education, and the amount of Continuing Education credits a respondent has earned in the last four years, did not correlate with the perceived levels of behavioral change in students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Social-Emotional Learning in Education

The United States views education as a right for any child. In many states, free education is provided to every child until twenty-one. Such is the case in New York State. The East Hampton Union Free School District (EHUFSD) shares the same importance of education. According to the EHUFSD (2019) website, the School Board's overall mission is "To support *every* student's intellectual and personal growth *every* day ."The district's website also notes that this mission is a district-wide initiative. They explain that the mission is not only a classroom responsibility; it is a cultural shift that affects student-adult interactions throughout our schools. The East Hampton High School's (EHHS) mission is "The East Hampton High School Mission is to give each student a robust learning experience that meets their needs and prepares them to positively contribute to our society." (East Hampton Union Free School District, 2019).

Furthermore, EHUFSD strives to make sure its students are ready to go onto post-secondary education and or are prepared to enter the workforce upon graduation. They believe this is achieved by a collaborative effort from parents, school staff, and the community. It appears that both missions consider the student's success academically. Therefore, there has been a critical focus on students' social-emotional learning.

The shift toward viewing a student from an empathetic, compassionate, and inclusive standpoint has opened the notion that students learn better when all aspects of themselves are nurtured. For instance, the student is not just viewed from a numeric or letter grade standpoint, and their ability to memorize information. Instead, the student is considered to be an entity, how they leadatarmation, how their environment increases or

diminishes their ability to learn, and the student's ability to regulate emotions. It is

essential to consider that students are multifaceted, and with the application of Social

Emotional Learning (SEL), teachers and staff can best support their students.

This study was intended to analyze how teachers, support staff, and administrators

of the East Hampton Union Free School District perceive and apply SEL strategies in

their work with students. Additionally, this survey allowed respondents to report on their

student's perceived level of changes after using SEL strategies in the following areas: a

student's level of aggression, a stustudent'sility to concentrate, a sstudent'sability to

regulate emotions, and a student's general cohesiveness.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

SEL is a newer modality that is used in the education field. This modality has become more prevalent in schools over the past ten years. SEL has evolved more so in the past five years, incorporating the importance of viewing the student from an academic standpoint and from a social and emotional standpoint.

Social-Emotional Learning

Social-Emotional Learning has become a pillar in the education curriculum in recent years. According to Schonert-Reichi (2017), if students' social-emotional competencies are nurtured, there will be an increase in their SEL strategies and, therefore, an increase in their academic success. SEL is be best defined as "The process by which people acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to understand and manage their emotions, to feel and show empathy for others, to establish and achieve positive goals, to develop and maintain positive relationships, and to make positive relationships" (Schonert-Reichi, 2017, p. 139). Applying SEL in an academic setting is to foster the student's emotional well-being to obtain an optimal learning experience. Coupling academic learning with SEL is known as, Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The five primary aptitudes for CASEL are "Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making" (Schonert-Reichi, 2017, p. 139).

The underpinning of SEL starts with whether a teacher believes in SEL and implements it in their pedagogy. It is important to note that Schonert-Reich suggests that teachers implementing SEL must fully believe in the approach. Additionally, there is a high correlation between teachers practicing SEL in their own lives. Furthermore, there

are three components to SEL, teacher's SEL competence, healthy classroom climate, and student social-emotional and academic outcomes. Moreover, the professional development received by teachers regarding SEL is essential. The more training a teacher receives in SEL, the more capable they are of implementing SEL strategies in the classroom setting.

The review of many CASEL programs has concluded that a significant factor in SEL programs focuses on mindset and climate. In this instance, the climate is in the context of school climate. When comparing programs that have only focused on improving a student's skill and mindset versus programs that additionally incorporate a focus on climate, it is found that those that have all three (skill, mindset, and climate) have been more successful.

For instance, Yaeger (2017) points out that "SEL programs help adolescents cope with their difficulties more successfully by improving skills and mindset. They try to create respectful school environments that young people want to be a part of by changing the school's climate." (Yaeger, 2017, p.73). The belief is that finding what adolescents feel passionate about gives the adolescent a sense of purpose and allows them to develop insight into being successful in their academics and lives.

It is also important to note that the brain and body transform significantly during adolescence. The fluctuation in hormones makes it challenging for adolescents to regulate their emotions. For instance, when adolescents reach the developmental stage of puberty, the brain structure and the hormonal composites of the adolescent change. In some instances, some casescause social strains, causing adolescents not to regulate their emotions. The inability to regulate can be seen during peer rejection; the failure to

regulate the emotion brought forth by the rejection can be very painful and cause hardship (Yeager, 2017). In addition, puberty increases hormones that are directly associated with SEL. Such hormones are testosterone, estradiol, cortisol, oxytocin, and dehydroepiandrosterone (Yeager, 2017). Specifically, "Testosterone has shown the clearest link to what SEL programs might typically do right or wrong." (Yeager, 2017, p. 76). This hormone is found in both males and females and contributes to how a person perceives their status. For example, higher testosterone levels will cause the adolescent to hyper-focus on their social status amongst peers, causing the peer to want to prove their status forcefully (Yeager, 2017). An indication that adolescents will exhibit aggressive behaviors to verify their status amongst their peers.

SEL programs that integrate a focus on climate and mindset into their program are successful because they allow adolescents to focus on their status positively. The three approaches taken in this SEL program are, "1. Creating a mindset that harnesses the adolescent desire for status and respect. 2. Creating a climate that's more respectful towards adolescents. 3. Creating a mindset that blunts the power of threats to peer status and respect." (Yeager, 2017, p.82). Giving adolescents an outlet to express their feelings will encourage their ability to connect to their environment. It allows them to feel respected and a part of the change, empowering them to grow.

Studies have also indicated that social supports are indicative of higher education performance. For example, Fernandez Lasrte (2020) completed a cross-sectional survey of how teacher support, familial support, peer support, and school engagement affect students' academic performances. The study focused on assessing how social support and school engagement influence academic performance. Additionally, "One of the key

strengths that foster positive adaptation in the school environment is school engagement, defined as students' feelings of connectedness with their school" (Fernandez Lasarte, 2020, p.100). Likewise, the student's engagement in academics, their feelings towards their school, and their efforts in learning are factors in how they succeed in school. Thus they are influenced by positive social support.

The study identifies adolescents' perceived social support as one of the primary variables in conjunction with school adjustment. Social support is interpreted by adolescents if they feel appreciated, loved, nurtured, and part of a social environment. Furthermore, it concluded that teachers' support and familial support are held in higher regard by the student than the support of their peers. Alike, it suggests that school climate indicated how teacher support was perceived, therefore making teacher support stronger. Consequently, it allows us to view that teacher support is a crucial social network factor that impacts students' engagement in school and academic achievements.

Focusing on comprehending the implementation of an SEL program, the acceptance, and the effects of an SEL program is also crucial for the success of an SEL program. In a study conducted by Voith (2020), qualitative data was used to analyze a thematic analysis of how respondents accepted the SEL program, the facilitator's proficiency, and how successful their students did academically. Additionally, "Outcome analyses were conducted on facilitator competence measures and student outcomes using mixed-model…" (Voith, 2020, p. 101). These measures guided the study of The Peace Program. This program is an SEL program that implements practical competencies to enhance students' skill acquisition. The program was facilitated by teachers, social workers, or counselors who received training. Each lesson incorporated four skill sets,

interpersonal communication, self-confidence, feelings of identification/ anger management, and decision making/problem-solving. It is important to remember that the SEL curriculum needs to be based on the importance of developing a child's social-emotional development. The child must be able to regulate and express their emotions. The child must also create healthy and strong relationships with peers and adults (Voith, 2020). It suggested that once the child attains the proper social-emotional functioning, they will be able to function in an academic setting, be psychologically stable, and have overall health.

The four theoretical components that are the base of The Peace Program are adverse childhood events, psychopathology development, experiential learning theory, and group psychotherapy (Voith, 2020). The results concluded that teachers, staff, and administrators widely accepted the program. When measuring the competence of the facilitator, it concluded that the facilitators were competent in their work. However, the facilitators were average in implementing cohesion and a trauma-informed approach. When reviewing student outcomes, "Averaging across all teachers, aggression scores increased over time; however, levels of aggression differed across teachers over time." (Voith, 2020, p.104).

Additionally, student concentration improved in elementary grades one, three, and six. The other rise remained the same or worsened. However, the study did conclude that emotional competence increased amongst all grade levels.

It is vital to recognize the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration amongst professionals when viewing the education field. School administrators and teachers often seek the assistance of school social workers, school guidance counselors, school

psychologists, and school nurses to help promote the SEL of students. Schools play a crucial role in the mental health services their students receive. Unfortunately, Americans still see a remarkable lack of general awareness and understanding of the importance of seeking mental health services, especially in rural areas. Nichols et al. highlight that a stigma is still very much associated with mental health illnesses. Making it difficult for many students to receive the services they require to achieve academic success. It is estimated that 70% of mental health services are obtained through school, and many students do not receive the proper care outside of school. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, students struggle with depression, Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder, and conduct-related disorders.

School Support Personnel: School Guidance Counselors, Social Workers, and Psychologists are trained to offer evidence-based strategies for supporting students socially and emotionally, thus keeping the student through any barriers they may face. Although the collaboration amongst professionals is optimal, there can be times when ambiguous roles arise. For example, suppose a student is seen by the guidance counselor, school social worker, and the school psychologist. In that case, the professionals may not be clear on who is responsible for certain student SEL support aspects. Additionally, suppose school support staff is shared amongst different buildings in the district. In that case, he they not be able to collaborate with teachers and administrators promptly due to schedule conflicts (Nichols et. alet al.). Therefore, when writing school policy on SEL or viewing specific student cases, the collaboration of administrators, teachers, school nurses, and school support staff should be conducted. The collaborative effort will ensure

that SEL aspects are presented from different standpoints and implement the best strategies.

It is pertinent to acknowledge that continuing adequate research on SEL competencies and interventions is crucial. For instance, "Prevention Science is, therefore, a discipline that brings research and practice together in dynamic interplay in a bidirectionally translational manner. Research informs practice in the basic science of human development, developmental psychopathology, cognitive and behavioral neuroscience." (Jones, 2019, p. 130). Establishing collaboration between research and theory implementation is crucial in developing policies.

Four core principles to guide SEL research are 1-develop theories of change based on research and meaningful theories. 2-research activities are designed in conjunction with professionals, allowing practitioners to respond to needs that may arise. 3- research designs should be conducted and communicated with exact terminologies. 4- the tools utilized to measure results should allow for continued advancements in learning and instruction (Jones, 2019). For SEL to continue to be effective, it needs to evolve with society. The importance of continuing research will give more accurate terminology in the field and interventions. Jones suggests that theory change is the beginning of type 1 transitional research. Coupling collaborative research and practice together builds the theory of change, allowing educators to understand how practicum implementation gives way to improved results. Furthermore, assisting researchers in moving past the uncertainty of whether or not the set theories have been influential, and if they have not been effective, they can be revised to be more effective.

Changes in Student Behavior and Teacher Characteristics (CEs, Level of Education, Years of Education)

Much of the literature emphasizes the importance of teacher and staff training in SEL modalities. It is generalized that a staff member trained in SEL will adopt its strategies as a primary tool in their work with students. Research shows that for SEL programs to be successful in school, teachers and staff must use the strategies continuously in their work. Unfortunately, many teachers are not trained in their education on SEL modalities. As a society, it is known that substantial change is achieved through policies at the state and federal levels. According to Donahue-Keegan et al. (2019), some states have required school districts to implement SEL in their curriculum. However, there is a lack of cohesiveness between the state's requirements, a teacher's education, and the professional development of existing teachers. Furthermore, only a tiny percentage of the states in the U.S. require higher education programs to include and concentrate on SEL (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019). Having staff trained appropriately in SEL will lead to a more significant change in student behavior.

It is believed that new teachers experience emotional fatigue during their first years of teaching. For example, new teachers experience emotional fatigue and philosophical demands that cause them to become anxious, insecure, frustrated, and scared (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019). Experiencing these intense emotions can make the classroom environment challenging for students and teachers. Therefore, requiring teachers to learn SEL strategies as a requirement for their certification will allow students a healthier learning environment. Donahue-Keegan et al. (2019) stated that student-teachers would learn strategy by:

> Developing emotional agility skills can also enable novice teachers to successfully enact more cognitively challenging and creative instructional practices to optimize meaningful student learning. Unfortunately, most teacher education programs focus almost exclusively on instructional skills. Without much emphasis on teaching student-teachers how to be aware of their emotions, interpret them without judgment, and manage their emotions, they enhance rather than interfere with their teaching (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019, p.151).

In establishing these requirements, teachers would adopt SEL strategies in their own lives. As previously mentioned, teachers that adopt SEL strategies in their own lives have higher success in implanting SEL in their classroom—giving way to more perceived levels of behavioral change in students.

The literature emphasizes the importance of continued research on social-emotional learning, especially in secondary education, where work is being done with adolescents. High School is the foundation of our society. Once students graduate high school, the hope is for them to be able to be functioning members of society. In further researching the effects of incorporating SEL learning into the curriculum, the more efficient the retention and success of the curriculum will be.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question proposed in this study was: Do teachers, support staff, and administrators of the East Hampton Union Free School District apply Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies in their work with student's perceived changes in student behavior from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year? It was hypothesized that many teachers, administrators, and support staff of the East Hampton Union Free School District value Social Emotional Learning and have seen it affect their students' performance. The two variables in this study were Social Emotional Learning

(Independent Variable) and teacher perception level of student change (Dependent Variable). There are four hypotheses under study:

- H1: Teachers, administrators, and support staff of the East Hampton Union Free School District who applied higher levels of SEL strategies in their work with students will perceive higher levels of change in student behavior from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year.

- H2: Teachers, administrators, and support staff who have more years in the education field will rank higher levels of perceived student changes in behavior.

- H3: Teachers, administrators, and support staff who have higher levels of education will rank higher levels of perceived student changes in behavior.

- H4: Teachers, administrators, and support staff who have completed more Continuing Education credits within the last four years will rank higher levels of perceived student changes in behavior more outstanding.

Chapter 3: Methods

The survey was conducted in February of 2022. This chapter will define the research design and associated methodology for this study.

Research Design

The research was concluded by doing a cross-sectional study. This study observed how SEL impacts the student population in the East Hampton Union Free School District and how the administrators, teachers, and support staff perceive SEL. This method was used because it is a better resource since experimental studies take longer to execute. In addition, the time constraints of the semester do not allow for studies over more extended periods.

Population and Sampling

The survey link was sent out to the teaching staff and administration via email. The survey specifically targeted the teaching staff, support staff, and administrators at the East Hampton Union Free School District. The data retrieved showed us the correlation between the two variables. One hundred people responded to the survey. The survey was voluntary and confidential. A brief description of the study was given prior to the survey indicating the purpose. Additionally, a participation waiver was given for participants to sign.

The theoretical population for this study was the administrators, teachers, and support staff of EHUFSD. This sample population was a non-probability sampling since it is limited to only the teaching staff, support staff, and administrators of EHUFSD. Likewise, this study is purposive sampling since it is a targeted population of only the EHUFSD. Respondents of this study posed little to no harm as the survey was of minimal

to no risk. The survey did not ask personal identifying questions or ask them to discuss traumatic experiences.

Data Collection

The contact information (emails) was derived from an email distribution list available through the East Hampton Union Free School District. A thirty-six self-constructed survey was sent out to the teaching staff, support staff, and administrators of EHUFSD via email once during the Spring semester. CampusLabs was used to design and retrieve the data. SPSS software was used to enter and desegregate data.

Instrumentation

Two self-constructed scales were created for this study. After the demographic information was collected, the first scale measured the respondent's stance on SEL and its' strategies. The second scale measured the respondent's perceived level of behavioral change in their students from the beginning to the end of the school year.

Social-Emotional Learning

The independent variable in this study is Social Emotional Learning (SEL). A self-constructed 23-item 5-point Likert scale operationalized SEL. Respondents were asked about their social awareness, beliefs in student connectedness with teachers, self-care techniques, and whether teachers implemented SEL strategies. Respondents received an overall summed score, ranging from 21 to 105, with higher scores indicating that teachers have solid social-emotional learning strategies.

The survey had two questions regarding the effects of COVID-19 and how it affected respondents' ability to support their students socially and emotionally. Question 31, "I Feel that COVID-19 has affected my ability to support my students socially", and

question 32, "I feel that COVID-19 has affected my ability to support my student

emotionally". These two questions were not included in the composite score. However,

they were used to determine if COVID-19 was a factor in whether teachers, support staff,

or administrators could support their students socially and emotionally during the height

of the pandemic. The coefficient alpha was run on this study's sample indicating strong

internal consistency (.89).

Teacher Perception of Student Change Behavior

The dependent variable, Teacher Perceived Change in Student Behavior (TPCSB)

Scale, was operationalized by a self-constructed four-question scale in which respondents

were asked to rank their students' degree of perceived change from the beginning of the

school year to the end of the school year on four domains: General level of Aggression,

Ability to Concentrate, Ability to Regulate Emotions, and Cohesiveness Between Student

and School. Respondents ranked perceived student change on a scale from 1 to 5. An

overall composite score was calculated with scores ranging from 1 to 2, with higher

scores indicating a higher perceived level of change in students. The coefficient alpha

was run on this study's sample, indicating a robust and moderate consistency (.71).

Data Analysis

This study is a quantitative study that measured the effectiveness of SEL within

the EHUFSD. The results of this study were analyzed with simple linear regression of the

independent and dependent variables by utilizing the SPSS statistical software (Corp.,

2020).

Chapter 4: Findings

Univariate analyses were run on the characteristics of the surveyed respondents, and simple linear regressions were conducted on all four hypotheses.

Missing Data

The survey had a total of 100 respondents. Nineteen respondents did not answer past question two, "Are you 18 years or older?". These respondents were deleted from the database. Furthermore, eight respondents only answered the first three questions of the survey; therefore, they were also excluded from the bivariate analysis. However, their information is included in the sample's demographics (N=81). Six respondents did not complete the survey questions on perceived student behavioral change. Sixty-seven respondents were included in the linear regression analyses.

Characteristics of Respondents

As shown in table 1, The sample of 81 respondents consisted of 73% teachers, and 14.8% were support staff members—for example, guidance counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and teacher assistants. Additionally, 7.4% responded other and indicated that they were specialists, such as reading specialists and department coordinators. Question four asked respondents how long they have been in the education field. The majority, 75.3%, worked for EHUFSD for more than four years and have received tenure. Eleven (13.6%) of the respondents worked for the district between one to three years, and only one respondent worked for the district for less than one year. When asked how many credits the respondent had according to the East Hampton Teachers Association Instructional Salary Guide, 67.9% of the respondents answered they were furthering their education beyond a Master's Degree, with 6.2% currently working on a

Master's degree. However, only four respondents held only a Bachelor's Degree (4.9%).

One respondent answered that they held less than a Bachelor's Degree (1.2%). Alike only

one respondent answered they were working towards a doctorate. Two respondents

responded that they currently hold doctoral degrees.

Table 1. Demographics of Respondents

	Variable	(*N* = 81)	N %
School position	Administrator	0	0.0%
	Support Staff (TA, Social Worker, Guidance Counselor, Psychologist)	12	14.8%
	Teacher	63	77.8%
	Other (write in your position at EHUFSD)	6	7.4%
Year in education	Less than one year	1	1.2%
	One to three years	11	13.6%
	Four years or more (without tenure)	8	9.9%
	Four years or more (with tenure)	61	75.3%
Degree in education	Less than a Bachelor's Degree	1	1.2%
	Bachelor's Degree	4	4.9%
	Working on a Master's Degree	5	6.2%
	Master's Degree	13	16.0%
	Furthering my education beyond a Master's Degree	55	67.9%
	Working on a Doctorate Degree	1	1.2%
	Doctorate Degree	2	2.5%
Number of CEU	3-6	38	46.9%
	7-12	9	11.1%
	12+	34	42.0%

Question seven inquired about the respondents continuing education credits (CEUs). 46.9% of the respondents had completed between three and six CEUs, 11.1% had completed between seven and twelve, and 42.0% had completed twelve or more CEUs (see Table 1).

In comparing respondents who completed the demographic information to those included in the linear regression analysis, there were minor differences only in degrees in education. The number of CEUs finished, with more of the analysis respondents ($N = 67$) having higher levels of education and completing more CEUs than those who did not cmeetall of the survey questions ($N = 14$).

Dependent and Independent Variable

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the independent variable (Social Emotional Learning Strategies) and the dependent variable (The Perceived Level of Behavioral Change Score). SEL strategies score revealed a mean score of 3.96 and a standard deviation of .50. The mean score is how respondents viewed and or applied SEL strategies in their work with students. The range for SEL strategies was 1.32 to 4.73, indicating that most respondents felt neutral about applyusingstrategies to their work with students. Alike, the descriptive statistics for The Perceived Level of Behavioral Change in students had a mean score of 3.02 and a standard deviation of .62. The range for this dependent variable was 1.38 to 4.25. Therefore, it can be determined that most of the respondents felt neutral about the perceived level of behavioral change in their students.

Table 2. Univariate Descriptive Statistics for SEL and Perceived Levels of Behavioral Change

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Social-Emotional Learning Strategies Score	81	3.96	.50	1.32	4.73
The Perceived Level of Behavioral Change Score	67	3.02	.62	1.38	4.25

Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question proposed in this study was: Do teachers, support staff, and administrators of the East Hampton Union Free School District who apply Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies in their work with students perceive changes in student behavior from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year? The results for each of the four hypotheses are discussed here.

Hypothesis 1

A simple linear regression was run to examine SEL strategies predicting perceived levels of behavioral change in students. Standard residuals were analyzed on the data to identify any outliers, which indicated that the data contained no outliers that needed removal. The data met assumptions of normality with normally distributed residuals. The scatterplot of standardized residuals showed that the data met the assumptions of homoscedasticity and linearity.

The results of the regression showed that SEL strategies explained 2.4% of the variance in perceived levels of behavioral change in students, $R^2 = .240$, $F(1, 66) = 1.59$,

p = .212. Given the results of this regression, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. There

is no relationship between social-emotional learning strategies and perceived levels of

behavioral change in students.

Hypothesis 2

A second linear regression was run to analyze the relationship between the

respondent's number of years in the education field and the perceived change in students'

behavioral change.

The regression results showed the number of years in education, 5.6% of the

variance in perceived levels of behavioral change in students, R^2 = .06, F (1, 65) = 3.875,

p = .053. Therefore, given the regression results, it can be determined that the statistical

significance is approaching significance (p = .053). Furthermore, results indicated that the

more years teachers spent in education, the higher their perceived results of behavioral

change in students (β= .237, P =.053) if we consider the regression equation.

$$Y = a + bx$$

Suppose respondents had zero years in the education field. In that case, their

perceived mean score of student behavioral change is 2.27, indicating respondents felt

that students have a slight perceived behavioral change from the beginning of the school

year to the end. However, if respondents had four years or more in the educational field,

their perceived mean score of students' perceived behavioral change would be 3.11. It

indicated that the respondents felt that students had more behavioral change, albeit a

minor change (less than a 1-point increase in perceived student behavioral change).

Demonstrating the significant value is approaching significance but not quite significant

(p=.053).

Hypothesis 3

A third linear regression was run to investigate the correlation between Teachers, administrators, and support staff who have higher levels of education and perceived levels of behavioral change in students.

The regression results showed that higher levels of education .3% of the variance in perceived levels of behavioral change in students, R^2 = .028, F (1, 66) = 1.875, p = .176. Given the results of this regression, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. There is no relationship between higher levels of education in the respondents and perceived levels of behavioral change in students.

Hypothesis 4

The fourth linear regression compared if the respondents who received more continuing education credits perceived higher levels of behavioral changes in students.

The results of the regression showed that number of continuing education credits show .13% of the variance in perceived levels of behavioral change in students, R^2 = .013, F (1, 66) = .888, p = .349. Given the results of this regression, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. There is no relationship between a higher number of continuing education credits in the respondents and perceived levels of behavioral change in students.

Conclusion

Out of the four hypotheses, only hypothesis #2 was approaching significance. All other were non-significant and unsupported.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In general, this study was well executed, and with more time to fix the weak areas, this study could be used to adequately assess teachers' and support staff's view of SEL at the EHUFSD. The implications of the findings of this study are discussed in continuation.

Implications of the Findings

The data revealed that the John M. Marshall Elementary School and The East Hampton High School had the highest participants. It is unclear why the East Hampton Middle School did not have many respondents. It can be assumed that many participants did not finish the survey because some participants did not understand the purpose of the study.

Hypothesis 1 Implications

Hypothesis 1 had non-significant findings. Literature suggests that the implementation of SEL strategies is short-lived. Therefore, teachers and support staff implement the SEL strategies for a short period. Consequently, they lead to minor or only short-term effects. For SEL to be successful, its modalities must be implemented consistently over a long period. It is then that teachers and support staff would start to see higher levels of behavioral change in their students.

Hypothesis 2 Implications

Hypothesis 2 was approaching significance. Since it is believed that respondents had difficulty determining what the question was asking, some of the respondents did not answer the questions regarding students' behavioral changes. If these questions had been more precise, the sample size would have been greater, and this hypothesis would have

been better determined. Much literature suggests that seasoned teachers and support staff can manage classroom climate better. They can regulate their own emotions better than a new teacher. However, many teachers rely on the school district to provide professional development to the staff that has been in the education field longer.

Hypothesis 3 Implications

Hypothesis 3 did not have significant findings, believing that the more educated teachers and support staff did not see higher perceived levels of behavioral change in their students. The main takeaway point from this result is not that higher educated teachers and support staff are unable to implement SEL in their work with students. It is that, as the literature suggests, many states do not require them to learn SEL modalities in their education. If SEL modalities and curriculum were taught during their training, they would implement them more and for extended periods.

Hypothesis 4 Implications

Alike, hypothesis 4 showed no significant findings. Many teachers and support staff receive continuing education credits from the professional development offered by their school district. Thus, if a school district is not focused on SEL, the teacher or staff member does not receive the appropriate training. Furthermore, many states do not require SEL to be a part of the curriculum. In recent years, the passing of Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, entails those states, "Develop accountability systems that not only include at least two indicators of students academic achievement but also at least one indicator of school quality or student success (e.g., school climate, SEL)." (Eklund et al., 2018, p. 319). Unfortunately, as research indicates, only focusing on one of the five core competencies of SEL will not show success. CASEL has conducted research to review

states that have adopted SEL as part of their curriculum. The study concluded, "Findings suggest that while 49 states have freestanding SEL standards for preschool, only three states possessed such standards for K-12'" (Eklund et al., 2018, p. 320). States should mandate school districts to instill SEL practices in their curriculum and provide funding for such professional development. In doing so, SEL would have a more significant impact on student success.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Even though the SEL survey was not standardized, the co-efficient alpha was strong. The sample was diverse and included support staff and their behavioral change opinions. Much of the support staff were either social workers or school psychologists. It is known that these professionals add insight to SEL. For example, social workers are trained from a person-centered strength-based perspective; and use this theory in work with their clients, in this case, the work with their students.

This study may be considered an added steppingstone to SEL research, a sparse subject that lacks research. Notably, it would be beneficial to research SEL during this time that COVID-19 has had a tremendous effect on students across the nation. It is also essential to consider that the researcher-constructed scales were used and not validated. It may also be possible that respondents had difficulty comprehending the questions.

One of the weaknesses to consider in this study is the missing data. The data revealed that 14% of the respondents did not complete the survey; this diminished the sample size impacting the result when the data was desegregated. Additionally, the survey questions were challenging to understand, and many respondents did not complete the surveyor did not answer the questions accurately.

This study was a cross-sectional design that statistically is weaker. An experimental design would have been more appropriate to fully view the teacher's and staff's view of SEL strategies and if they saw higher levels of perceived behavioral change in their students. Furthermore, there is no information on studies on SEL in the area. There is no known similar school with SEL as part of their curriculum with the supporting research performed. There is no research on a school in the area that does not have a formal SEL curriculum.

Recommendations

Given the results, the following recommendations regarding Social Emotional Learning in school districts are discussed below.

Recommendations in Practice and Policy

As a new generation of teaching professionals, school-related support staff, and administrators emerge, SEL must be essential for their training. Therefore, states ought to implement requirements for institutions to meet a standard of teaching SEL modalities to their students; in doing so, this would set a professional standard, and novice staff would be able to support the needs of their students.

The lack of federal and state mandates for schools to integrate SEL in their curriculum has caused an imbalance in the education field. If SEL mandates were required, schools would see higher graduation rates and high amounts of students attending post-secondary education institutions. Most importantly, schools would start to see a better school climate and engaged students, and overall, their student's mental health would be stable. Many schools rely on state and federal funding to implement new curricula and the maintenance of such, especially in rural school districts. Leveling the

disparities in the education field is essential for SEL to be mainstreamed. In addition, the funding provided would offer continuing professional development, encouraging the use of SEL modalities on a long-term basis, therefore fortifying the effects of SEL.

Recommendations for Future Research

An experimental design is recommended for future research on this subject, allowing a longitudinal study with more accurate results. A more comprehensive study would enable respondents to accurately report the perceived levels of behavioral change in their students. A more extensive, more robust, and diverse sample size would allow more accurate results. If there were a lot of missing data, a larger sample size would still be used. Also, a standardized, reliable scale should be used; this would guarantee that more respondents complete the survey in its entirety. If the scales used in this survey are used, they should be revised for a clearer understanding of the purpose of the study.

Conclusion

The execution of this study gave a glimpse into some teachers' and support staff's perceptions regarding how SEL affects student learning. This study is a base start to seeing how SEL is perceived by the teachers, support staff, and administrators of the East Hampton Union Free School District. As concluded, it can be said that some staff of EHUFSD does not hold SEL to a high standard or feel that it impacts student behavioral change throughout the school year. Moreover, the study showed deficits regarding SEL, where the implementation of professional development would solidify strategies implemented and have positive outcomes. As with all school goals, students' success is the top priority. Therefore, learning the importance of SEL will assist in reaching EHUFSD's primary goal of supporting students to achieve academic success.

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Appendix A

Supporting Students of the East Hampton Union Free School District Survey

This study looks at how teachers, administrators, and support staff of the East Hampton Union Free School District support student learning. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to take. Please answer as honestly as you can, as there are no right or wrong answers.

Informed Consent

All teachers, administrators, and support staff of the East Hampton Union Free School District are invited to take this survey about how they support their students. The goal of this research study is to better understand the strategies that are used when working with students.

Participation in this study is voluntary. The survey includes questions about your approach with students, and some of your personal stress. You can choose to stop at any point during the survey.

Participating in this study may not benefit you directly, but it will help us learn more about how teachers support students. You may find some questions are personal, but we expect that they would not be different from the kinds of things you discuss with family or friends.

The information you will share with us if you participate in this study will be kept completely anonymous. No one will be able to see your surveyor know that you participated in this study.

Please note: You must be 18 or older to participate in this study.

By continuing on to the survey, you are consenting to participate in

this study.

Yes, I consent to participate in this survey
No, I do not consent to participate in this survey

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Demographics:

Are you 18 years of age or older?

Yes
No

Please identify if you are a:

Administrator
Support Staff (TA, Social Worker, Guidance Counselor, Psychologist)
Teacher
Other (write in your position at EHUFSD

What type of teaching certification or certification do you hold?

How long have you been an educator or in the education field?

Less than one year
One to three years
Four years or more (without tenure)
Four years or more (with tenure)

According to the 21-22 EHTA Instructional Salary Guide, how many educational credits do you currently hold?

Less than a Bachelor's Degree
Bachelor's Degree
Working on a Master's Degree
Master's Degree
Furthering my education beyond a Master's Degree
Working on a Doctorate Degree
Doctorate Degree

How many continuing education credits have you earned in the past 4 years?

3-6
7-12
12+

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Please indicate what building you are in:

John M. Marshall Elementary School
East Hampton Middle School
East Hampton High School

   The next 23 questions ask about how you work with your students. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer as honestly as you have felt over the past six months using the following 5-point scale to indicate how much you disagree or agree with each statement.

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5

SEL

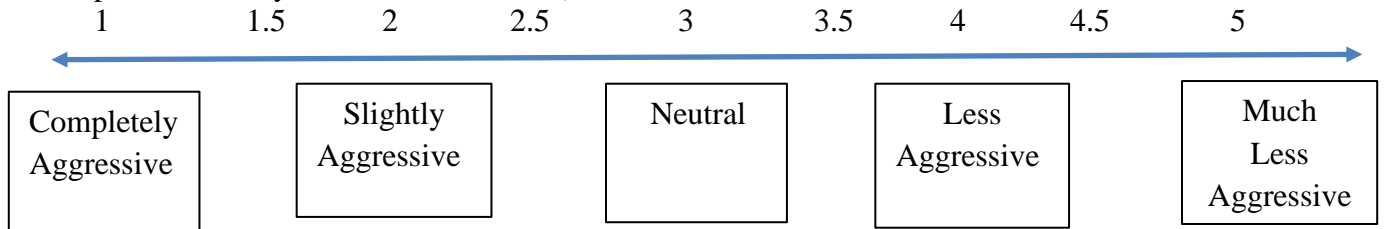|	
1) I feel that social awareness is beneficial to student learning.	1 2 3 4 5
2) I feel that my personal stress level inhibits me from working at my best.	1 2 3 4 5
3) I incorporate self-care techniques during my workday.	1 2 3 4 5
4) I assist students in establishing and achieving their academic goals.	1 2 3 4 5
5) I teach students how to use their time effectively.	1 2 3 4 5
6) I teach students how to regulate their emotions	1 2 3 4 5
7) I assist students in regulating their emotions.	1 2 3 4 5
8) I teach or assist students in fostering healthy relationships with their peers, teachers and school staff.	1 2 3 4 5
9) I assist students in fostering healthy relationships with their peers, teachers and school staff.	1 2 3 4 5
10) I feel that school connections with teachers, support staff, and school personnel hold more value in the decision making of students than the student's peers.	1 2 3 4 5

11) I encourage students to be a part of social causes in school.	**1 2 3 4 5**
10) I encourage and support students to be vocal about school climate concerns.	**1 2 3 4 5**
12) When needed, I show extra empathy and compassion towards my students.	**1 2 3 4 5**
13) I incorporate teaching students about empathy and compassion.	**1 2 3 4 5**
14) I feel that I have received sufficient professional development regarding the social emotional learning needs of students.	**1 2 3 4 5**
15) I feel that the EHUFSD fosters a healthy school climate for all students, regardless of race, economic status, immigration status, and sexual orientation.	**1 2 3 4 5**
16) I feel that the School Climate (e.g., LGBTQ students feel accepted; students feeling represented by the staff) is an integral part of how a student succeeds academically.	**1 2 3 4 5**
17) I feel that I have a strong connection with most of my students.	**1 2 3 4 5**
18) I feel that teacher support is an integral part of how a student succeeds academically.	**1 2 3 4 5**
19) I feel that Mental Health services are readily available to students. and staff.	**1 2 3 4 5**
20) I feel that Mental Health services are readily available to school staff	**1 2 3 4 5**
21) I feel that students hold a stigma associated with receiving Mental Health Services within the school setting.	**1 2 3 4 5**
22) I feel that COVID-19 has affected my ability to support my students socially.	**1 2 3 4 5**
23) I feel that COVID-19 has affected my ability to support my students emotionally.	**1 2 3 4 5**

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

For the next four questions, mark on a scale from 1 to 5 the degree of perceived change in your students from the beginning of the school year to now.
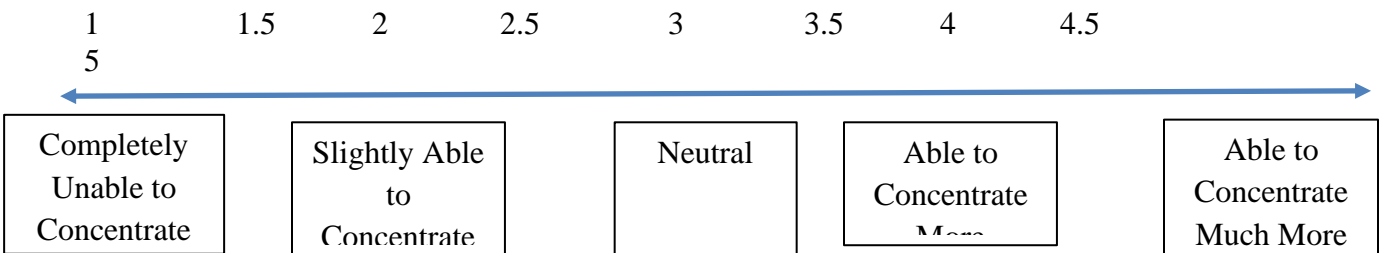
General Level of Aggression

(For example, if you notice that students were aggressive through social media, or bullying one another at the beginning of the year, but it has decreased slightly at this point in time, you would write in 2.5)

| 1 | 1.5 | 2 | 2.5 | 3 | 3.5 | 4 | 4.5 | 5 |

| Completely Aggressive | Slightly Aggressive | Neutral | Less Aggressive | Much Less Aggressive |

Put your score of change in General Level of Aggression in this box

Ability to Concentrate
(For example, if you notice that students exhibited difficulty concentrating in the beginning of the school year (1), but are now able to concentrate, you would write in 4)
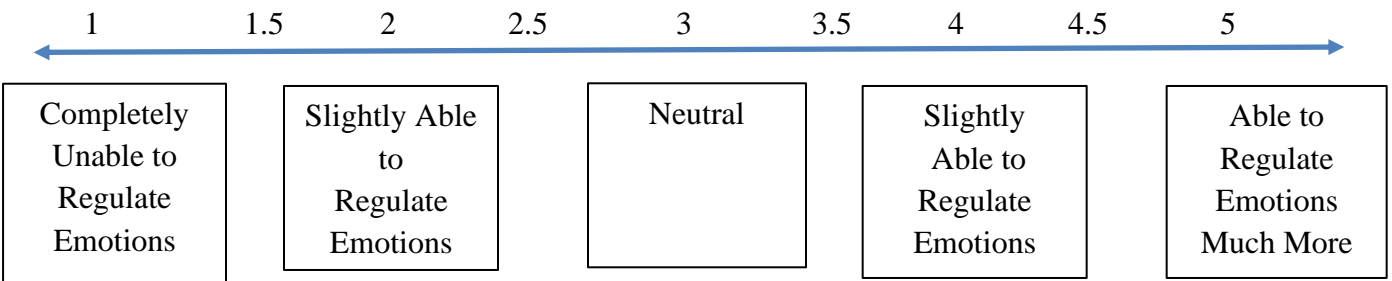
| 1 | 1.5 | 2 | 2.5 | 3 | 3.5 | 4 | 4.5 |
5

| Completely Unable to Concentrate | Slightly Able to Concentrate | Neutral | Able to Concentrate More | Able to Concentrate Much More |

Put your score of change in General Level of Ability to Concentrate in this box

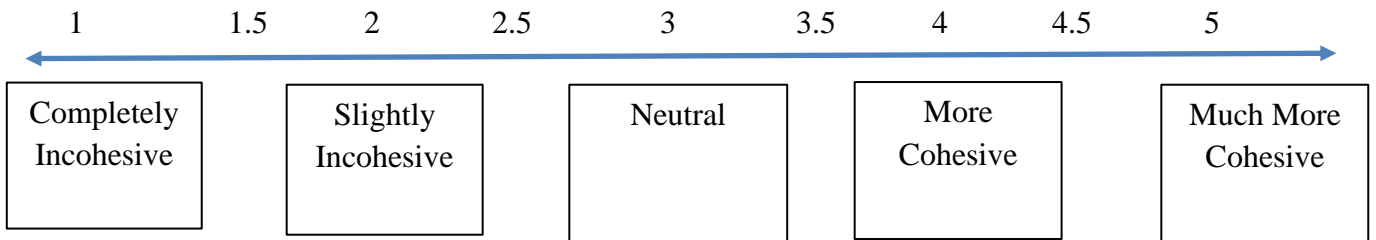*Ability to regulate emotions (e.g. Anxiety, frustration etc.)*
(For example, if you observed your students able to regulate their emotions at the beginning of the school years, but are know more anxious or frustrated you would write in 2)

| 1 | 1.5 | 2 | 2.5 | 3 | 3.5 | 4 | 4.5 | 5 |

| Completely Unable to Regulate Emotions | Slightly Able to Regulate Emotions | Neutral | Slightly Able to Regulate Emotions | Able to Regulate Emotions Much More |

Put your score of change in General Level of Ability to regulate emotions in this box

Cohesiveness between student and school
(For example, if you observed your students less interested in school, academics, and school functions at the beginning of the school year but, now they show a great interest you would mark 4.5)

| 1 | 1.5 | 2 | 2.5 | 3 | 3.5 | 4 | 4.5 | 5 |

| Completely Incohesive | Slightly Incohesive | Neutral | More Cohesive | Much More Cohesive |

Put your score of change in General Level of Cohesiveness in this box

If you have any questions or would like any further information regarding this survey, please feel free to contact me at ivonne.tovar@ehschools.org or my advisor, Dr. MariaTaylor at maria.mays@liu.edu .

Thank you for taking the time to take this survey,
Ivonne Tovar