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**The Effects of Social-Emotional Learning Strategies on Promoting Positive Behavior in
Elementary School Students**

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EDU 635: Capstone

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Abstract

The focus of this action research was to appropriately implement social emotional learning into a small classroom environment. The lessons were aimed to assist students and foster positive behaviors both inside and outside the classroom environment. Participants participated in a four-week study. The research participants consisted of 17 girls and boys within a classroom. This classroom environment had a total of 11 boys and 6 girls, in Honolulu, Hawaii. The study also included four specialist teachers (Hawaiian, Japanese, Computer Science, and Physical Education), the homeroom teacher, and the school counselor. During the intervention, each class engaged in daily morning meetings, facilitated classroom rules and norms, SEL lessons, and weekly journal entries. Data sources within the study included daily behavior frequency tally charts, office referrals, student journals, and teachers log of behaviors. After analyzing the data conducted during this research project, the researchers concluded social emotional learning had a positive effect on students in an elementary school setting. Further research could provide more data to show whether a school-wide implementation is necessary and whether this could promote positive behaviors by teaching social emotional learning.

Keywords: Social emotional learning, behaviors, elementary

Introduction

Social-emotional learning is a huge part of learning, growing, and developing at an early age. Social-emotional learning is defined as “the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (CASEL, 2022). Social-emotional learning is important both inside and outside of the classroom.

Many students often miss the opportunity to learn these types of things in school. Students can benefit from learning how to understand their emotions and how to properly deal with certain situations. By learning these types of topics at a young age, we are setting them up for success in their futures. By implementing SEL into their studies, these students will be able to show empathy and develop empathy when it is most necessary.

The main components of the SEL framework are: responsible decision-making, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and self-awareness (CASEL, 2020). Teachers who use CASEL's framework understand the importance of positive learning environments. Improving both social and academic skills is the main point of the CASEL SEL framework (CASEL, 2020). The CASEL SEL framework is the focus of this study.

According to Schonert-Reichl (2017), when schools are able to teach SEL skills, students' negative behaviors can be reduced and they are able to be academically successful. The goal of SEL is to encourage positive thinking, emotional, and behavior skills when faced with difficult situations. Academics are not the only indicator of student success, there are emotions and anxieties that can be attributed. Helping students to cope and manage these feelings and emotions is necessary. Students need to understand how to interact well with others and handle

the daily challenges of life to succeed (Greenburg, 2017). The students in this study are humans who learn through interactions and working with others. The CASEL framework teaches students the necessary skills needed to work with their peers in a positive and effective learning environment. SEL is a necessary component for elementary students, promoting and showing the required skills for students to be successful.

SEL helps kids identify their feelings, understand and communicate with others, build strong relationships, and make good, empathetic decisions (Behring, 2022). Students need to understand and comprehend empathy, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, and overall communication skills. Without having these factors engrained into our students minds on a day to day basis, there may quite possibly be no success. Students need to learn this at a young age, so they can carry this onto their successful futures.

Purpose of the Research Project

This action research's main purpose and focus are to implement social-emotional learning (SEL) into a classroom environment. By implementing social-emotional learning and specifically choosing targeted lessons can help to improve and promote positive behaviors within the classroom. The research addresses the questions: *What effects will the teaching of social-emotional skills (SEL) have on negative behaviors? What effects will the teaching of emotional skills (SEL) have on positive reinforcement behaviors?*

This action research study focused on social-emotional learning in a small classroom environment. The research took place in a classroom of seventeen students and five different specialist teachers. The classroom was made up of first graders who are all six and some that are turning seven. The specialist teachers that

participated were Physical Education, Japanese, Hawaiian Culture, Yoga, and Computer Science.

The focus of this action research was to implement social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons within a classroom community to promote positive and respectful behaviors in the classroom. During this research project, the students participated in regular studies with added SEL lessons throughout the day. The data sources included behavior tally charts, office referrals, student journals, and teacher logs. After analyzing the data collected, the research showed that social-emotional learning had a positive impact on the students. Further research shows that this study could impact a school-wide scale or district scale on the positive effects of social-emotional learning.

Ethical Considerations

This action research study involved human participants. The researcher contacted and received IRB approval prior to conducting the study. This study shows minimal risk to mand was conducted within a public-school setting and did not involve data from secondary sources. For example, university records, formal evaluations, and personnel files. The researcher ensured “adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data” (Criteria for IRB Approval of Research, 2018) were taken into serious regard. Any and all reports of data that were shared remained confidential and protected anonymity. The participants’ names, gender, and ages were omitted. The researcher also ensured to have the informed consent of the participants rights and freedoms. The overall participation in this research study was completely voluntary. The scope and purpose of this study was clearly defined and outlined. The participants were also informed of any changes, additional responsibilities, or dedication they pledged during the study. Lastly, those who signed the

consent form had the ability to opt-out of the study at any point in time and understood the process in which to do so.

Literature Review

Social-emotional learning is a necessary component for elementary students. Many children enter the classroom doors having experienced trauma and social anxiety and are unaware of the social-emotional skills that are necessary to succeed in the classroom. Tough (2013) mentioned how trauma in many students' lives affects these students mentally and physically. We all react to stress differently and it causes our executive and non-executive functioning to be hard to overcome and to even regulate. Students need to learn how to cope and regulate these emotions and feelings consistently. These very real stressors can make it extremely challenging for students to complete basic tasks, focus, and regulate their emotions (Mendelson, 2015; Tough, 2013). According to Plumb (2016), "A child with difficulties in self-regulation, attention, impulse control, and higher-order thinking may struggle in the typical classroom environment" (p. 40). This means social-emotional learning is prevalent in many school settings to help focus on students' social and academic concerns (Plumb, 2016).

Social-emotional learning was defined by Yang, Bear, & Mary (2018) as the: Process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply 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. (p. 46)

Students that are impacted by trauma are often unable to manage, cope, and participate in a classroom environment. The main issue in most classrooms is students truly lack the essential

skills needed to succeed in a school setting. When we see students, who lack social-emotional skills, they may exhibit behaviors that are undesirable and aggressive behaviors, which can lead to lower academic performance and negative peer relationships.

This literature review aims to identify and recognize the importance of social-emotional learning, find the benefits and setbacks of social-emotional learning in schools, and examine prior studies conducted with SEL. SEL is an essential tool in providing students with the skills to improve academically and carry the traits learned throughout their futures.

The research that was conducted was within the conceptual framework shaped by Bandura (1977) and Skinner (1988). Albert Bandura created the social learning theory, which was later renamed the social cognitive theory. Bandura's social learning theory described and concluded that children learn by watching and observing others. Researchers found "some SEL interventions are grounded in the social learning theories, that is, they focus on how children interpret social cues and respond to social challenges" (McClelland, 2017, p. 3).

The second theory is called Behaviorism, which was created by B.F. Skinner. Skinner stated the experiences in our environment shape our overall behaviors. According to Banks, Sapp, & Obiakor (2014), Skinner believed feelings happen from our experiences and can be affected by both positive and negative reinforcements within our environments. Both of these theories explain how the environments around us regulate and can change our overall emotions.

Social-emotional learning is composed of five main components: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Carroll, 2020; Choi, 2014). SEL also consists of three different domains of skills: thinking, behavioral,

and self-control (McKown, 2017). This definition comprises the critical aspects and components of SEL.

Benefits

Many educators who use social-emotional learning either consistently every day, or sometimes throughout the school weeks, have found several benefits within their classrooms. For instance, teachers have concluded SEL connects many different subject matters. Teachers have also found students can take what they have learned and apply these traits in real world activities and other areas in life. In a few schools, attendance rates are higher because of the school's environment and emphasis on motivation and morale. This is primarily because of the intervention and the positive outlook the research has received (Yang et al., 2018). As reported by Schonert (2015) and Choi (2014), they stated in order for a social emotional approach to be successful, the approach must incorporate mindfulness, empathy, and aid students towards the path of fostering social relationships, positive outlook on school, reduce stress, and improve self-regulation. If schools are successful when implementing this type of social emotional approach, students are less depressed, calmer, and can positively change their outlooks on those around them and the many different social cues when navigating different social groups (McKown, 2017). This also goes to show when students are exposed to social emotional learning, students can put the other factors aside and focus on their strengths and be more engaged with the environments around them (McKevitt, 2012; Taylor, 2017).

When school settings offer and strive for positive learning environments, these environments can in turn create emotionally responsive students who have the ability to succeed in all types of environments. These school environments can become more secure, safe, caring, controlled, and structured after implementing a social emotional learning approach (McKevitt,

2012). The researchers, Schonert (2015), McKeivitt (2012), Taylor (2017), and Jones (2017), have all stated implementing a powerful and prosperous social emotional learning approach can give extremely positive outcomes in terms of students being able to succeed academically, behaviorally, and socially. Furthermore, research has shown brain function has increased when students are introduced and have participated in social emotional learning interventions nationwide (McClelland, 2017). Although these benefits are clear, they extend much farther than just within a classroom environment. Students who are exposed to the proper traits and learn self-regulation and social-emotional skills, can have healthy life by using these coping skills on a day to day basis (Jones, 2017).

Drawbacks

Although there are many positive benefits of social emotional learning, a few studies have found there is little to no benefit to SEL interventions (Jones, 2017; McClelland, 2017). To be specific, social emotional learning is vital. However, the subject itself requires more than just teacher influence and the subject being taught in order to be successful in many classroom environments (Schonert, 2017). Due to this, many schools have not scheduled time for teachers to attend professional development courses on the subject of social emotional learning. Teachers are not equipped to teach this subject without the proper training. A huge and essential portion of social emotional learning is teacher understanding and approval of the subject itself. When there is a higher approval of social emotional learning amongst teachers, the more effective the subject is taught to students (Carroll, 2020; McClelland 2017). In the end, this can pose challenges because many schools are not able to dedicate a significant amount of time for teachers to attend training. The lack of training is a negative aspect for teachers. However, another negative drawback is these skills are also absent from the different environments within students' home

lives. In the end, the benefits of social emotional learning are only apparent when they are implemented in a school environment (McClelland, 2017). Another researcher McKnown (2017) found only a limited selection of assessments show that they are truly beneficial and show the true outcomes of these social emotional learning interventions. The researcher's main interest is not about whether the benefit is apparent, but how to measure the different benefits that arise both properly and accurately.

Positive Environments

In order to have a successful intervention and implementation of social emotional learning, there needs to be a positive school atmosphere. There needs to be a unity amongst all staff, administration, and an effort to show a united team and front. Not only will a positive environment allow students to feel safe, but this will also provide students with the understanding of being and feeling supported. Another important aspect of a successful implementation of social emotional learning is teamwork and respect. In other words, rules created as one classroom family and the respect that the rules will be followed. Oberle (2017) shares a classroom that offers a supportive environment and has the proper classroom management is deemed more effective than a classroom that does not have these factors in place. Another author, Yang et al. (2018), sided with Oberle (2017) by stating not only does a positive learning environment make students feel comfortable, but allows them to expand their social skills and sets them up for success. By having positive relationships with teachers and the other children around them, there are significant benefits for students who are high risk (Nickerson, 2019). When students have strong relationships to those around them, there are reduced occurrences of bullying and common issues that arise (Nickerson, 2019).

Although when there is not a positive school environment in place, the social emotional learning intervention might encounter some impediments. For instance, students who might not feel safe at their school or within their classroom, might run into challenges and have a negative mindset when it comes to social emotional learning. In the long run, this could pose more challenges than benefits because these students might exhibit negative behaviors and in turn, cause a negative outcome of whether an intervention like this is effective. Another factor that is important to address is how these students often feel neglected, outsiders, and potentially isolate themselves. Students who have negative social interactions with those around them often blame themselves for the way others see them, due to not being able to fully understand those around them and blend in with the crowd (Nickerson, 2019). Nickerson (2019) found disengaged students tend to have negative attitudes and perceptions towards their peers. This suggests the lack of engagement can have negative consequences beyond academic performance, influencing social interactions as well. This goes to show, instilling a positive learning environment could not only be beneficial, but imperative for students to feel comfortable, be receptive of social emotional learning, change their outlook on school, and benefit their wellbeing.

School-wide Approach

A school-wide approach can not only be beneficial, but allow to see the changes on a bigger scale. Oberle (2017) discussed by using a school-wide approach, students can become stronger in the present and in the future, which can allow them to be true leaders. Oberle (2017), also defined a social emotional learning and the benefits of a school-wide approach as, “the entire school community as the unit of change and aims to integrate SEL into daily interactions and practices at multiple setting levels in the school using collaborative efforts that include all staff, teachers, families, and children” (p. 278). Another researcher Kasler (2018), observed

when interventions are integrated in school settings, there is an extended amount of time where there is a drop in the negative behaviors that are present within schools. By implementing social emotional learning throughout the entire school, this reinforces the essential traits to be taught, enforced, and upheld in all grades. This also promotes the longevity of the intervention and program that is implemented in both the school and the community. In order for social emotional learning to be effective school-wide, researchers have concluded a program of this magnitude must be implemented throughout the entire school and not just limited to one specific classroom (Oberle 2017, Yang et al., 2018). This also goes to show that in order for full implementation to be successful, there needs to be emphasis on the teaching of SEL skills with not only the students, but the community, as well. In terms of this, many schools forget about the playgrounds, lunchrooms, and hallways when it comes to dealing with the many different social aspects and issues (Oberle 2017; Jones 2017). Although many researchers have noted there is a huge need for a school wide SEL program to be implemented, there are clear challenges when attempting to fully implement this approach in school settings. Some challenges mentioned previously are the lack of training, money, resources, and time. The primary purpose of a school-wide approach is to ensure all students are being taught the proper social emotional skills, along with being able to carry these traits into other aspects of their lives. In order for this to occur, Jones (2017), mentioned there needs to be strong engagement and dedication towards time that is given to teachers for professional development in the subject of social emotional learning and the overall implementation. In past research, there was documentation showed that the first round of teachers participated in professional development around SEL interventions. However, when specific teachers leave or go on maternity leave, the new staff are not introduced to the same professional development or a similar one. This in turn gives new staff a lack of training on

social emotional learning, teachers then implement the subject incorrectly, or have no idea how to approach or teach the subject at all (Kasler, 2015). In the end, teachers are found struggling to implement the subject of social emotional learning into their teaching and curriculum because of the lack of support they receive from their administration (Oberle, 2016).

Universal Approach

As mentioned previously, social-emotional learning would be more beneficial when there is a universal approach and is not limited to one classroom environment. To be specific, a universal approach is where the entire school and all the students combined are included within the intervention. This is instead of a smaller scale and one classroom environment. Researcher McKown (2018) discusses:

One meta-analysis of 213 universal school-based SEL programs found that about 57 percent of children who participated in well-implemented, evidence-based SEL programs showed improvement on measures of behavioral outcomes, compared with about 43 percent of children who didn't participate in such programs. (p. 164)

Another researcher found within these universal approach programs, there are different benefits. Low (2016) mentions these programs require very little resources and give exposure to all students without singling out any students. Another researcher Carroll (2020) concluded social emotional learning interventions are effective for students who have behavioral difficulties. Carroll (2020) also proved these interventions are worthwhile and are typically lower in cost. Taylor (2017) also found in students who experience poverty, having a universal SEL approach can reduce disruptive and unwanted behaviors. Furthermore, any and all attempts to provide a universal SEL approach must include bullying prevention, teaching students how to change

negative outlooks to positives, instilling positive interventions, and teaching self-regulation (Nickerson, 2019).

Similarly, a universal approach is necessary to ensure all students are benefitting in the long run. In other words, not singling any student out or making them feel less than in a classroom environment. Many researchers have argued intentionally singling a student out can benefit and stop the negative behaviors. However, others have argued doing this causes more harm than good. Researcher Evans (2016), discusses there are more positives that outweigh the negatives when it comes to singling children out. He concluded singling children who are struggling are able to in turn support them in the long run. In other words, when they are called out on things they must improve on, they are able to succeed. However, Nickerson (2019) found students who are bullied might struggle throughout a universal approach. This proves that constant and apparent intervention is necessary for students who might need more assistance throughout their learning.

Another researcher Taylor (2018) concluded there are successful universal SEL interventions and approaches that exist for districts, schools, and teachers. However, he also found some of these approaches to be inadequate for some students. Evidence shows children learn at various speeds, rates, and have various different ways that they each individually learn. Taylor (2018) explains teachers must realize there are no programs that are perfect for every child within our school systems. One approach might benefit one child, but this approach might not work for the next child. In other words, not as versatile. Furthermore, schools should adopt different approaches that suit various learners and overall childrens' needs.

Research Plan

The research questions that guided this action research were: What effects will the teaching of social-emotional skills (SEL) have on negative behaviors? What effects will the teaching of emotional skills (SEL) have on positive reinforcement behaviors?

The timeline this action research was conducted was a month-long duration. During this time, data was carefully collected and the students were observed. Throughout this process, the researcher was able to observe whether or not SEL can reinforce positive behaviors both inside and outside a classroom environment.

The purpose of this study was to see what effect social-emotional learning has on inappropriate student behaviors. In other words, decreasing these negative and inappropriate behaviors. The intervention included a weekly SEL lesson about a specific skill in one of the five domains in the CASEL SEL framework. For example, Monday consisted of: self-awareness, Tuesday: self-management, Wednesday: social awareness, and so on. Students participated in daily morning meetings along with journaling weekly about the SEL lesson. During this time, the researcher collected qualitative and quantitative data throughout the four weeks of intervention.

Methodology

The variables that were analyzed was how SEL can be affected within elementary schools. For instance, the study will be conducted within a classroom of 17 students. The main impacts the researcher focused on were how teaching social-emotional skills have an impact on students. To be specific, seeing how negative behaviors increase or decrease in a classroom environment with the exposure of SEL. However, when students are exposed to social-emotional learning and understanding, these factors were properly assessed to see if positive behaviors are

being reinforced both inside and outside the classroom. More specifically, when teachers are not looking are the students showing care, compassion, and acting as positive role models? All in all, this was essentially the main variable that was analyzed throughout the action research. This research was conducted with the homeroom teacher, specialist classes, and in other extended learning classrooms (RTI, ELL).

Participants

The intended research participants consisted of 17 girls and boys within a classroom. This classroom environment had a total of 11 boys and 6 girls. The study also included four specialist teachers (Hawaiian, Japanese, Computer Science, and Physical Education), the homeroom teacher, and the school counselor. These researchers determined if SEL learning affected students both inside the classroom and outside the classroom.

The researcher conducted data through the use of qualitative and quantitative analysis. The data analysis was mixed throughout the study. Two of the tools were collected by qualitative data, and three data tools were collected by quantitative data.

Description of Intervention

The first piece of the intervention began with students participating in a daily morning meeting. The morning meeting consisted of a morning message about the day, sight word practice, word work, and other basic skill practices. During this morning meeting, the researcher scheduled roughly 20 minutes into the daily schedule for all classrooms to incorporate a morning meeting at the start of the day. These morning meetings were held on the main carpet in the middle of the classroom. The researcher started their morning meeting with all 17 students and the researcher standing in a circle. The researcher would ring a chime, and all students would

breathe for one to two minutes. This break was called a mindful minute. Once this period was done, the students would go around the circle saying good morning to every student. This process would take place each day, following with good mornings to one another to build positive relationships. The students also participated in a daily sharing with a partner. The task was to share anything that happened overnight, over the weekend, or simply something that excited them. After the sharing, students went back to their spots and worked through their morning work, which was listed on the board.

The researcher focused on creating a positive classroom environment with the same routine and morning work daily. At the beginning of the intervention, the students worked together to create their own classroom rules and routines that they agreed to follow. The researchers read stories and had discussions on why it was essential to always follow the rules and routines that were created. Once every morning meeting was concluded, the students and researcher brainstormed together one positive goal for the class. The next day they would attempt to accomplish that specific goal. The morning meeting would conclude with the students reciting positive affirmations.

Data Collection

Data sources included daily behavior frequency tally charts, behavior office referrals, classroom observations, student journals, and a teacher lesson log. There was a total of five data collection tools. Three of the tools collected qualitative data, and two data tools collected quantitative data.

Quantitative data:

- Behavior Frequency Chart

- Behavior Office Referral Form

The first quantitative data tool used was the Behavior Frequency Chart (Appendix A). The researcher collected data for a month-long duration. The Behavior Frequency Chart allowed for documentation to take place. The chart documented the negative behaviors and the frequency of these behaviors for each child. These observations were recorded every week the intervention took place. The table below shows the behaviors that were observed, along with the frequency.

Table 1

Behaviors and definitions

Behaviors	Definitions
Left Classroom	Student leaves the group without permission and will not come back after one prompt
Noncompliance	Refusing to follow directions after one prompt
Raised Voice/Arguing	Yelling or aggressive tone, arguing
Physical Contact/ Aggression	Any physical contact with the intent to cause harm
Inappropriate language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Name-calling, swear words, hurtful words, any words that are inappropriate for school 2. Inappropriately using words directed toward another person

To be specific, a tally mark was marked on the chart every time a negative behavior was observed. This chart was created to document each negative behavior that was observed and whether or not the behaviors increased or decreased about the four weeks of intervention.

Another qualitative tool the researcher used was a behavior office referral form. During the entire four-week intervention period, the researcher used behavior office referrals. This specific form gave the researcher the incident and specifically the negative behavior that occurred. The purpose of obtaining this document was to see if there were any related issues that occurred inside the classroom, along with outside the classroom, as well. To be specific, if the child was sent to the office by referral. This form also addressed whether or not the behaviors increased or decreased after the implementation of the intervention. These specific forms are used school-wide and they allow for the proper personnel to be notified. To notice if there was a change in the behaviors observed, the researcher counted and collected the data of the total number of behavior referrals both before and after the intervention was conducted.

Qualitative data:

- Student journals
- Student Observations
- Implementation Lesson Log

The first qualitative tool used was student journals. These student journals allowed the researcher to gain insight on the student's perceptions towards the intervention. This also showed the researcher whether or not the students showed growth towards SEL and their overall understanding of the new skills that were learned. The students journaled at the end of the week once every SEL lesson was concluded. To ensure that there was differentiation and

accommodations for the differing reading and writing levels of the students, drawing was allowed. In other words, students were allowed to draw pictures that explained their ideas versus writing. This allowed every student to be included in this process. Table 2 shows an example of the journal prompt that was provided to each student.

Table 2

Journal Prompt

Classroom

This SEL skill made me feel _____.

Specialist classroom

This SEL skill _____ has helped me _____.

Using this skill _____ makes me feel _____.

Within these journals, the students explained their thoughts and ideas. However, the students were not allowed to use one worded answers. This was primarily because the researcher wanted to ensure learning was taking place and the type of responses students would provide by using writing or pictures.

The second qualitative tool used was an Implementation Lesson Log. Once a week, the researcher and each specialist teacher would fill out a Google Form about the SEL lesson that occurred during the week. This form included the date of the specific lesson, the description of the lesson that took place, any observations that took place, and whether or not the students were receptive to the lesson. This log ensured the researchers were held accountable for what they were teaching and allowed for documentation of anything that caught their attention. From there, all the data was gathered and properly documented. The lesson log also ensured the researcher

and specialist teachers used and discussed the different strategies within the SEL Framework: CASEL.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to address the questions: What effects will the teaching of social-emotional skills (SEL) have on negative behaviors? What effects will the teaching of emotional skills (SEL) have on positive reinforcement behaviors? This action research study evaluates the changes in overall positive and negative effects on social-emotional learning. The learning that was conducted took place during daily morning meetings, journal time, maintaining a healthy classroom environment, and during the routines of the day.

The quantitative data was recorded on tally mark charts. Once the charts were filled, the researcher can then gather the information, create graphs, and show the overall increases and decreases that took place regarding the behaviors observed. The qualitative data was taken by using a five-step process Hendricks (2013) recommends disassembling, compiling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. The researcher analyzed the changes in the whole participant group as well as individually for each participant.

Behavior Frequency

The purpose of the quantitative tools was to closely monitor the overall frequency of behaviors. The researchers wanted to observe whether there were decreases or increases in the quantity of negative behaviors. Most importantly, the researcher wanted to recognize if negative behaviors continued after the implementation of the intervention. The students who received referrals got them due to showing behaviors that clearly went against the written code of conduct. The principal, counselors, and other administration leaders were the only ones who

could give out referrals, as well as monitor them. These referrals stayed in each student's file and no one other than the administration is able to access or view their files at any given time. The table below shows the total number of referrals that were given throughout the entire study. The study is broken up into parts: pre-intervention, intervention, post-intervention, overall outcome.

Table 3

Behavior Referrals

	Pre-Intervention	Intervention	Post-Intervention	Outcome
<i>Homeroom class</i>	3	0	0	-3
<i>Specialist classes</i>	3	0	0	-3

The homeroom classroom had three behavior referrals that were written during the pre-intervention. However, there were none that were written during the intervention, and post-intervention time period. Within the specialist classes, there was also a total of three behavior referrals that were given during the pre-intervention period. To be specific, there was one referral that was written on March 20, 2023, another referral that was written on March 21, 2023, and one more that was written on March 27, 2023. All three of the behavior referrals were from two different students. Two referrals were for one student and the third was from a different student. They were all non-compliance. When looking at the data, there was no change from the homeroom classroom to the specialist classroom. The data shows there were the same amounts of referrals, which showed during the pre-intervention timeline. The homeroom classroom and

the specialist classes had the same number of students, and were the same students in both classrooms throughout the entire study. There was essentially no mixing of students from different classes. The only factors that changed were the days that these students saw the specialist teachers and the different orders of the classes.

The researchers used various behavior frequency charts to examine whether or not negative behaviors increased or decreased during the intervention period. During this time, the researchers collected data during the four weeks of the entire intervention. The table below shows the behaviors that were observed during all four weeks of intervention

Table 4

Behavior Frequency Chart – Homeroom Classroom

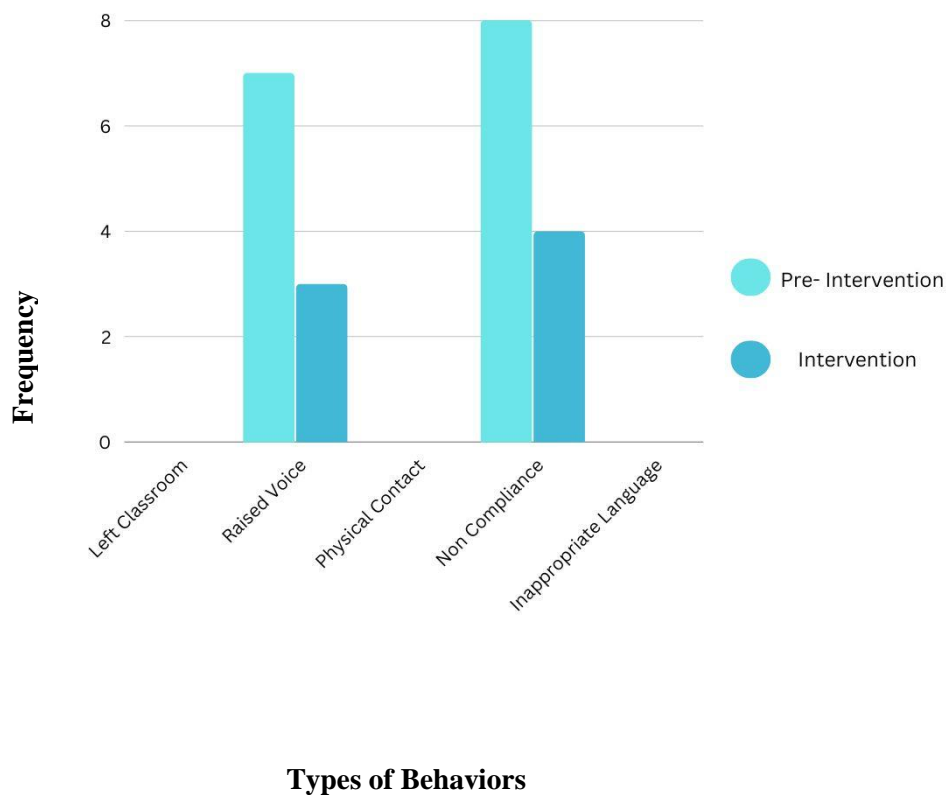
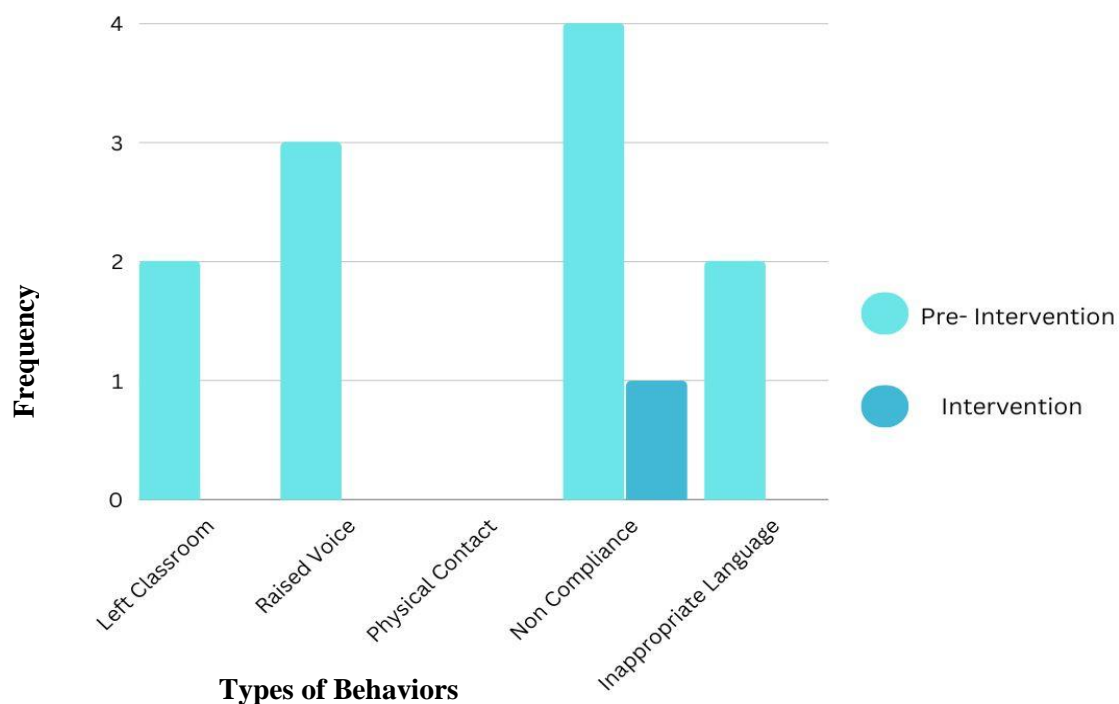


Table 4 shows the homeroom classroom displayed the behavior of non-compliance a total of ten times during the pre-intervention period. The graph also shows within the category of raised voice, this was exhibited seven times during the pre-intervention period. Although during the intervention, there was a total of three occurrences of a raised voice and four incidents of non-compliance. Both non-compliance and raised voice decreased during the intervention. Although raised voice had more of a decrease, non-compliance still showed growth. A factor to note is, the pre-intervention period occurred for a total of one week. While the intervention data was a total of three weeks, concluding with one last week for the post-intervention data to be gathered. Another important factor to note is similar factors for different behavior referrals could have also been present during this documentation period. Lastly, there were little to no transitions for the students because of the scheduled time for SEL daily. In other words, there was no transition to carpet time, small group instruction, rotation of students within different groups, or individual or partner work that took place. In the end, there are several different factors that could influence the behaviors that were taking place.

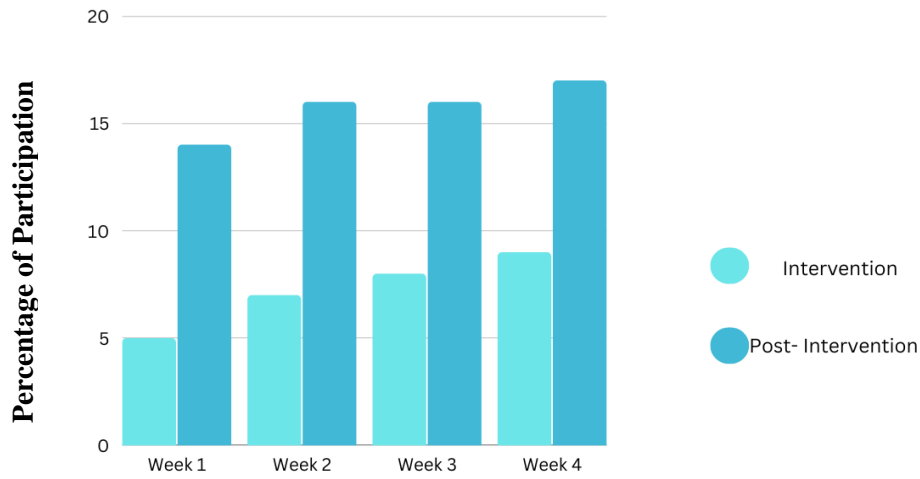
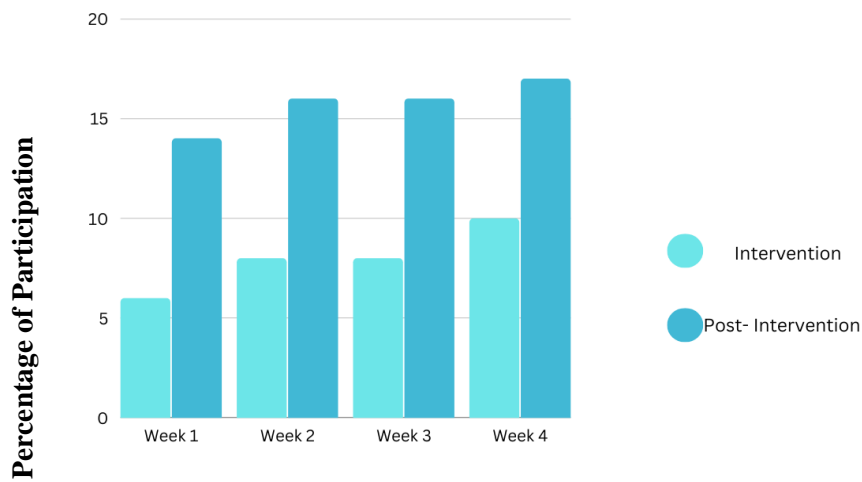
The next table shows the behaviors that were exhibited in the specialist classrooms during the pre-intervention and during the weeks of the intervention.

Table 5**Behavior Frequency Graph – Specialist Classrooms**

In table 5, the data shows both the pre-intervention and the intervention statistics. In the pre-intervention period, there were two incidents where students left the classroom, three occurrences of a raised voice, four incidents of non-compliance, no reports of physical contact, and two incidents of inappropriate language. However, during the intervention period, there were a total of zero cases where the students left the classroom, zero cases of a raised voice, zero cases of physical contact, one incident of non-compliance that was reported, and zero cases of inappropriate language. This shows that in the specialist classrooms the negative behaviors significantly decreased. However, there was still one incident that was documented of non-compliance. In both the Homeroom classroom and the Specialist classroom, the behavior that occurred in both settings were non-compliance. Due to the students having to follow directions

and consistently throughout the entire classroom block, this can cause non-compliance issues to arise. The teachers documented many of the students struggled to follow directions and did what they wanted to. In the end, all teachers documented non-compliance as “not following directions” and/or “doing what they wanted to do instead of what was asked of them”.

During the entire study, the students connected on the platform of Class Dojo and Google Classroom. All assignments were posted on Class Dojo and the students were assigned to follow along. The last week of the study consisted of a post-intervention period. During this time, the researchers recorded a tally mark for any and all students who were able to complete Class Dojo assignments and the follow the directions accordingly. However, when a student was not able to finish their assignments or failed to follow the directions, then the student received an ‘incomplete’ grade on Class Dojo. Although, the students had the ability to change their work and improve their incomplete grade they had previously received. The tables below show the graphs of the Homeroom Classroom and Specialist Classrooms and their overall participation during the intervention and post-intervention periods.

Table 6*Homeroom Classroom – Participation***Table 7***Specialist Classroom – Participation*

The Homeroom Classroom had roughly 55% and 80% overall participation during the last weeks of the intervention. During this time, the students were introduced to Class Dojo, how to complete and post the different activities, and a complete run down of the app. Every week, the students had three to four activities consisting of Math, English Language Arts, and Science. The students were given the assignments at the start of the week and had to be completed with them all by Friday. The parents had access to their child's Class Dojo account, so they could monitor their progression throughout the week and assist them, if needed. The Homeroom Classroom had an overall increase in participation throughout the pre-intervention, intervention, and post-intervention periods. The data showed the increase from 45%, 55%, 75%, to 90%.

At the start, the Specialist Classroom had 70% and 80% of participation for the remaining portion of the intervention. There was a slight increase in participation throughout the pre-intervention, intervention, and post-intervention collection periods. The students had an overall participation percentage of 50%, 65%, 82%, and 90% in the last leg of the collection period. The students at this time had been exposed to Class Dojo and were more familiar with the app itself and how to navigate the different areas and complete their assignments on time. The students were given time to practice on the app. For instance, actively completed practice assignments in both the Homeroom Classroom and Specialist Classrooms to ensure students were able to effectively work independently at home.

Student Journal Participation

The students in the Homeroom Classroom and Specialist Classrooms completed journal entries at the end of every lesson. The students were given the journal prompt, "This SEL lesson made me feel _____". The students were instructed to complete this prompt and once they were finished writing, the students were told to draw a picture that depicted what they wrote. The

students could also draw what they were feeling, as well. In their journals, students shared they felt calm and happy. The examples below show journal responses from the Homeroom Classroom journal entries.

Journal Entries – Homeroom Classroom

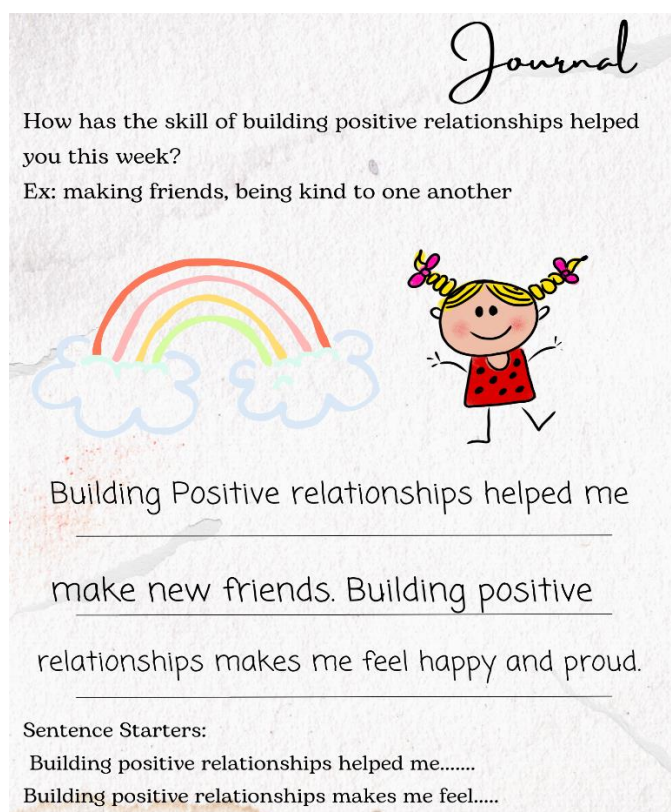
Figure 1, 2, and 3 (below)



Within the Specialist Classrooms, the students had an entirely different writing prompt. The prompt for this class was, “The SEL skill _____ has taught me _____. Using this skill makes me feel _____”. The students were able to succeed with this writing prompt. However, due to the differing writing levels, both strengths and weaknesses, some students struggled with this writing portion. This area posed challenges when the students completed their

journals. For instance, the segment where students were told to write about how the skill makes them feel, many students fell short and were not able to produce any responses. The researchers concluded some of the students may not have understood the instructions or fully understood the prompt for this writing portion. Although, some positives that came out of this journal segment was how some students wrote about the relationships with their peers and how they have learned to form positive relationships with those around them. Some examples are shown below.

Figure 4 – *Specialist Classroom Journal Entry*

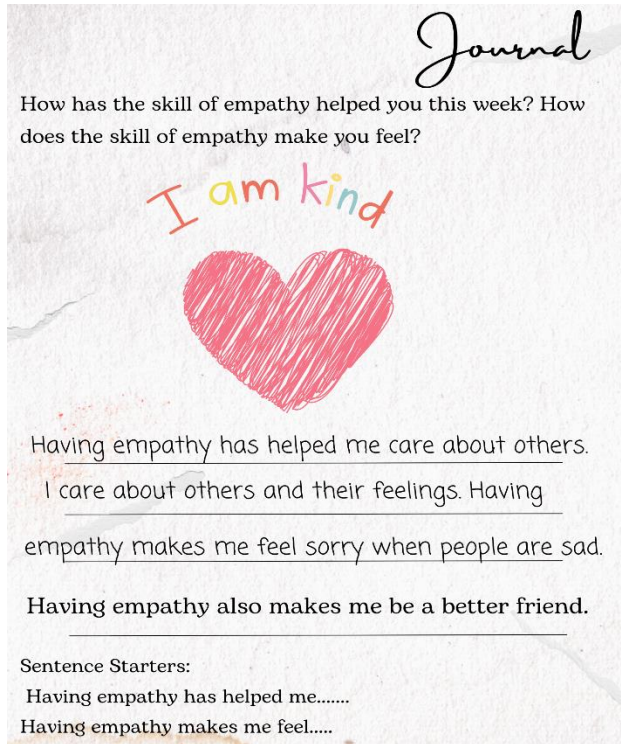


In another portion of the writing session, the students discussed the importance of empathy. Some students mentioned how empathy allows them to understand when someone's feelings are hurt, when they are sad, or if they need a friend. An example below shows how one

student expressed showing empathy for one another helps us respect and be better friends.

(Figure below)

Figure 5 – Specialist Classroom – *Empathy Journal Entry*



Action Plan

The purpose of this study was to observe the overall effects of consistent daily morning meetings, allowing and instilling positive relationships with peers, with the emphasis on social-emotional learning.

After the data was collected during the research project, the researchers were able to conclude social emotional learning had positively reached and affected elementary school students. When observing the specific behaviors and responses to the subject of social emotional learning, the amount and frequency of these behaviors significantly decreased in both the

Homeroom and Specialist Classrooms. In other words, the amount of officer referrals had also diminished throughout the study.

In both the specialist and homeroom classes, there was a decrease in all negative behaviors that were expressed throughout the study. For instance, incidents where a child leaves the classroom, raised voice, physical contact, and inappropriate language. When looking at the data, the evidence showed the overall participation increased for both classrooms throughout the study. The students showed more engagement and almost all students had assignments that were submitted. The data showed one child was unable to submit in both classrooms. However, the records showed this child was out sick for the last week of the study. In the end, the results show students had positive feelings and excitement towards the SEL lessons that were taught. Overall, many students shared they felt more responsible and held themselves accountable for their actions, behaviors, and participation in school.

Recommendations

The researcher shared there should be a school-wide implementation of an SEL curriculum. This curriculum will be geared towards social skills and self-regulation. In other words, teaching and embodying acting, thinking, and feeling. SEL must be at the forefront and held as a priority for all students in every classroom environment. This is to ensure that students can learn not only academically, but how to navigate through social situations, as well. To ensure there is a school wide approach towards SEL, schools must take initiative towards the betterment of the teachers and the skills they teach. For instance, “Socially and emotionally competent children tend to be better integrated in the school and classroom context, and can focus on the academic tasks provided to them, compared with children who struggle socially and emotionally” (Oberle, 2016, p. 281). One recommendation for this would be an ongoing professional development that allows

for a successful implementation of SEL in all classrooms and the entire school. This could potentially be a district wide implementation, as well.

There were many surprising factors that affected the research throughout the study. The findings prove that there is a need for more data to be collected. In other words, the data indicates a need for future research to be conducted on the subject of SEL in elementary schools. Due to the smaller size of this study, the findings were quite limited. If this study was to be conducted again, the researchers would consider having a larger scale. The researchers would also propose a school-wide study to allow for a deeper understanding of social emotional learning for all elementary students.

Another limitation was the differing levels and abilities of reading and writing. Looking through the notes and documentation throughout the study, some of the researchers noted some of the students struggled with being able to complete some of the written prompts. Due to this, there could have been other factors that attributed to students not being able to finish their assignments. This could have affected their ability to understand the directions at hand and not submit the assignment entirely. In the end, the researchers believed there could have been a number of reasons that could have attributed to the amount of participation throughout the study.

Analyzing Data from SEL

Research Question One

What effects will the teaching of social-emotional skills (SEL) have on negative behaviors?

The researcher began by using the journal data by comparing the pre-intervention behavior frequency mean and the post-intervention behavior frequency mean. The results were based on the behaviors that were shown during the pre-intervention period, during the

intervention, and post-intervention. The researcher calculated the mean for each individual participant and used those numbers to find the average mean of all participants. Then, the researcher calculated the post-behavior frequency mean and used those numbers to find the average post-behavior frequency mean for all participants. Comparing the two means showed the results of growth or decline throughout the study. The researcher used a bar graph to show the growth or decline.

Second, the researcher calculated the total growth shown in the bar graphing. This was done by calculating the difference between the pre-behavior frequency and the post-behavior frequency score of all the participants. This showed whether or not any participants had high or low growth throughout the study. This also showed any major declines that existed. The total growth was then used to see the learning improvement of each participant and looking at the improvement of the entire group throughout the study. The researcher calculated the declines and learning improvement, which showed how many students benefitted from the social emotional learning intervention. The researcher then analyzed each participant's growth that was similar to and different from the growth of all the participants. The overall results showed how many students benefitted from the SEL intervention and which students need more intervention and strategies.

Research Question Two

What effects will the teaching of emotional skills (SEL) have on positive reinforcement behaviors?

The researcher began by using survey data by comparing the pre-participation means and the post-participation mean. The researcher calculated the mean for each individual participant

and used those numbers to find the average mean of participation for all participants. Then, the researcher calculated the post-participation mean and used those numbers to find the average post-participation mean for all participants. Comparing the means allowed the showed the results of growth or decline throughout the study. The researcher used a bar graph to show the growth or decline.

Second, the researcher calculated the overall total growth. This was done by finding the difference between the pre-participation and post-participation for each participant. This showed whether or not any participants had high or low growth in participation throughout the study. This also showed any major declines. This total growth was then used to see the learning improvement of each participant and their participation. The researcher also looked at the improvement of overall participation within the entire group throughout the entire study. The overall results showed how many students benefited from the SEL intervention.

Findings

Potential Limitations

Some possible issues or factors that might influence the results of this proposed research are students who feel that their school is unsafe. This consists of students who lack positive experiences and might respond poorly to the SEL approach and could very well develop negative behaviors. This can also affect students who experience prior negative interactions with others and in turn, they can feel isolated.

Another limitation is SEL might be difficult to implement and might not stick with students outside of the classroom. In other words, students might only use the resources that were taught within the classroom when teachers are watching. Another factor is some students

may have perceptions of negative peer interactions. The small class size is another limitation that might affect the study. In other words, there might not be enough mass or size in the classroom for this research to be fully conducted.

Lastly, the issue of Covid-19. The school where this study was conducted has very strict regulations and social distancing. Even though other schools have loosened their guidelines, this school has not. There was no exposure to other grade levels or classrooms during recess. There are strict policies. For instance, this school made it mandatory to wear masks at all times and be socially distanced. This can drastically change the delivery of morning meetings and cause this process to be less personal. Social distancing can also cause stress and anxiety to the students.

Opportunities for Sharing Results

At the end of the study, the researcher shared the findings of the action research with other teachers, administrators, parents, advocates, legislators, and interested parties. The researcher also shared the findings in a faculty meeting. The researcher also emailed the action research to fellow teachers and parents. The researcher has also promised to have conversations and discuss the data that was gathered throughout the study. The researcher knew and understood the audience. First and foremost, the researcher defined their goal. Ultimately, the researcher strived to find how to effectively communicate this research to increase its impact in the long run. Throughout this process, the researcher ensured to collaborate with others and make a concrete plan. The researcher embraced plain language writing because it was necessary throughout the research and the entirety of the study. From time to time, the researcher did check-ins to ensure that they were layering and linking important thoughts throughout the research conducted. Lastly, the researcher evaluated the work completed overall and always remembered to acknowledge the successes and pitfalls.

The researcher shared the results of the research on two different technology-based platforms. One platform was, EdTech. EdTech is a software program that enhances teacher-led learning in classrooms and improve students' education outcomes. This program allows teachers to introduce information and allow for more interactive learning experiences. The researcher understands that being published with EdTech would be immense because not only would this allow students to be engaged, but would also be able to facilitate the research one step at a time.

The second technology-based platform the researcher shared this action research was on Google Meet. Google meet is a video-chatting service. The researcher noted this was mainly for office use and was associated with school emails where all teachers could access this site very easily. Within google meet, one can share their screen, chat, and react to specific things within the presentation. In google meet, the researcher shared and elaborated on the specific topic of social emotional learning. The researcher shared this information with teachers, families, and parents, and shared all about the research that was conducted. In these meetings, the researcher ensured the main points were being discussed and shared how this information was found.

One direct communication opportunity that would be appropriate for the researcher to share the research conducted is the Hawaii International Conference on Education. This conference is going to take place in 2024 from December 3rd to the 6th. The purpose of the conference is for teachers in various education-related fields to come together and learn from each other. This conference has teachers from all over the world joining. All in all, the researcher would like the chance to share their research here. In the end, this conference could be very impactful and meaningful to the listeners who attend this conference.

A second direct community opportunity the researcher found to be appropriate to share this research is within meetings. For instance, faculty meetings, board meetings, parent-teacher

conferences, etc. Sharing the findings within these meetings can be beneficial to share the knowledge and data that was found. The researcher would reflect and pass on the positive and negative attributes of the research that was conducted with all peers. The researcher would also elaborate with parents on how the research reached and guided their children. All in all, sharing the information with parents would be a wonderful way to share the knowledge that was gained surrounding the social emotional learning topic.

The researcher used two scholarly journals that published research similar to this action research. The first article the researcher used was, *Who benefits most? Predicting the effectiveness of a social and emotional learning intervention according to children's emotional and behavioral difficulties* (Carroll, 2020). This particular article had a bigger scope of a classroom environment and the researcher compared the findings with the research conducted.

The second article that the researcher used throughout the action research was, *The Unintended consequences of targeting: young people's lived experiences of social and emotional learning interventions* (Evans, 2015). This article also has a bigger scope of a classroom environment and the researcher wanted to see how the findings compared with this research. Also, this research dives into whether or not friendship groups may lead to the construction of intervention 'outsiders', as students seek safety through the reification of pre-existing relationships (Evans, 2015). The researcher was curious about whether the research that was conducted would provide the same results.

Need for Further Research

Due to the small class size, the data indicates a need for further research. In other words, the findings were limited. The researcher recommends a second study to be conducted to better

understand the need for social-emotional learning on a school-wide scale. All in all, there is a need for social-emotional learning and further research can be significant to the findings for school-wide data to be found and conducted.

Conclusion

Social-emotional learning is an entire process that requires whole school commitment, in order for all individuals to be successful. This is not something that can be done overnight, this can take time. This is also not something that can be done by one teacher, all teachers need to band together to implement this in all of their classrooms. All in all, there are many positive impacts that social-emotional learning can have on students. As mentioned previously, social-emotional learning is composed of five main pieces: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Carroll, 2020; Choi, 2014).

Overall, there are many benefits to using social-emotional learning in a classroom environment. By teaching our students empathy and mindfulness helps students to foster positive school and social relationships, both inside and outside of the classroom. Implementing social-emotional learning can provide students with self-regulation and a way to reduce their stress loads. There are many different components and strategies that are effective for SEL. However, this requires the help of the community within the school. By creating a positive learning environment will help to ensure that the implementation of social-emotional learning is smooth and concise.

Lastly, a universal classroom approach is necessary to ensure students learn the proper social skills to succeed in their futures. By using a universal approach within a classroom can allow students to feel safe and that they are allowed to make mistakes in the classroom. By

establishing classroom rules and guidelines helps promote a positive learning environment where students feel safe, loved, and connected. SEL skills that are taught every morning, or even weekly could ensure students learn these necessary social skills. The main goal is for SEL to be integrated within the classroom on a daily basis. The essential goal is for entire schools and communities to follow and implement SEL to ensure that there are positive social interactions in all classroom settings.

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