Preliminary Findings: Elementary Classroom Teachers' Self-Efficacy Regarding Social-Emotional Learning

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Abstract
With the rising popularity of social-emotional learning (SEL), there has been an increase in the teaching of SEL competencies in pre-K through 12th-grade classes. Teachers have widely been responsible for implementing these competencies; however, research shows that little to no SEL education is provided to teachers. Research also shows that teachers feel they need to receive more SEL training before implementing competencies. This project explored current elementary teachers' self-efficacy levels regarding SEL. This project utilized a survey, open-ended responses, and interviews for qualitative analysis. Participants comprised 33 in-service teachers, and interviews were conducted with five participants. Data analysis indicated that teachers felt confident in their ability to teach SEL. However, many explained that this confidence derived from experience with teaching SEL and not due to the training they received. Participants of this study indicated that although experience improved their efficacy, more training, including follow-up training, is necessary for pre-service or new educators to build their SEL efficacy. The findings suggest that current teachers feel that pre-service and/or new educators need to be provided with SEL training that includes hands-on learning opportunities to build efficacy levels regarding SEL implementation in future classrooms.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is identified in the literature and schools as an essential method for improving student achievement. Studies show (Schonert-Reichl, 2017) that many teacher preparation programs discuss SEL but need to provide specific coursework to assist teacher candidates in instructing SEL. Therefore, current educators must learn about SEL through professional development or independently developing their expertise. In this study, in-service teacher participants provided their perceptions of self-efficacy concerning their knowledge and ability to use SEL in their classroom and discussed how they developed these skills. The study used a survey, open-ended responses, and virtual semi-structured interviews to investigate the teacher participants' self-efficacy. Descriptive statistics were used to identify the patterns displayed in the demographic and Likert-like statement rating data. After the data was coded using MAXQDA within the open-ended responses and interview, all three data sources were triangulated to identify the emerging themes in the participants' responses.

1. Introduction

Students in grades Pre-K through 12th-grade classroom continue learning and growing through SEL instruction provided through informal and formal SEL programming (Mahoney et al., 2020; MacCann et al., 2020; Hart et al., 2020). SEL has been identified as an effective method for teaching students to be responsible and successful adults (Weissberg et al., 2015). In 1994, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

(CASEL) established SEL competencies and program standards. These include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building, and responsible decision-making, which students need to learn to grow socially and emotionally. Particular characteristics representing the skills that make up each competency are identified within each competency. For example, within the Relationship Skills competency, characteristics include 1) communicating clearly, 2) listening actively, 3) cooperating, 4) resisting inappropriate social pressure, 5) negotiating conflict constructively, and 6) seeking and offering help when needed. Each of the competencies contains a variety of skills necessary for student mastery.

Using CASEL competencies, SEL programs have developed formal curricula designed to address issues that cause students to struggle and teach more appropriate emotional responses (CASEL, 2021). SEL instruction has been heavily researched in K-12 schools (Cipriano et al., 2023; Gimbert et al., 2023; Poulou, 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Zinsser et al., 2014). These studies indicate that a teacher's knowledge of SEL programs has an enormous impact on the program's success and managing behaviors in the classroom.

Schonert-Reichl (2017) discovered that elevated teacher knowledge of SEL and the mastery of the accompanying instructional programs led to fidelity to SEL implementation, ultimately producing higher-performing students. More knowledge about SEL competencies and strategies created a better understanding of the content teachers were required to teach (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). The study suggested that the successful implementation of SEL strategies and programs depended on teachers' attitudes, motivation levels, and confidence in their knowledge level (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Schonert-Reichl's study determined if there was a connection between SEL training and more successful and consistent program implementation. The sample size of 812 included teachers from multiple elementary schools (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). After an initial evaluation to ascertain teacher comfortability levels with implementing an SEL program, the teachers were categorized as follows: *low-quality implementers, moderate-quality implementers, and high-quality implementers* (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). The results from this study suggested that *low-quality performers* had less confidence in their ability to implement an SEL program. This created lower levels of program implementation in their classrooms (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Teachers who were high-quality implementers effectively incorporated the program and adapted it to meet their students' needs (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). The information from this study led to the current research, which sought to examine elementary school teachers' self-efficacy concerning SEL from the knowledge and performance base.

2. Procedure

This qualitative study utilized three different data sets. First, data was obtained from a 10-statement, Likert-like survey completed by 33 participants. Second, the 33 participants completed open-ended responses that provided more information about their ratings. Finally, one-to-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain a more in-depth understanding of these teachers' self-efficacy concerning SEL with five participants who had volunteered to participate in the activity. Data analysis was completed independently within each data set and cross-analyzed for a more in-depth understanding.

Participants gained access to the study through social media posts. Forty-three responses were generated. After consent, participants answered three demographic screening questions (their grade level, subject, and years of teaching experience) to ensure that a target population of current elementary school teachers was achieved. Ten individuals did not meet the requirements of the study, leaving 33 eligible participants. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a number correlated with their survey submission time. They were then asked to rate their self-efficacy regarding various statements concerning SEL. Each Likert-like statement was followed with an open-ended text box in which they further explained their rating. At the end of the survey, a final question asked participants if they would consent to continue to the interview portion of the study.

Twelve participants consented to an interview and were contacted via email to schedule an online meeting. Of the 12, six responded to the email; however, one participant later requested removal from the study. After removing that individual's interview, five interviewees remained. All interview participants were current elementary classroom teachers with varying years of experience. Interview participants were given a number, and all files relating to their interviews were saved under that number. After consent was reaffirmed, a 30–45-minute, 12-question semi-structured interview was conducted. The interview was audio-recorded and documented through written notes.

After a short general conversation, the researcher verbally explained the purpose of the interview and informed each person of their right to skip any questions and/or to end the interview at any time. The researcher explained that some questions were designed to better understand their competency levels regarding SEL, while others dealt with additional topics. Many of the participants answered the questions thoroughly; however, some required additional prompting to elaborate on their responses. After the interview, the researcher transcribed each and stored transcriptions using *MAXQDA*.

3. Data Analysis

After examining the demographics, the researchers used descriptive statistics to find patterns among the survey responses. Open-ended responses paired with the rating scale survey statements were coded using *MAXQDA*. The researchers analyzed each response and labeled them according to repeating words or phrases across multiple participants. These codes were triangulated to determine the patterns represented within the open-ended responses. Next, the interview responses were examined, and the data were coded. The coded data were then triangulated across all three data sets to allow the emerging themes of this study to be determined.

4. Trustworthiness / Transferability

To establish trustworthiness, credibility was created as the researcher explained the study's importance of gathering the data concerning teacher's self-efficacy with SEL. Dependability was produced by using privacy protections, keeping detailed notes concerning the process, and continuously reviewing research decisions as the study advanced. Additionally, using a script for the semi-structured questions for the virtual interview and then keeping detailed, accurate notes in addition to the audio recording further enhanced the dependability of the interview. Finally, by providing detailed explanations concerning the characteristics of the participants, the procedures, and data analysis transferability was enhanced in the study.

5. Results

The research question that guided this study was: *What are teachers' self-efficacy levels regarding social and emotional learning?*. Demographic information, the survey results, open-ended questions, and the data obtained from the interviews were analyzed from an individual perspective and subsequently triangulated. In this manner, the researchers were able to delineate patterns within the data sets as well as across the data. The triangulated data led to the establishment of two overarching themes.

5.1. Demographics

5.1.1 Teaching experience

The initial screening questions collected participants' years of experience, current grade level, and current subjects taught. The demographics for teaching experience indicated that many of the participants had been teaching for ten years or less. In fact, of the 33 participants, 18 had been teaching for five or fewer years, representing 55% of the participant pool. By adding in the eight teachers with ten years or less experience, that percentage rose to 79%. This set of participants represented the most recent picture of educators being prepared to teach SEL competencies. Figure One provides a visual representation of the years of teaching experience for the participants in this study.

Figure 1: A Distribution of Subjects Taught by Participants
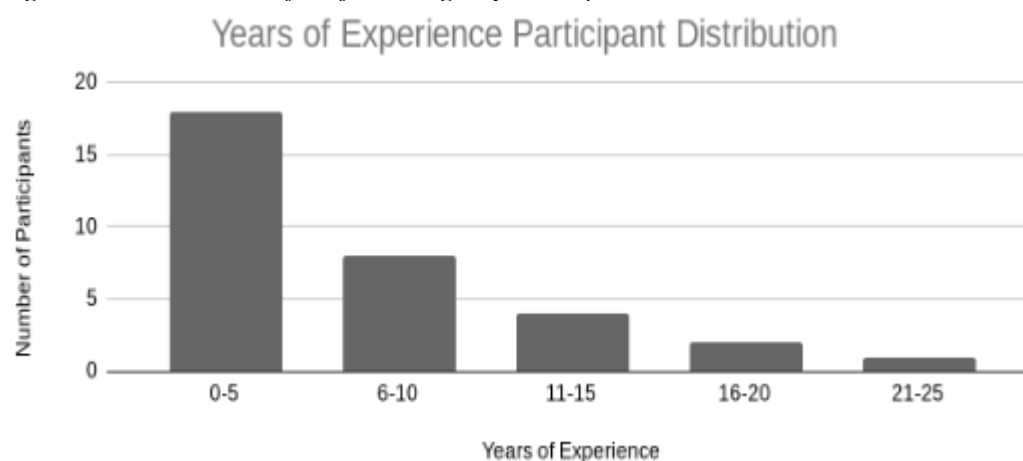
5.1.2 Grade Levels

Grade levels taught. Various responses were noted regarding the grade level the participants taught. Some taught only one, while others taught across a variety of levels. Figure Two provides information concerning the grade levels indicated by the teachers.

Figure 2. Participants Reported Grade Levels
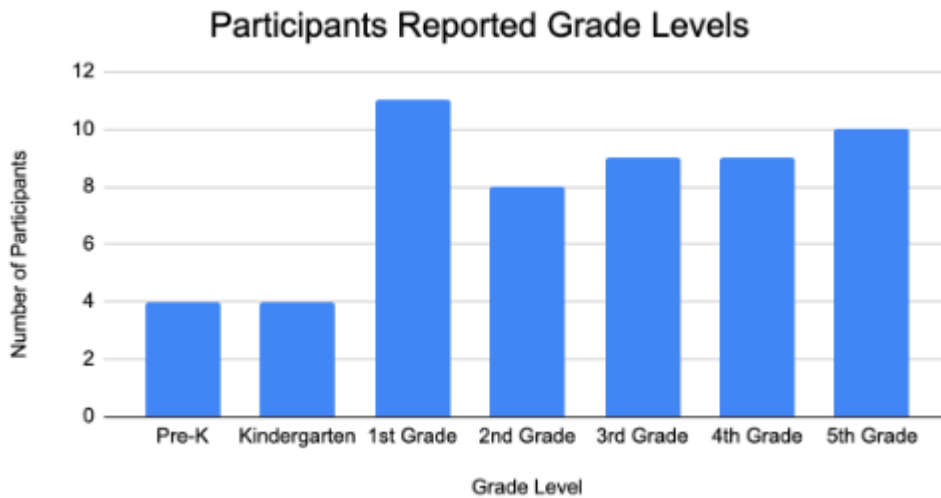
The participants who taught a single grade level were evenly distributed across the grade levels, although more participants were represented in the upper elementary grades. Additionally, six individuals (typically special education inclusion teachers) taught multiple grade levels with no pattern to their instructional assignments.

5.1.3 Subject

Subjects taught. In the last question, participants were asked to select the subjects they taught. The options included reading, writing, science, social studies, and electives/specials. The following chart, Figure Three, illustrates the distribution of participants by subjects taught. Most participants (43%) in this study taught all five subject areas. None taught, only reading, writing, or science. It was assumed that SEL characteristics were included in all these subject areas.

Figure 3. Distribution of Subjects Taught by Participants.
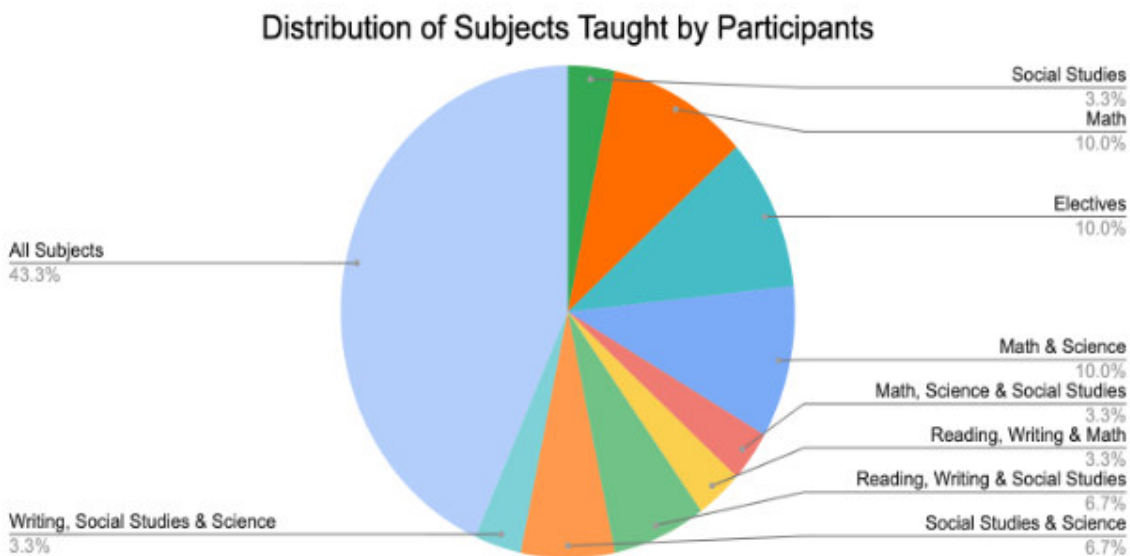
5.2 Survey

Three statements on the survey pertained to self-efficacy levels throughout the survey. The participants used a 5-point Likert-like scale to indicate the rating of their SEL self-efficacy. Participants were asked to rate how strongly they felt about each statement by selecting one of the following: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neutral*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree,* with a five indicating *strongly agree* and one indicating *strongly disagree*.

Participants were asked to rate their confidence levels regarding identifying SEL competencies in the first statement. Twenty participants responded that they either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the statement. Only three people indicated that they *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*. When the category *neutral* was included with negative responses, 27% indicated they were not confident in their ability to identify SEL competencies.

In the second survey statement participants were to rate their feelings regarding their confidence levels in

their ability to use the characteristics of SEL competencies. Six participants *strongly agreed* with the statement and 15 selected *agree* representing 64% of all responses to the statement. While the *neutral* category had six responses, the remaining six participants selected *disagree.* If the neutral category indicated a lack of confidence in their ability to use the characteristics of SEL in their daily classroom experiences, 36% of the teachers reflected their doubts.

The final statement asked participants to rate their confidence levels concerning their ability to teach SEL to their students using a published curriculum. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that they either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they were confident teaching SEL to the students in their classroom using a curriculum. Nine responses were *neutral,* representing an increase from the previous two statements. The open-ended questions provided more insight into the meaning of this response by 28% of the population. The thoughts expressed by the participants appear below. Only two participants, or 6%, felt they needed more confidence using a published curriculum. Figure Four illustrates the participant's responses to the survey statements related to their self-efficacy levels concerning SEL overall.

Figure 4: Reported Efficacy Levels Regarding SEL
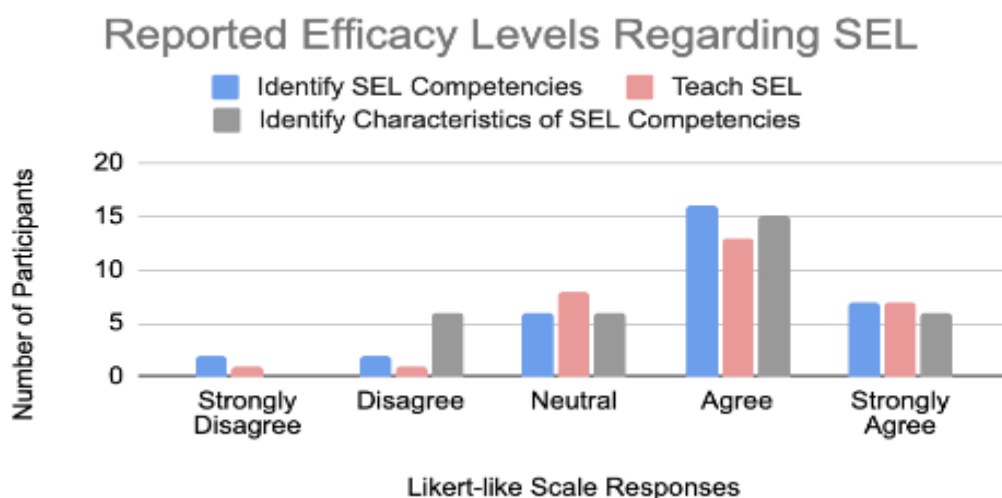
5.3 Open-Ended Responses

5.3.1 Identifying SEL Competencies

Each participant was asked to elaborate on their answer selection using a text box on the online survey. One participant explained that they introduced an SEL initiative to their campus, increasing their confidence in identifying SEL competencies. Another participant indicated that they "taught SEL for ten years" (Participant 12, personal communication, March 28, 2022), giving them high confidence in their SEL knowledge. Participant 26 attributed their confidence level to their district's training, saying, "My school and district really focuses on social-emotional learning and support. We've had training and have specific tools and spaces in our room for social-emotional learning for the kids" (Participant 26, personal communication, March 31, 2022). However, participants who did not rate their confidence as strong stated that they were "still growing in understanding all of the competencies" (Participant 17, personal communication, March 29, 2022). Others explained that the lack of training contributed to their deficiencies in identifying the competencies, saying, "I don't feel like I have had enough training" (Participant 21, personal communication, March 30, 2022).

5.3.2 Utilizing the SEL Characteristics

Participant 24, who reported their efficacy as a *four* on the rating scale, elaborated on their rating and explained that they used SEL characteristics daily to improve their classroom atmosphere and functioning. "I have implemented strategies within my classroom management that I feel make my classroom a successful environment socially and emotionally for most [if] not all of my students" (Participant 24, personal communication, April 1, 2022). For one special education inclusion teacher, confidence levels came from the structure initiated by their department. They used the competencies as an overall framework and applied the specific characteristics to support students individually to improve both socially and academically. "As a special education teacher, we focus first on these competencies to help establish relationships, build bonds, and these are what bridge the gaps between students and their academic growth" (Participant 31, personal communication, April 9, 2022).

5.3.3 Teaching SEL Skills

Many responses appeared when participants elaborated on their confidence levels regarding their ability to teach SEL to students using published curriculums. Some participants explained that their low confidence levels were directly linked to a lack of training, with one participant saying, "I would be better at it with more training and

resources" (Participant 17, personal communication, March 29, 2022). Participant 9 acknowledged their need for continued growth in SEL instruction by saying, "I am confident to help students evolve in their SEL. I also know I have a lot of room for improvement" (Participant 9, personal communication, March 28, 2022). However, other participants reported receiving many training sessions, which made them feel confident in their ability to teach SEL. "My district has also provided training in the summer, such as conscious discipline which are amazing SEL tools for the classroom. In my first four years of teaching in another district, we did not have any SEL support, and I was not taught these skills in college, so I am so thankful I have had training and that it is embedded in my curriculum" (Participant 14, personal communication, March 29, 2022).

5.4 Virtual Interviews
The semi-structured virtual interviews involved a more systematic and detailed discussion with five volunteer participants. Each participant was asked the same set of questions, although some follow-up questions were offered if more explanation was needed. The focus of the questions revolved around the individual's self-efficacy with recognizing the SEL competencies, using the SEL characteristics in their classroom, and teaching an SEL-published curriculum to their students. Participants were encouraged to answer from their perspective, providing the researchers with numerous points of view. Additionally, participants varied in their desire to engage in specific topics from a more detailed perspective, again adding pieces of information to construct the puzzle.

5.4.1 Recognizing the SEL Competencies
As the interviewees discussed their feelings of self-efficacy concerning their ability to recognize the SEL competencies, several individuals pointed to how much preparation they received to recognize them. For example, one individual stated, "We had district-wide training going to all the schools that were going to implement this SEL program… We had our vice principal run the training for SEL… We did roll it out slowly…" (Participant 1, personal communication, April 15, 2022). Participant 1 indicated that this increased her self-efficacy in identifying the SEL competencies.

Interview Participant 5 confided that she had never really known what SEL was nor used it in her classroom. She explained that it had not been a top priority in the district she worked in, "It wasn't something that they really pushed" (Interview Participant 5, personal communication, May 7, 2022). Interview Participant 3 echoed this sentiment when she explained that while she had experience using SEL in the classroom, she did not feel overly competent in recognizing the SEL competencies due to a lack of training throughout the year. She stated, "I know that we had professional development training in August. I wasn't able to go, and there was never a follow-up to that for those who could not attend" (Interview Participant 3, personal communication, April 21, 2022). Interview Participant 5 described her lack of confidence in her competency levels regarding SEL centered around the fact that her campus had little training on SEL to prepare them for implementation. "It was a quick, 'Here is the and this is what you do with it' training. So, there was hardly any training other than a quick conversation about it" (Interview Participant 5, personal communication, May 7, 2022). For these two participants, the lack of additional training opportunities or a cursory presentation in professional development resulted in a lack of desire to learn about SEL competencies.

Interview Participant 4 described a different perspective concerning her self-efficacy in recognizing the SEL competencies. She explained that SEL was not as well known when she started teaching, "There really was no name for it, but, you needed to teach kiddos how to handle life. How to deal with their big feelings and how to deal with their big emotions and how not to blow up on you every 30 seconds" (Interview Participant 4, personal communication, May 3, 2022). As SEL competencies became more explicitly stated in the field of education, Interview Participant 4 indicated that she could quickly identify the competencies and understand their place in classroom organization.

5.4.2 Using the SEL Characteristics
Many interviewees related that they had included SEL characteristics in their classrooms whether they identified them as part of a published SEL curriculum. The participants sometimes indicated it was part of their normal instructional process. Interview Participant 2 informed the researcher that while she used SEL daily in her classroom, she had not always done that, "I've always tried to incorporate social-emotional components but as for a published curriculum or things like that that has not been made available until recent years" (Interview Participant 2, personal communication, April 15, 2022). Other participants stated that they included the SEL characteristics as they became more proficient with multiple professional development sessions. "That was a slow process, but we did have district-wide training before we implemented it, and then they had district-wide training at our content-focused sessions every six weeks" (Interview Participant 1, personal communication, April 15, 2022). The measured program implementation training helped Interview Participant 1 feel more competent in including the SEL characteristics in the classroom.

Feelings of self-efficacy with using the SEL characteristics in the classroom were also impacted by the perception that others in the school had more expertise. Interview Participant 3 explained that although she did

small components (i.e., the characteristics) in the classroom, the counselor at their school primarily took over SEL for their campus when situations arose, "We have the counselor meet with the students because she is more trained in that area than we are" (Interview Participant 3, personal communication, April 21, 2022).

Other participants reported the opposite. They indicated that increased professional development often led to improved self-efficacy with the use of SEL characteristics in the classroom. Interview Participant 3 expressed that since summer, when SEL was first introduced to her campus, she increased her competency over time to the point of incorporating daily affirmations with the students that had become "embedded in our daily routines" (Interview Participant 3, personal communication, April 21, 2022). According to several participants, simple daily practice increased their self-efficacy. Interview Participant 4 stated that she could increase her competency in using SEL characteristics over time through experience, not so much through professional development. "I had my first classroom when I was 20, and I was 20 in '90. I mean I did social-emotional learning with my kids, but I had to. Yeah, but it wasn't called social-emotional learning" (Interview Participant 4, personal communication, May 3, 2022).

5.4.3 Instructing SEL Skills

When questioned about their self-efficacy with implementing SEL through a published curriculum, the interviewees had many different viewpoints. The interviewees explained that the expectations for implementing a published SEL curriculum could have been more consistent. Interview Participant 2 was very open and honest in her feedback about her competency levels regarding SEL. She explained that prior to being expected to implement SEL in her classroom, she was "handed a box and was told to use this in the classroom, and that box is still sitting, dusty, under my desk" (Interview Participant 2, personal communication, April 15, 2022). She reported not attempting to include SEL characteristics or skills in her classroom. When Interview Participant 1 was asked if she had always taught SEL, she stated, "Not always. The last three years I have though" (Interview Participant 1, personal communication, April 15, 2022) as the district had required it.

Participants with fewer years of experience noted that their lack of general knowledge about teaching initially negatively impacted their confidence. Interview Participant 2 described the little training provided to her before she was expected to implement a published curriculum. She recalled that she "tried to use the SEL program, but I didn't truly know what I was doing" (Interview Participant 2, personal communication, April 15, 2022). Over time, P2 received more training, and she reported that her competency levels improved drastically.

"I think now districts are doing a better job of implementing that stuff. When it first started, funds were not there. The resources were allocated towards other areas. I guess at that time, it was not seen as valuable but, now through the pandemic they're putting more resources towards that which I think is good for new teachers, but I think we also need to go back and hit some veteran teachers as well" (Interview Participant 2, personal communication, April 15, 2022).

6. Emerging Themes

Two themes emerged from the triangulated analysis of the three data sets, which included Real-time Professional Development and Guided Practice. While the participants in this study indicated generally positive self-efficacy concerning their ability to identify the SEL competencies, use the SEL characteristics, and teach through a published SEL curriculum, the themes identified in the data are steps could be taken to improve their confidence. Many of the participants mentioned professional development. Several recognized that in addition to engaging in the training, having an easily accessible person with SEL expertise to guide them in their everyday classroom SEL experiences would significantly impact their self-assurance. Additionally, the participants often discussed the need for direction after the professional development. In this section, the themes will be presented.

6.1. Real-time Professional Development

Notably, 79% of the participants had been teaching for less than ten years. Many participants reported that their only SEL preparation came in the form of professional development presented in isolation without any follow-up as they performed in the classroom. They noted a glaring absence of SEL training in programs in their original teacher preparation program. Participant 23 stated that the only thing close to SEL training was "a behavior management class, but even that [did not] train" (Participant 23, personal communication, March 30, 2022). Other participants agreed that they were given some support through their teacher preparation program, but it was not specific to SEL. "It was embedded but not elaborated" (Participant 18, March 29, 2022). Participant 15 agreed with Participant 18 and said their program did not go into detail regarding SEL (Participant 15, personal communication, March 29, 2022). While some participants received behavior management courses that could help them with SEL, others did not. "To be honest, I did not learn enough before becoming a teacher or during student teaching" (Participant 17, personal communication, March 29, 2022). One participant mentioned that "…it's a really important topic that should be used in schools, but if teachers don't have the proper training for it, then it's not going to be implemented correctly" (Interview Participant 5, personal communication May 7, 2022).

These participants readily agreed that for teachers who had yet to learn about or experience teaching SEL in their preservice coursework, professional development must move beyond the typical single-session seminar style. In-service training must include a real-time component in which the instructional methods are readily presented, providing teachers the opportunity to engage in SEL instruction with support. According to the participants, active learning was critical for the teachers to increase their confidence. "I think they should start with training teachers how to do social, emotional skills first before we can expect them to teach students what they need to know" (Interview Participant 4, personal communication, May 3, 2022). This training must include experiential activities beyond learning the SEL competency terms to specific training using the SEL characteristics and published curriculum.

6.2. Guided Practice

Some participants equated their ability to use SEL in the classroom to their professional experiences rather than prior training. Participant 20 said, "I've been in education for 13 years as a para and now a teacher. I've experienced a lot in that time" (Participant 20, personal communication, March 30, 2022). Another participant stated, "I have taught a variety of students over the years and feel I have much experience in learning students, their behaviors, and their needs in the classroom" (Participant 24, personal communication, March 30, 2022). One participant acknowledged that they were inexperienced with published SEL curriculums; however, becoming aware of SEL and its competencies helped them more easily implement it in the classroom. "I was inexperienced, but knowledge of the content allowed me to have some tools to help" (Participant 11, personal communication, March 28, 2022).

Another interview participant stated that she had not been very well trained on SEL but had been able to use her professional judgment in SEL lessons, "I use my professional discretion based on the individual students needs as much as I'm able to" (Interview Participant 2, personal communication, April 15, 2022). She also acknowledged that her experience "has allowed her to do this" (Interview Participant 2, personal communication, April 15, 2022). The participants indicated that becoming proficient at using the SEL characteristics and teaching from a published SEL curriculum required opportunities for guided practice with an experienced coach.

7. Discussion

The results of this study supported the conclusion that SEL self-efficacy varies among in-service teachers. Many participants expressed confidence in their ability to identify SEL competencies. Some felt confident about using the characteristics of each competency in their classrooms. Others indicated they did not begin with high levels of SEL knowledge but rather gained the knowledge through experiential training, professional development, and teaching a SEL-published curriculum to their students. Although this can be beneficial, high quality SEL implementation has been linked to improved teacher SEL knowledge in prior literature (Alsalamah, 2023; Schonet-Reichel et al., 2015)

Many teachers perceive that the more experience they have with SEL, the more they understand it and the better they are at implementing the strategies in their classroom (Dusenbury, 2015). The participants in this study support this concept. However, they quickly noted that teachers need to become proficient immediately. Active-learning professional development spaced over time was described as an effective model for increasing self-efficacy with SEL instruction. Hands-on experience with SEL competencies, characteristics, and SEL curriculum ensures opportunities to practice. "The most effective lessons provide explicit instruction and promote generalization by including opportunities for practicing skills beyond the lesson and throughout the day, or through connections during academic lessons" (Dusenbury, 2015). The participants indicated that opportunities to practice skills and strategies with an experienced individual allowed them to gain experience in SEL implementation.

8. Limitations

What does active learning professional development for SEL implementation look like? Powerschool. com presents five key elements that were also identified by the participants in this study (www. powerschool. com retrieved April 22, 2023). The five include 1) work-embedded collaboration, 2) modeling best practices, 3) providing coaching and support, 4) incorporating feedback and reflective practice, and 5) delivering in smaller portions of professional development over time. Each of these approaches creates meaningful SEL professional development as it supports the teacher with implementation, potentially resulting in increased student achievement.

8.1. Providing for Work-Embedded Collaboration

Using a variety of professional development opportunities is a sensible method for entwining action orientation training and guided practice. Supporting teachers in co-teaching SEL instruction allows educators to learn from each other while providing quality SEL experiences for students. Additionally, peer observation professional

development allows the observer to reflect on the strategies they see in another's SEL lesson and include them in their next SEL session.

8.2 Modeling Best Practices
Active learning professional development should move beyond simply informing teachers about SEL to engaging them in actual strategies during the session. The study participants agreed that exposure to SEL without seeing it in practice seldom supported their growth and confidence. They reported that participating in SEL activities and working with others to plan, practice, and implement lessons expanded their understanding and desire to provide quality SEL instruction. Interview Participant 1 declared that she had seen incredible things from using SEL on her campus and could see SEL working with all kids. "I think any student would benefit from the SEL program we use within our campuses" (Participant, personal communication, April 15, 2022).

8.3. Coaching and Support
Professional development in various places over time has been proven to help educators become more proficient and confident in SEL instruction. Using a coach who provides feedback to improve practice without coming in and taking over the SEL instructional duties helps teachers increase their confidence. Coaching removes the sting of evaluation while enabling the individual to examine areas for growth and become better at SEL instruction. Study participants often described how having another teacher to interact with helped to increase their self-efficacy in SEL programming.

8.4. Incorporating Feedback and Reflective Practice
The participants of this study agreed that feedback concerning their SEL instruction was a positive influence in increasing their self-efficacy. Beyond simply receiving feedback, however, it was critical to have the time to truly consider what the feedback meant and where they were trying to go with the students in their classroom.

8.5. Providing Professional Development Across Time
When professional development is delivered over time, the participants feel they can add to their mastery rather than feel overwhelmed. They expressed that providing professional development that presented smaller segments that could be implemented "the next day" allowed them to feel in control. A one-time professional development overview of a published SEL curriculum often resulted in avoidance.

9. Summary
SEL has increased in the public-school curriculum over the past decades and is now included in many schools throughout the United States. Unfortunately, the rise in implementation has left many teachers unprepared to teach SEL to students. This study used a collective case study design to gather information from current elementary classroom teachers. Survey responses, open-ended responses, and semi-structured interview data were analyzed and triangulated to identify the emerging themes. These themes consisted of needing 1) Real-time Professional Development and 2) Guided Practice. Data analysis indicated that teachers expressed confidence in their ability to teach SEL; however, the data also showed that teachers thought they needed to receive more training. The participants denoted that teacher needed modeling, more extensive, in-depth training, and experience with SEL content for teachers to become competent in SEL. These results supported prior research indicating the need for more SEL training. Recommendations were made concerning moving to active-learning professional development to increase teacher self-efficacy concerning SEL instruction. To build on this research, additional studies could be conducted that investigate the effectiveness of including SEL in a teacher preparation coursework. By analyzing pre/post assessment scores regarding SEL implementation, the significance of including SEL instruction for pre-service teachers could be determined. Finally, a research study could be conducted which focused on pre-service teachers' implementation of SEL strategies in field placements with and without strong SEL mentor teachers.

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