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Humanizing English Language Arts Content Using a Social-Emotional Learning Approach

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This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Marisol Thayre as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

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Abstract

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In light of an increased focus on the importance of soft skills to academic achievement and success later in life, educators are looking towards social-emotional learning (SEL) as a means for addressing the diverse needs of students. This qualitative study was aimed at understanding how secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers use literary texts in their classrooms to enhance social-emotional learning, specifically, their training, text selection processes, and methods for articulating and assessing ELA and SEL outcomes. A multiple-case study design featuring semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and content analysis of curricular materials was used to develop a robust understanding of the processes, resources, and motivations of three SEL-minded secondary English teachers. The results revealed that the participants had similar reasons and motivations for infusing their content curriculum with SEL, but had little formal training or resources to draw from. The participants relied on their knowledge of and relationships with their students to select appropriate texts for instruction and reported relevance and perspective-taking as major influences on the texts they chose to feature in their classrooms. While the participants could clearly identify and assess their students' success with ELA outcomes, they did not have a shared definition of what SEL was, nor were there clear outcomes and methods for assessing growth in social-emotional skills. The study results indicate a need for purposeful training in the use of SEL in the content classroom, which may include a shared and consistent SEL model and accompanying standards across schools or

districts, as well as an established tool for measuring SEL outcomes. Additionally, this study highlights the importance of leveraging student-teacher relationships in creating student-centered *and* standards-based curriculum that addresses the needs of the whole child.

Dedication

In memory of my father, who showed me that books could be better than toys.

To my mother, for being the first teacher in my life.

And for my husband Erik, who continues to teach me what it means to be steadfast.

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Chapter 1: Background of Study

Introduction

In schools across America, many aspects of the English Language Arts curriculum look much like they did 20 years ago, when I was a young high school student. Authors like John Steinbeck, Robert Frost, and William Shakespeare hold court on the Common Core State Standards reading list (Boyd, 2013) and teachers still implement now-traditional approaches to literature instruction. Typical approaches to secondary English pedagogy are student-centered instruction like Reader Response (Rosenblatt, 1978), which relies on personal interpretations and connections to the reading as a catalyst for discussion and analysis, and more text-centered lessons grounded in New Criticism, which present literature as an artifact with inherent meaning and an opportunity to learn literary terms, skills, and "taste" in "great books" (Applebee, 1993, p. 119). The transition to the Common Core State Standards in 2010 resulted in a renewed focus on text-centered instruction and reading skills (Shanahan & Duffett, 2013), possibly due in part to an increased emphasis on using grade level to determine text complexity, not reading level (Griffith & Duffett, 2018). Literature and literature instruction grounded in student-centered methods seem to have taken a back seat to informational and literary nonfiction works and text-centric methods of teaching literature (Applebee, 1993).

Though the reading lists and two-pronged teaching strategies mentioned above may be familiar to me, the day to day "life conditions" (Greenburg et al., 2017) of high school students today differ drastically from mine. Adolescents undergo significant changes in their cognitive, academic and creative abilities during the teenage years and must often reimagine their shifting roles in relationships and social groups (Crone, 2012). This time of pronounced change is

further complicated by significant changes to social, cultural, and political contexts that surround teenagers today. Current populations of students are more diverse, use more media, and report higher levels of stress and anxiety than past generations (Ellis & Dumas, 2020; Fegert et al., 2020; Twenge, 2017). Generation "Z" is the least likely to report "excellent to good" mental health of any other age group, and in 2018 "teens reported worse mental health and higher levels of anxiety and depression than all other age groups" (American Psychological Association, p.4).

Statement of the Problem

The racially, economically, and culturally diverse population of American students and the vastly different life experiences they bring require that the institutions that serve them address and develop crucial life skills beyond just academic competence (Durlak et al., 2011). It is no longer enough for English Language Arts (ELA) educators to teach reading and writing–they increasingly report assisting their students with mental and emotional dilemmas that are beyond the scope of what is traditionally provided through teacher training programs and professional developments (Martinez, 2016; Shlemy et al., 2019). What's more, adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and social conflicts are often linked to immediate negative effects like increased dropout rates (Veronique et al., 2018; French & Conrad, 2001) as well as delayed ones like poorer health, higher rates of incarceration, and an overall decrease in reported life satisfaction (Durlak et al., 2011). These detrimental outcomes only increase for at-risk populations who experience more violence, poverty, and resulting behavioral instability, which has been linked to poorer academic outcomes and difficulties with social relationships (French & Conrad, 2001; Durlak et al., 2011). As more and more students, teachers, and families report increased levels of stress (Son et al., 2020) and educational researchers note significant learning losses, especially in student groups already affected by the achievement gap, due to extended

time out of school and subpar virtual instruction during the Covid-19 school shutdowns (Dorn et al., 2020,) it is clear that a solution to the already-existing crisis needs to include efforts to reach and teach students in regards to their social and emotional skills. Given these current realities, there is universal concern that secondary schools in the United States are not sufficiently addressing all of the needs of their students, especially the most vulnerable ones.

Despite these critical emotional needs, there is a dearth of curriculum in the United States that focuses on social-emotional competencies and skills in the form of official standards; in fact, only 27 of 50 states have stand-alone standards outlining and identifying "soft skills" for deliberate instruction and educators report very little infrastructure in their sites to support full implementation (Wallace, 2018; CASEL, 2022; Reed & Sheridan 2021). This is despite the promising evidence that incorporating instruction that focuses on developing social-emotional competence in students may help mitigate the poor outcomes outlined above; participation in programs that target SEL have been linked to better life outcomes for all students independent of race, socioeconomic status, and geographic location, like graduating from high school, lower participation in risky sexual behaviors, and reduced likelihood of incarceration (Taylor et al., 2017; Gabrieli et al., 2015). In addition to the positive "life" effects, supporting the social-emotional development of students has been linked to higher academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011; Rutledge et al., 2015) and better problem solving and improved attendance and behavior (Zins & Elias, 2003).

Social-emotional learning and competence requires an individual to acquire information about their surroundings, self, and develop skills for self-reflection, managing relationships, and healthy decision-making (Rivers & Brackett, 2010; Gabrieli et al., 2015). The goals of SEL education dovetail easily with English Language Arts curriculum and its focus on using language

to acquire knowledge, communicate one's thinking, manage communication with others, and respond to a variety of perspectives through texts (Rivers and Bracket, 2010; *English Language Arts Standards)*. Still, while literature represents 30-50% of all curriculum (*NAEP,* 2017) designated to be taught in secondary classrooms (Young, 2013), there is limited understanding of the impact of literature on social-emotional competence in adolescents, even though there is evidence of success in SEL programs integrated into ELA portions of elementary school classrooms (Zins, 2004; Rivers et al., 2012; Hagelskamp et al., 2013; Reyes, et al., 2012; Cipriano et al., 2019; Jones, et al., 2021). It is clear that a greater emphasis should be placed on the significance of social-emotional learning (SEL) and its place in the daily curriculum of secondary English Language Arts classrooms since there is compelling evidence that these skills contribute to academic achievement and success later in life (Goleman, 1995).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Given the amount of time spent in English Language Arts classes and the proven positive effects of SEL curriculum programs (Hawkins et al., 2008), this study aims to develop an understanding of how teachers use literature in secondary school ELA curriculum in order to impact student success in academics as well as in crucial "life skills" that will influence students' lives long after they graduate (Turner & Felisberti, 2018). This study is important for several reasons. First, SEL has become an increasingly important issue when considering how to best educate the 21st century student; there is compelling evidence to suggest that effective implementation of SEL programs can help lower delinquency and high school drop-out rates, which are linked to health, economic success, and personal satisfaction (Heckman et al., 2014). Second, while students of all ages are exposed to and taught with literature, there is little specific research exploring how this exposure impacts the emotional development of children and

adolescents. Finally, studying models of teachers who create concrete relationships between reading literature and increased empathy and "prosocial skills" would provide an avenue through which a larger population of secondary educators can incorporate SEL skills into traditional standards-based curriculum (Turner & Felisberti, 2018).

Research Questions

This dissertation will present a multi-case study aimed at identifying and understanding the methods of teachers who deliberately integrate SEL skills into their secondary English Language Arts lessons. The driving question underpinning this study is: *How do secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers use literature to enhance and develop social-emotional learning (SEL) in their adolescent students?* More specifically, this question addresses the following subquestions:

1. What training or preparation do teachers receive in order to integrate SEL practices into their standards-based English curriculum?
2. How do teachers select the literature they use in their curriculum?
3. How do teachers define and measure their success in using literature to address SEL in their students?

The study will be contextualized through a discussion of current educational challenges significant to secondary ELA classrooms and situated within a conceptual model using Louise Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory (1938, 1978) and Gloria Ladson-Billings' Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (1996). After reviewing major ideas regarding the definition, impact and role of reading works defined as literature, I will consider the concept, definition, and importance of Social-emotional learning as it is currently understood and suggest that a better understanding of how SEL and ELA work together can address current gaps in how teachers address the needs

of their students. The study design, including sampling and recruitment methods, observation tools and protocols, and data analysis will be presented and justified. In Chapters 4 and 5 I will present the findings of the study and discuss their implications in relationship to theory, practice, and further research. Finally, I will discuss assumptions and potential limitations.

Context of the Study: Challenges in American Education

In the 2021-2022 school year, 49.5 million students were enrolled in K-12 public schools, 15.4 million of which were secondary (6-12) students (U.S. Department of Education). Attainment gaps related to race persist in the United States, though they have narrowed in more recent years in regards to high school graduation and college attendance (de Brey et al., 2019). Despite this progress, disparities continue to plague the system due in part to poverty rates, access to early childhood education, and public school quality (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). This educational inequality gives root to broader inequality in jobs, political participation, agency, and, ultimately, quality of life.

On a global scale, the United States, despite its standing as a worldwide economic and military power, lags behind our international peers in spite of comparatively higher spending per pupil on primary and secondary students than the average in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (DeVos, 2017; OECD, 2012). Even with this economic investment in our students, our 2018 PISA scores have seen no significant increase overall (OECD 2018 PISA Results, 2019), indicating that a shift in focus is necessary, especially given the fact that our PISA results also reveal a gap in achievement based on race and socioeconomic status, with high poverty schools scoring almost 50 points lower on both reading and math than those with the lowest levels of poverty (OECD 2018 PISA Results, 2018).

The most effective teachers and schools adapt to the needs of their students, and these needs are increasingly expanding beyond just the achievement gap. With the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic projected to widen already devastating achievement gas (Dorn, et al., 2020), and rising levels of stress reported by students and families alike (Son et al., 2020), it is imperative to find avenues for teaching students beyond what is in the academic standards. There is no formal SEL curriculum offered consistently across the country and states have widely varying expectations in regards to social-emotional learning. Currently, only 15 of 50 states require schools and teachers to address social-emotional learning (CASEL, 2023) and all but six states out of 50 are categorized by The Education Trust, as being "partially supportive" to "least supportive" in offering teachers professional development in social-emotional learning and practices (Duchesneau, 2020). Thus, it is important to explore ways to integrate SEL instruction into existing curriculum.

Theoretical Framework

Transactional Theory (Reader Response):

Louise Rosenblatt's (1938, 1978) Reader Response theory positions students as an integral part of the meaning-making process when reading literature. When a person reads a text, they bring with them their unique experiences and thoughts which may shape the way they interpret and find meaning. The teacher does not impose their view or knowledge about the text and instead lets students grapple with it and use their own critical thinking to engage with the reading (Woodruff & Griffin, 2017).

In this instructional framework, the students become critical purveyors and creators of knowledge as they align what they are reading to their own lives and beliefs; using the self as a

filter through which to interpret and interact with the text can result in a greater sense of investment in the reading process and validate the experiences our students bring to the classroom. Woodruff and Griffin (2017) point out that "using relatable texts prevents students from feeling isolated from such texts and instead encourages them to see how they themselves fit within the story's plot" (p. 112). Using what Rosenblatt (1968) calls "aesthetic reading," students immerse themselves in a fictional world and use their various perspectives to interpret the text. While multiple readings are possible in Reader Response theory, students still need to justify their thinking with evidence and discussion of the formal elements of the text. I will argue that Reader Response theory presents an opportunity to reimagine how teachers select and use texts as a means for inclusive and engaging classrooms for a variety of settings and students.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Originally established through Gloria Ladson-Billings' research on highly effective teachers of African American children (1996), the model for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is centered on student learning and long-term academic success rather than test-driven measures of achievement. Culturally competent teachers share the belief that students' cultures and experiences are critical to the learning constructed in the classroom. They draw upon the funds of knowledge–or life experiences and competencies students have developed within their cultural communities (Gonzalez, et al, 2005)– within the room as teaching tools. Through their instructional practices and curricular choices, they emphasize the importance of relationships within the learning community, as well as the need to master skills (both soft and hard) in order to navigate oppressive systems. Knowledge is created in organic and fluid ways, and a teacher's pedagogical approach is not static–the only constant is the belief that all students can be successful, which the instruction and curriculum is designed to enhance. One significant quality

of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is a teacher's knowledge of their students; through her understanding of who her students are academically, culturally, and emotionally, she can design rigorous and meaningful instruction that incorporates "home and community cultures" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 466).

Another crucial element of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is the emphasis on excellence and academic rigor; while the teachers Ladson-Billings observed in her seminal study on teachers deemed "outstanding" by their parent and school communities approached their instructional practices with a consistent focus on students' home cultures, "each of the teachers felt that helping students become academically successful was one of their primary responsibilities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 475). Finally, culturally competent teachers carefully orchestrate their classroom community in such a way that students work collaboratively and develop "equitable and reciprocal" (Ladson-Billings, 2015 p. 480) relationships with their teachers and each other.

Since Ladson's seminal work on Culturally Responsive pedagogy, the framework has been adapted by Geneva Gay (2000) to include–in addition to Ladson-Billings' three domains of academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness–six dimensions of culturally responsive teaching. According to Gay (2000), a culturally responsive educator sets high expectations of her students; uses various, multidimensional knowledge inputs; validates home cultures in the classroom; teaches "the whole child," by addressing cultural, emotional, and academic needs equally; empowers students through deliberately structured teaching moments, and is transformative and emancipatory.

Paris and Alim (2014) have further refined Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, presenting a model of culturally *sustaining* pedagogy, which focuses on "sustaining [linguistic, literate, and

cultural] pluralism through education to challenges of social justice and change" (p. 88). Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy proposes a tighter focus not only recognizing the cultural assets students bring to the classroom, but on using education as a means to develop and sustain these assets as students develop into members of a larger social community.

The conceptual model below (*Figure 1)*, which is an adapted version of Lloyd Bitzer's 1968 model of the rhetorical situation, highlights the key influences in an SEL-centered English Language Arts classroom. In the original version of the rhetorical situation, the points of the triangle represent the subject, writer, and reader; the triangle itself is the text authored by the writer for their reader. The circle represents the context(s) surrounding the situation in which the text is written and read and includes social, historical, and political factors. Bitzer's model, which is ubiquitous in most ELA classrooms, is a helpful schema through which to see how the class outcomes of an SEL-centered classroom become the teacher's "text" rather than a tangible argument; the "writer" is the teacher and their students the audience, and the actual texts used in the classroom are tools rather than the focus of the instruction itself. The context still includes socio-political and historical influences, but there is interplay between the different parts of the actors in the model (teacher, student, text) that are not present in Bitzer's iteration. In this version, we see the interaction between teacher, students, and text being informed by social, cultural, personal, and historical contexts and the relationships between the individuals in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995); in addition to this understanding of this students, the teachers' content knowledge, training and development of classroom experiences also informs text choice and how students may interact with texts. True to Rosenblatt's theory (1968), an SEL-minded teacher will create opportunities for students to engage with texts on multiple levels–both personal and academic–in order to create intellectual and emotional understanding.

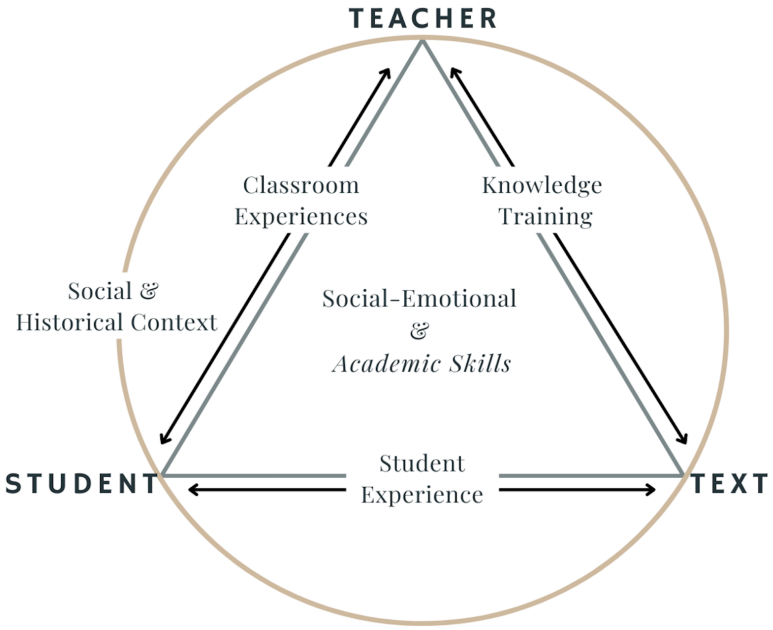


Figure 1: Centering SEL in the ELA classroom experience

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, *literature* will be defined as a fictional text that exhibits a unique or unexpected style different from common speech, defamiliarizes the reader or requires them to make inferences or "deep psychological processing of author's intentions and character's subjective experiences" (Demulder et. al, 2017), and has potential to transform the personal views or beliefs of the reader due to this defamiliarization (Miall and Kuiken, 1999). In other words, literature is defined here as a complex text designed to induce psychological exertion.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) encompasses a wide range of attributes related to "intrapersonal and interpersonal noncognitive skills" (Gabrieli et. al., 2015, p. v). For the

purposes of this study, it will be defined as "self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making" (Durlak et al.,2011, p. 400).

Summary

The following chapters will present and discuss the different components of this study on how ELA teachers integrate SEL competencies through their use of literature. Chapter Two will provide a literature review that considers the fundamental aspects of what makes a text literature, its potential impact on SEL skills, and the factors influencing how it has been used in American classrooms from past to present; in addition, a brief background of SEL as a field will be introduced, as well as a discussion of the benefits of SEL programs in response to current educational issues. Finally, the literature review will explore how ELA and SEL have been leveraged to impact students and identify gaps in our current understanding of how these practices can apply to adolescent learners and their ELA teachers. Chapter Three outlines methodology and procedures used for this study and will briefly present the three cases that will be described in detail in Chapters Four and Five. The findings of the study will be presented case-by-case in Chapter Four and a cross-case analysis will provide a transition into Chapter Five, which will discuss the findings in the context of current and future research. Finally, the study will conclude with recommendations for practice and further research and a brief discussion of limitations.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

What is Literature, exactly?

As someone who has studied literature for the better part of her schooling, I am loath to admit that I have never delved *that* deeply into what differentiates literature from other types of fiction. What makes a popular fiction book like *The Da Vinci Code* different from, say, *The Scarlet Letter*? Researchers interested in this topic have outlined different criteria for determining what makes literature so unique. Some of the classic features of literature relevant to this study are the presence of a distinct *style* (Kidd & Castano, 2018; Mulder et al., 2017), the effects of *defamiliarization* on the reader (Fialho, 2007; Miall & Kuiken, 1999), and *transportation* into the story mentally and emotionally (Johnson, 2012; Mar & Oatley, 2008).

Multiple experiments involved in defining literature have focused on the presence of an authorial style that requires readers to confront aspects of the text that are unfamiliar to them, particularly in the use of language (Miall & Kuiken, 1999). Literature sets itself apart from other forms of writing in how it deviates from "normal" language usage; this can be through an author's style and treatment of language and is called *foregrounding* (Leech & Short, 2007). Foregrounding is a crucial component of what makes a text "literary" and has been described as a "violation of rules and conventions" (Childs & Fowler, 2006, p. 90) which allow a writer to transcend beyond the restrictions of "normal" speaking language and engage the reader in the interactive process of negotiating meaning in a purposefully ambiguous text (van Peer & Hakemulder, 2006).

Foregrounding aids in the process of *defamiliarization*, which requires a reader to interpret common people, things, and situations presented in unexpected or uncommon ways in a text (Shklovskij, 1917/2004). The "mental workout" (Kidd & Castano, 2018, p. 604) required of

readers to fill in gaps between what is obvious and what is implied in a piece of literature results in a very different reading experience than reading a news article or even a popular fiction book on the very same topic (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Kidd & Castano, 2018). This process of refamiliarizing the unfamiliar is a unique aspect of literature and part of how it draws upon physical and psychological processes in ways that other texts do not. Due to the nature of language and how it is processed in the brain, a reader will experience comprehension first on the word level; the subsequent associations with the word will activate relationships with other words, events, and perspectives (Dehaene, 2009). The reader will experience the text from the temporal and spatial constraints within text and vicariously live the text. This is what is referred to as transportation, a crucial aspect in studies exploring literature exposure and empathy (Zwaan, 2003).

Transportation, or the act of becoming immersed in a story, has been framed as a unique aspect of literature that is not present in other forms of text (Bruner, 1986). When reading a fictional text defined as literature, readers have the potential to lose all sense of time and space and become totally absorbed in the experience (Gerrig, 1993). Because fiction presents a version of the real world, readers can engage with characters and plot lines more readily, but then are also drawn in to do the heavy lifting of reading by interpreting and refamiliarizing the fictional worlds they encounter, wrestling with difficult or ambiguous prose (foregrounding), and connecting these fictional experiences with the real-life experiences of the reader (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013).

While other types of texts may also represent real life (such as nonfiction and informational texts) situations a reader can relate with, Bruner (1986) argues that their aims differ from that of narrative. He explains, and Bal and Veltkamp's 2013 study reinforces, that

while nonfiction aims to communicate empirical "truth" as best it can (Bruner calls this universal truth), fictional narratives capture scenario-specific truths through created worlds that are believable to the reader. The connection of a reader, then, to a piece of literature is its ability to move, or transport, the reader into a parallel world, where they can interact with, question, and empathize with characters and situations much like they might do in the real world.

The most effective texts tend to be more ambiguous, thus requiring readers to process the author's intentions and take on the perspectives of others in order to understand character motivations and actions. The psychological burden put on readers of fiction can be absent when reading non-literary texts, as often the purpose of this type of writing is to be predictable, easily read, and clearly understood. This meaningful transportation is not possible with all forms of fiction either, since popular fiction tends to provide clear answers on the outset, limiting these gaps and making it easier to read (Mulder et al., 2017), however more investigation is needed in how specifically different genres interact with the currently established criteria for literature.

Use of Literature in the Curriculum

Secondary education in the United States has far-reaching roots in Greek and Roman traditions; curriculum aimed at practice and application–voluntary, and learned in schools and practiced with teachers in preparation for life as public servants or orators (Cubberley, 1920)--was spread widely as the Roman empire dominated the world. The reformation of schools after the Dark and Middle Ages saw a system still deeply rooted in Greek pedagogy, but slowly separating from the church to become nationalized (Cubberley, 1920). In the New World, this tradition continued; schools open to all were established with the goals of educating a democratic society while providing curriculum and instruction based on the population and individual needs

of each area (Cubberley, 1920). The goals of primary education were aimed at developing literacy, while further education at the secondary level focused on "cultural" education, though typically university education was offered only to elite members of society (Cubberley, 1920).

High schools in early America differed in purpose and focus; *Latin Grammar Schools* taught literature in Greek and Latin with an emphasis on classical education (Cubberley, 1920) while other schools like Benjamin Franklin's academies (Franklin, 1749) expanded this focus to life skills and civic responsibility, giving exclusive priority to the English language, emphasizing "good reading" and "proper speaking" (Franklin, 1751), as well as suggestions for an emerging canon based on "Classicks" like "*Tillotson*, *Addison*, *Pope*, *Algernoon Sidney*, *Cato's* Letters" (p. 14).

Though Franklin's academies introduced reading literature as an activity with intrinsic value, much of the purposes of teaching reading in early colonial America were practical and focused on building a cohesive culture and sense of national pride--popular textbooks like *The New England Primer* or Noah Webster's *Blue Backed Speller*, were vehicles for teaching larger ideas like ethics and morality, and later on, nationalistic sentiments (Applebee, 1974). The literary value of the writing itself was not a main consideration, and the writing was often short and basic. William Holmes McGuffey's readers provided the first true materials for reading instruction that emphasized the value of reading text, focusing lessons on the reading process (like "articulation" or "accent") using short passages (Applebee, 1974).

The Civil War disrupted the educational momentum of the 1700's, but by its close, Americans, fueled with a renewed purpose for educating the masses to preserve a democratic society, began to lay the foundation for a system of education that interested itself with the people (which included shifting instruction to the English vernacular) rather than the classical

traditions of Greek and Roman schooling of the 1700's and 1800s (Cubberley, 1920). It was not until the late 1800's that the subject of English as we know it emerged, though it was met with multiple impediments due to the common belief at the time that main aim of education was to strengthen the mind in the areas of reason and knowledge retention--a subject's importance was gauged by its ability to stimulate and promote mental discipline, which the study of classical languages offered (Applebee, 1974). Studying grammar, too, was seen as a valuable enterprise for developing young minds, and made the transition from teaching a classical language to "correcting a native one" a centerpiece of American education between 1750-1800, leading to "the competence in any aspect of the vernacular" as a requirement "for entrance to any college in America" (Applebee, 1974, p. 8).

The structure and mental rigor of grammatical study gave way to the legitimization and popularization of rhetoric and oratory studies. While many of the texts in this vein were from the classical tradition, English and French writers began to emerge as the "best Writers" Franklin (1749) referenced in his "Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania," and many, like Pope, Milton, Shakespeare, and Swift remain cornerstones of the traditional English canon we see today (Applebee, 1974). Still, the prescriptive approach of grammatical and rhetorical study of texts dominated the burgeoning field, kept attention narrowly focused on expressive and stylistic merits of a piece of literature rather than its function as a cultural or individual experience. Applebee (1974) notes that the only arena in which literature was read for reasons beyond critical analysis and composition instruction in the mid to late 1800s was in so-called "literary and debate societies" in colleges, where students could freely discuss and explore ideas related to their extracurricular readings; Applebee emphasizes that colleges still did not see English as a subject that merited formal study of its own, however (p. 23).

The Romantic era in the United States offered a new look at literature as a means through which to develop young scholars individually, but also establish a cultural tradition of a nation. If the curriculum used in early American education was a vehicle through which to obtain lessons on ethics, morals, reason and logic, the 19th century offered the study of literature as "a body of knowledge and tradition to be consciously valued and consciously studied" (Applebee, 1974, p. 23). Mathew Arnold's ideas on culture development as a primary goal for public education as a way to preserve and strengthen society paved the way for literature to be seen as a tool for upholding and transmitting values and establishing an American literary tradition (Culler, 1961).

By 1848, William James Rolfe was recognized as the first teacher to offer consistent instruction in literature to high school students, framing his approach with classical methods of instruction, like beginning with background knowledge, exploring and defining unknown vocabulary, explaining allusions, and culminating in writing from models (Applebee, 1974). While this approach to literary instruction was still highly prescriptive and composition-focused, it presented literature as a legitimate field of study and worthy of a place in the American education system.

In addition to Rolfe's work, Harvard University's 1873-1874 entrance requirements, which required that

> Each candidate will be required to write a short English composition, correct in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and expression, the subject to be taken from such works of standard authors as shall be announced from time to time. The subject for 1874 will be taken from the following works: Shakespeare's Tempest, Julius Caesar, and Merchant of Venice; Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield; Scott's Ivanhoe, and Lay of the Last Minstrel.

presented a powerful indicator the study of literature was officially a mainstay in the high school curriculum of the United States. While Applebee (1974) notes that these requirements, which were quickly adopted by major universities across the country, were measuring composition

skills–not literary knowledge–they sparked a frantic push for a standardized list of titles that would appear on college entrance exams. Two lists were created–one for "deep" and one for "wide" study (Applebee, 1974, p. 42). Yale would eventually delineate a required list focused on the study of literature alone–not for teaching Composition. Independent of the diverging ideologies on the way literary texts *should* be used, the works identified still skewed traditional on the literary spectrum, despite increasing belief that teachers should choose texts that children would "find both manageable and interesting" (Applebee, p. 56, 1974). However, even early American teachers were encouraged to adapt material to "closely [fit] the minds and hearts of the children" (Hall, 1886) and the canon evolved to include mythology and legends due to their close alignment to the coming of age many adolescents experienced, recommended by G. Stanley Hall, a prominent American psychologist and first president of the American Psychological Association (Hall, 1904).

Hall's ideas pioneered the focus on the content and morals of a work more than its structural components, which would shift the focus of teaching literature from analysis to enjoyment (Applebee, 1974). This new direction through which to present and interpret works through the lens of the personal resulted in more emphasis on contemporary writings like magazines and newspapers; Applebee notes that the pendulum swing inevitably returned the other way, with secondary teachers agreeing that "in the end, the classic texts were most important" (p. 70, 1974) and that contemporary texts were useful in their connection to and support of more "literary" texts. The Modern Language Association, (MLA) established in 1884, further championed the "advancement of study of Modern Languages and their Literature" (Cook, p. xx, 1884) but maintained a focus on the importance of studying "privileged, literary texts" as means in and of itself versus using literature as a tool for "emancipatory [practice]"

(Tuman, 1986). The 1894 meeting of the Committee of Ten, which was called to help unite divisions between states in their approach to education across the nation as a whole, included the call to teach English as an official subject, along with classical languages, math, and science (Mackenzie, 1894), however the discord would only become more pronounced as enrollment in secondary schools tripled between the inception of the MLA and the establishment of the National Council of Teachers of English in the early 1900s (Tuman, 1986).

The Evolution of the Secondary English Canon

The establishment of English as a legitimate course of study for secondary students led to increased attention on the works to be used in the classroom. After the Committee of Ten recognized English officially, the push to outline high school course design in concert with college entrance requirements began (Applebee, 1974). These lists featured classic writers like Shakespeare, Eliot, Milton, and Coleridge–authors who still feature prominently in English classes today (Applebee 1974, 1999). Because the lists were fairly rigid, they drew wide criticism from those who felt college programs should not dictate instruction in secondary institutions (Applebee, 1974; Fay, 1979). As a result, the National Council on Teacher Education (NCTE) was formed in part to address the unrest regarding the lists, as well as to provide a representative group for and by teachers as means of working on major problems of the burgeoning field, including undue influence from college systems ("The National Council of Teachers of English: Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting," 1912). James Hosic (1917), founder of NCTE, was a champion of curriculum reform from the college-focused, classical lists to a curriculum that was more applicable and relevant to the lives of an increasingly diverse high school population. In what is known as the "Hosic Report" (1917), he argued that the

university-driven course outlines did little to address the needs of students–many of whom would not attend college–and did not guarantee "preparation for college," since many college professors "freely confess that they make no attempt to base their courses upon what the high schools are supposed to have done" (p. 5). Instead, he advocated for curriculum and instruction that developed reasoning skills, "sparked imagination," taught "habits of weighing and judging human conduct and of turning to books for entertainment, instruction, and inspiration as the hours of leisure may permit" and sharpened language skills to the best of the students' "circumstances" and ability (Hosic, 1917, p. 5; Applebee, 1974). Hosic strongly believed that English instruction a child received should be differentiated to their individual needs to develop their composition skills, but also "the habit of thoughtful reading and the joy of study" (1917, p. 7).

Rather than reject the lists unilaterally, the NCTE attempted to provide an alternative; to do this, the Committee on Types of Organization of High-School English was created. The Committee disseminated a survey documenting over 300 teaching practices (Applebee, 1974), none of which helped develop an alternative list, but provided momentum for the creation of The Report of the Committee on Home Reading, which provided an official recommended reading list to counter the literature program of National Council (Applebee, 1974; Bates, 1913). The list presented a diverse list of titles, noting that "the books must differ as widely as the needs of the individual students" (NCTE, p. 3, 1913), which was a counter to the more rigid recommendations prior to the inception of the NCTE. After this list, which included writers like Jane Austen and Louisa May Alcott, college entrance exam requirements began to change; while this change was not directly attributed to the NCTE's interventions, the immediacy of it following the release of the council's recommendations point to their increasing influence on the

types of literature taught in American higher schools (Hook, 1979). Still, the debate continued due not only in part to the classical versus practical, “every child” approach to instruction that had plagued the newly minted field of English, but also what the purpose of teaching the literature itself should be–while some argued for the rhetorical analysis of the classical tradition, others maintained that students would benefit from enjoying literature on an individual, “appreciation” level (Applebee, 1974).

By the 1920’s, the conversation was returning to the question of which should come first: the student or the text? Humanists like Harvard president Irving Babbit remained faithful to the idea of studying “great books" as a means of maintaining social tradition and intellectual rigor while a movement towards what was termed “Experience Curriculum” focused attention on a curriculum consisting of clearly outlined units of instruction underpinned by students’ experiences; this made finding applicable texts challenging and, Applebee (1974) notes that the reading lists, though they featured less classic authors like Walt Whitman, remained largely traditional, featuring works that “had been on the college lists at the turn of the century” (p. 121). Louise Rosenblatt’s 1938 seminal work, *Literature as Exploration* more plainly articulated the role of literature in meaning-making and therefore, served to focus attention on the types of works to be studied. Simply put, to Rosenblatt, the attention of an ELA curriculum should begin with the student rather than the work being studied. Rosenblatt argued that the value of studying literature lay not in the “correct” interpretation or ability to discuss the work solely on a structural level, but to “respond maturely to more complex writings" (Applebee, p. 135, 1974). Concurrently, Dora Smith’s study of 156 English courses revealed that college reading lists no longer dominated the curriculum, though classic works like Shakespeare still held court in over half of the classrooms she studied (Applebee, 1974; Smith, 1933). Anthologies began to emerge

as a cost-effective way to supplement the established classics in the classroom while providing a wider range of works to be read and exposure to modern writers like Emily Dickenson and Robert Frost. Still, the most widely used anthologies were dominated by authors featured on the College Entrance Examination Board (Applebee, 1974).

By the mid century, emphasis was once again placed on preparing adolescents for the "real world" and thus the texts used in ELA programs were selected by their "[attunement] to real adolescent problems' ' (Burton, 1955; Applebee, 1974). While familiar works like *Macbeth* were still part of the curriculum, they were framed by larger themes that could be applied to one's own life and contemporary works became more visible in curricular units via bibliographies that a teacher could use depending on the needs of her class (Applee, 1974). With the adolescent experience at the forefront of curriculum committees, familiar works like JD Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* entered the reading list for English teachers (Applebee, 1974) and the high school canon as my peers and I know it began to take shape, with "modern" additions here and there along the way. This push and pull between contemporary texts and their classical forebears has continued to the present day, where reading lists and the "American canon" are still battlegrounds on which ideologies about what the aims of an English language arts education should be clash regularly. The tension between using ELA courses to teach Knowledge (capital K intended) versus life skills (or, "pro-social" skills) is just as present today, and compels us to turn our attention to more formalized ways in which to address the psychological, social, and emotional needs of our students, otherwise known as social-emotional learning (SEL).

Understanding Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Much like with literature and its role in the secondary classroom, defining social-emotional learning is not as straightforward as it may seem at the outset. SEL has been called an "umbrella term for a number of concepts, including non-cognitive development, character education, 21st century skills, and trauma-informed learning" (Jones et al., 2021, p. 4), with different groups adopting different iterations of what it means to be socially emotionally competent. However, many definitions center around core concepts of what we mean when we talk about social-emotional learning or skills.

A Brief History of SEL in US Education

Similar to the curriculum of the early United States, the roots of SEL as an area of study can be traced back to ancient times. In his discussion of the aim of education in *The Republic*, the Greek philosopher Plato emphasized the importance of virtue and its attainment through knowledge of the "good," which is developed through character education combined with academic skill-building (Plato, 1943). Progressivist John Dewey, like Plato, believed that education was a "a crucial ingredient in social and moral development" (Dewey, 1938, p. 174) and that classroom content and instruction should be designed to mimic real-life settings relevant to students' lives (Williams, 2017).

The focus on educating the "whole child" was continued through Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory which posited that social interaction is a powerful tool through which skills, both academic and interpersonal, are learned. He argued that "the social is instrumental towards understanding and teaching children " and that classrooms should reflect content that is relevant to both students and teacher interests in addition to supplying opportunities to interact

meaningfully with peers and teachers (Jaramillo, 1996, p. 2). Though not yet labeled as social-emotional competencies, Vygotsky identified “normative” and “deviant” experiences as being crucial to a child’s psychosocial development and asserted the role of a teacher in creating curricula to facilitate this learning (Jaramillo, 1996; Smagorinsky, 2013). The role of mental health was deemed as important to learning as was the academic content being delivered. While not officially adopted as a widespread aspect of general teaching pedagogy, these early iterations of what would become social-emotional learning cleared a path for more formalized implementations of programs focused on addressing student behaviors, like James Comer’s Corner School Development Program (SDP).

Piloted in 1968 at two predominantly Black elementary schools plagued by poverty and chronic absenteeism, the SDP was created in conjunction with Yale University to address critical social issues that impeded academic success, which were identified as “family stress and student underdevelopment” and school management, in addition to a lack of teacher knowledge in child development and skills (Haynes & Comer, 1993, p. 173; Lunenburg, 2011). The SDP reported significant gains in reading and math, surpassing those of the district and non SDP schools (Haynes & Comer, 1993; Haynes, Comer, & Hamilton-Lee, 1988b). In addition to the increase in academic achievement, SDP schools had improved attendance and more positive classroom behavior and participation (Haynes & Comer, 1993). The success of the program in the pilot schools and subsequent field test sites in New Haven led to adoption across the country (Lunenberg, 2011). On the heels of the SDP, New Haven and Yale emerged as a nerve center for research that would become foundational to the later development of SEL theory through the formation of the New Haven Social Development Project and the Collaborative to Advance Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Yale professor Roger P. Weissberg and Yale graduate

Timothy Shriver would form the k-12 New Haven Social Development Project, a district department dedicated to sustained access to social-emotional learning through curricular committees, professional development for teachers, and program evaluation (Weissberg et. al., 1997). Concurrently, Weissberg and Maurice Elias would develop and publish the first framework for using social-emotional learning in schools through the W.T. Grant Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence (Elias et. al, 1996). Weissberg would later go on to become director of CASEL, which pioneered SEL as a formal field of study and whose founding members contributed the first significant book on SEL in schools, *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators* (Collaborative on Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2007; Weissberg, 2019).

CASEL was formed in 1994; the original nine founding members included Weissberg, Shriver, David J. Sluyter of the Fetzer Institute and Daniel Goleman (CASEL, 2022), whose later work, *Emotional Intelligence,* would define and introduce the concept of emotional intelligence to the general public in 1995. The Fetzer Institute organized the first CASEL conference in 1994 and the group would later formally define SEL in *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators* as:

> …the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development [including] self-awareness, control of impulsivity, working cooperatively, and caring about oneself and others…[it] is the process through which children and adults develop the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to acquire social and emotional competence. (Elias et al., 1997, p. 2)

Under Weissberg's leadership, CASEL moved from Yale to the University of Chicago in the mid 90's and later changed its name to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. Since then, CASEL has continued to pioneer research and best practices in SEL

education and is considered a leader in the field through their work on program evaluation, research, and collaboration between major thought leaders. Through their Collaborating States Initiative and various federal bills like The American Rescue Plan Act, CASEL also works to guide legislation on both the state and federal level (CASEL, 2023).

Competing Definitions of SEL

The emerging importance of formally integrating social-emotional learning into educational systems has resulted in a multitude of definitions and frameworks since the inception of the field in the early 1990's. Daniel Goleman's 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence,* regarded as a pivotal text in exposing the general public to SEL, identified five components to comprise emotional intelligence theory: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Similar to Goleman's model, since 1997 CASEL has identified five "Core Competencies" (figure 2.1) which include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making and introduced a framework centering the five core competencies within the contexts of community, family/caregiver, school, and classroom (CASEL, "Fundamentals of SEL," 2022).

Figure 2: CASEL SEL Framework (CASEL webpage, 2022)

Since Weissberg and Elias' (1996) first SEL framework was introduced through the W.T. Grant Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence, over 136 SEL competency frameworks have been introduced (Berg et al., 2017), highlighting the challenge in creating common language and consistent implementation across programs. Harvard's Taxonomy Project, created to compare and organize 25 SEL frameworks in an effort to align their identified competencies, notes this challenge in particular "leads to imprecision and variability in how constructs are measured and promoted in both research and intervention contexts" (Jones, et al., p. 2, 2019). Using the Harvard Taxonomy Project' criteria of a "good" framework (Concrete, Clear, Empirically Grounded, Developmental and Contextual, Culturally Sensitive and equitable), researchers identified 34 widely-adopted SEL frameworks and defined

six emotional domains present across them (Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning, EASEL, 2022). These six domains represent the following aspects of social-emotional learning most prevalent in the SEL frameworks analyzed through the project: cognitive, emotional, social, values, perspectives, and identity. The values, perspectives, and identities domains are largely concerned with the internal aspects of social-emotional health like self-concept and outlook, as well as personal ethics and values. The more outward-facing characteristics of social-emotional learning like conflict resolution, cooperation, attention and emotional regulation and expression are encompassed by the cognitive, emotion, and social domains (EASEL Lab Definition of Domains, 2022). Like the Harvard Taxonomy Project, other organizations have attempted to review and organize the numerous SEL programs, like CASEL's program comparison or the Wallace Foundation's report "Navigating Social Emotional Learning from the Inside Out" (2021), which summarizes the top 33 k-5 SEL programs. The Wallace Foundation report, written by Harvard researcher Stephanie Jones, uses the same six domains as the EASEL/Harvard Taxonomy Project to identify effective programs and practices. Regardless of what program is chosen from the many in circulation, one of the most important influences on the success of SEL instruction is implementation, which will be discussed in further detail in the following section.

Best practices in SEL implementation

The social-emotional learning of students is a relatively new and uncharted area of study and practice in traditional, standards-based curriculum, and many programs operate outside of regular school hours. However, for SEL instruction that is embedded into regular classroom time, teacher investment and buy-in becomes crucial to its success. Despite teachers reporting

that they value SEL and believe it improves school performance (Bridgeland & Hariharan, 2013; Reed & Sheridan, 2021), it can be challenging to convince them to add yet another initiative to their already overflowing plates (Kress et. al., 2004). Prior research has indicated that the most effective implementation of SEL programs are those that are integrated in the culture of the school and in daily classroom practices (Durlak et al., 2011), but that also have high teacher buy-in and consistent fidelity to practice (Greenberg, et al., 2017).

Although teachers consider SEL to be an important aspect of education and agree that it positively affects student outcomes (Reed & Sheridan, 2020), the inconsistent implementation of programs focusing on social-emotional skills (Kress et. al., 2004) represents an overlooked opportunity for educators to address education gaps for all students, but especially those who have historically been left behind (Duschesneau, 20200. A growing body of research has suggested that successful use of SEL programs (either embedded or supplementary) has a positive impact on student achievement, as well as increased "prosocial" behaviors, higher self esteem, and better emotional regulation (Durlak et. al., 2011). However, due to the often unrelenting focus on standardized testing, teachers often report little to no training, time, or formal support in developing and enacting SEL-focused activities in their practice (Martinez, 2016). For underserved students in particular, the integration of SEL into the school day has been linked with improved academic outcomes, increased positive relationships with peers and adults, and emotional resiliency and connection to the community (Durlak et. al., 2011; see also Taylor et. al., 2017; Beyer, 2017; Hawkins et. al., 1999) Thus, it is important for the school and community to understand the value and purpose of integrating an SEL program into the curriculum (Reimers et. al., 2012)

Social Emotional Learning and Educational Inequities

Before the arrival of the Covid-19 virus in the American educational system, eyes were already on SEL as a means for addressing inequities in academic and social achievement. Because gaps in achievement can be attributed in part to socio-economic status (SES), it is important to understand how social-emotional competency is also impacted by income level. For children of color and other marginalized groups, poverty can prevent access to crucial resources like high quality education and teachers, healthcare, and food and housing security (American Psychological Association, 2016). Lower SES can also be attributed to lower social capital, which in turn influences access to services, institutional support, educational opportunities, and job prospects (Carnoy, 2007; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Martin et al., 2005).

Poverty can also have disastrous and lasting effects on a child's ability to manage and process their emotions (Blair & Raver, 2016), leading to disproportionate levels of disciplinary actions in school; Black students are expelled and suspended at three times the rate of their White peers and punished more harshly for the same behaviors as their non-Black peers (Gregory et. al., 2010). Sadly, this disparity begins as early as preschool (Gilliam et al., 2016). For students, especially those who attend schools that utilized out-of-school punishments like expulsion, these discipline practices can result in lower achievement due to lost instructional time (Simmons et. al., 2018). Black students are not the only group at risk of increased school discipline, either; disparities have been documented for Native American, LGBTQ, and Latinx students as well (Simmons et. al., 2018).

Children and youth who experience "adverse childhood events" (ACEs) or are exposed to violence—regardless of SES—experience higher levels of "posttraumatic stress disorder,

anxiety, depression, and behavior problems" (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016). It is estimated that over half (almost 60%) of all young Americans under the age of 17 have “have witnessed or experienced maltreatment, abuse, bullying, violence, or assault” (Simmons et al., 2018, p. 5; Finkelhor et. al., 2009). The emotional effects of ACES can be linked to difficulties in reasoning and maintaining attention, lower achievement, and higher dropout rates (Simmons et. al., 2018). In light of a world-wide pandemic and significant social unrest in the United States, it can be expected that the incidence of ACE’s will only increase. Clearly, there is a need to address the emotional health of our students, and incorporation of SEL skills into classroom curriculum may be the way to do this, since there is evidence that SEL instruction can intervene in adverse risk-taking behaviors, emotional distress, and conduct problems, and contributes to health, academic achievement, and success later in life (Durlak et. al., 2011; Hawkins et. al., 1999; Taylor et. al., 2017).

Studied Effects of Literature on Social Emotional Development

A growing body of research (Kidd & Castano, 2018; Turner & Felisberti, 2018; DeMulder, 2017; Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Fong et al., 2013; Miall & Kuiken, 1999) has demonstrated strong links between reading literature and improved ability to empathize with others, self-reflect, and build relationships, especially among adult samples. However, the influence of exposure to literature on adolescents and high school age children has been less widely examined than the effects on empathy and interpersonal skills in adults (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Fong et. al., 2013; Johnson, 2011; Kidd & Castano, 2018; Turner & Felisberti, 2018). For this reason, this section will explore the work that has been done with adults and look to ways in which further study might successfully capture additional insights related to youth.

The recruitment of intellectual, physical, and psychological systems when reading text defined as literature demonstrates a relationship with higher levels of empathy, self-awareness, and prosocial skills (Kidd & Castano, 2018; Zwaan, 2003). According to several studies comparing the effects of reading literature versus nonfiction on adults, reading literary texts has been shown to produce positive results on the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (Baron-Cohen et. al., 2001), which measures a person's ability to correctly interpret the emotions of another by looking at an image of their eyes only (Black & Barnes, 2015; Fong et. al., 2013; Kidd & Castano, 2018). Exposure to fictional narratives has also been correlated with positive scores on empathy measurement scales (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Davis, 1983), or simulations, like a "helping behavior" task (Johnson, 2011; van Baaren et. al., 2004). The Author Recognition Test (ART) (Stanovich & Cunningham, 1989) measures literary print exposure through a recognition task using a list of real and foil author names. It has also been implemented to measure exposure to fiction (Moore & Gordon, 2015). While there is some variation of results due to the methodology of certain studies–some use real literature as treatment (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Black & Barnes, 2015; DeMulder, 2017; Fong et al., 2013; Johnson, 2001) while others use proxies (like the ART) as a means for measuring the effects of reading literature (Kidd & Castano, 2018)–there are promising indications that exposure to literary fiction may predict greater empathy, relationship skills, and other social-emotional competencies.

When reading text defined as literature, there is potential for the reader to "exercise" what behavioral psychologists call Theory of Mind (ToM) (Kidd & Castano, 2018; Turner & Felisberti, 2018; Mar & Oatley, 2008). Theory of Mind, developed by Premack and Woodruff (1978) proposes that people, using the powers of observation and deductive reasoning, make a succession of inferences about the state of mind in others in regards to their intentions, beliefs,

knowledge, thoughts, and preferences. This series of conclusions serves as a foundation for predicting future behavior. Theory of Mind, then, is a key factor in creating and maintaining functional interpersonal relationships and may be connected to increased self-awareness and ability to evaluate one's own behavior (Billington, 2011). In fact, the development of the Reading the Mind Through the Eyes Test, developed by Cohen-Baron and colleagues, was developed as part of their ToM research on people with autism. It has previously been observed that, when immersed in the fictional worlds of literature, readers are required to navigate complex conflicts, characters, and have their expectations challenged, which strengthens an individual's ToM (Black and Barnes, 2015; Kidd & Castano, 2018). Strengthening ToM can also positively impact antisocial behaviors. Since literature can present accurate simulations of the world that are easily understandable and able to be generalized by the reader, they provide an opportunity to strengthen Theory of Mind and lessen prejudice (Mar & Oatley, 2008).

While there is certainly a compelling (and growing) body of literature exploring the potential benefits of literature on the development of the sometimes-elusive soft skills of empathy and relationship skills, questions still remain as to how ToM develops in different groups (like adolescents) and through different mediums (like television or film). Several studies have attempted to pin down the "magic ingredient" in literature that results in strengthened social skills. Differences have been noted in several studies on the impact of multiple genres of literature (Kidd & Castano, 2018; Miall & Kuiken, 1999). It is also important to note that reading any fiction is not a sure-fire way to develop or strengthen one's Theory of Mind—the text must satisfy the parameters noted in the "What is Literature, Exactly?" section of this literature review. The literariness of a text is central to a reader (Kidd & Castano, 2013; Miall & Kuiken, 1999; Mulder et al., 2017) and in order to affect any significant change, a text must elicit the

"psychological work" (Mulder et. al, 2017, p. 132) that amplifies ToM through the implementation of complex characters, plots and storylines in order to trigger the gap-filling Bruner (1987) and other theorists have deemed necessary for a work to be considered literary. However, this is not to imply that only canonical texts are the means through which to experience the psychological workout needed to see psychological and social benefits. Fong et al.'s (2013) study linked increased interpersonal sensitivity to the Romance genre, which is typically not associated with "highbrow" literature (p. 371). This finding suggests more research is needed in exploring the psychosocial impacts of subgenres within literature, including genres–like popular fiction or young adult books–that may have been ignored in other studies, due to their failure to conform to the narrower criteria of literary literature.

Social Emotional Learning in the ELA Classroom

Given the current understanding of how instructional practices grounded in SEL concepts might be leveraged, it is helpful to understand what ELA classrooms currently look like in terms of curriculum and practices. In his seminal study of surveys conducted by The National Center on Literature Teaching and Learning, Arthur Applebee (1992) found that the most frequently required texts were relatively static across locations, with the majority of reading lists featuring works by Shakespeare, John Steinbeck and Mark Twain, while overall excluding most titles written by women and writers of color. Despite efforts to expand the literary canon, Applebee's analysis concludes that little change has been made to meaningfully incorporate diverse voices and experiences into the working high school literary canon. Though Applebee's piece is over 30 years old, it still represents a significant challenge in the ELA curriculum. The Common Core State Standards Appendix B still features works by over 70% male and 60% white authors.

Given the emphasis on using Appendix B as a guide to prepare students to succeed on standardized tests, it is important to interrogate once again what texts American high school ELA teachers use and why.

Without opportunities to engage with diverse texts, students lose the possibility of centering the ELA curriculum in the context of their own lives, which is an important part of establishing relevance and increasing academic and social achievement. Through his analysis of Vygotsky's work in the context of secondary ELA instruction, Smagorinsky (2013) explores the role of speech and language, focusing on how school should be a place of language exploration. Vygotsky believed that emotions and thinking were inextricably linked and he was interested in how works of art engaged with the emotional aspects of ourselves and made deeper impacts beyond knowledge acquisition. He also noted the potential for literature to give us opportunities to relate to others and build capacity for social cognition and emotional intelligence. Smagorinsky suggests that Vygotsky's ideas on cognitive development as a full-body experience can be integrated into classroom approaches that focus on emotional and social skill-building using existing funds of knowledge that students arrive to our classroom with.

This "full-body experience" Smagorinsky (2013) references is echoed in Dacey et. al.,'s (2018) chapter on integrating SEL in the existing curriculum. They argue that the persistence of achievement gaps and emerging issues for adolescents related to new forms of media and their associated pressures is due in part to the relentless focus on test scores and college entrance exams at the expense of emotional and social skills. Multiple studies have indicated that SAT scores and GPA averages do little to predict success in later life, especially more elusive markers of success like personal relationships and satisfaction with one's life (Heckman et al., 2014). The authors cite the effectiveness of focused SEL programs in improving outcomes for all students

(but specifically disadvantaged students), reducing stress and negative self-image, and increased positive interactions with teachers and peers (Dacey, et al., 2018). They also promote integration of SEL programs in ELA classrooms specifically, since the use of literature in these courses provides material through which students can engage with stories and characters that reinforce their individual identities, allow them to reflect on their own experiences, and can enhance what they call "affective learning" in the class.

Shechtman et al. (2012) also reference "affective teaching" (defined as instruction that incorporates the Humanistic focus on the learner with an additional layer of emphasis on the learners' feelings, relationships, and motivations) in relation to improved student outcomes in "relationships, behavior, motivation to learn, and content knowledge" (p. 1). The authors review the literature on the efficacy of SEL programs, noting that the majority of the studies covered indicate that school-based interventions can produce positive outcomes for social and academic skills. Students who received affective instruction had better scores on content knowledge, reported being more motivated to learn, had more positive perceptions of the classroom environment, and had improved classroom conduct. Though Schectman et al.,'s (2012) study was done in elementary school classrooms, Meaghan's (2019) review of ELA-specific integrations of SEL identified social and academic benefits to students, especially for underserved students or those deemed "at risk." Meaghan's review includes teachers who improvise within their current curriculum to address the social needs of their students rather than relying on prescribed and planned (often scripted) programs. While this requires more creativity on the part of teachers, it could result in better fidelity to implementation of an SEL-centered curriculum. Additionally, she recommends including student voice and motivations for reading. Teacher-researcher Reeb-Reascos' 2016 article also addresses what she calls the faulty prioritization of "technical

skill-building" (p. 1) over exploration in ELA classrooms, which results in disengagement and "superficial" instructional practices (p. 1). Her study explores how students use conversations in ELA classrooms, and about literature specifically, to construct understandings about identity. In their classroom-based small group discussions of *Romeo and Juliet,* and *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, students conceived of identity in three different categories: historical, individual, and generational. Through their discussions of these texts, students were able to wrestle with and articulate their own values, identities, and experiences in relation to what the characters were experiencing. The author explains, "As a result, the personal stories that the students shared in class became more than just pre reading exercises for *Romeo and Juliet* (1993); they became practiced in sharing personal identities" (p. 15). The classroom conversation became a platform on which students interacted with social and historical norms and internalized or rejected them; in essence, "engaging with the text became almost as real as engaging with another person" (p. 16). Since reading and writing often go hand in hand in ELA classroom instruction, it is important to examine SEL-centered practices for writing about texts as well as reading them.

Similarly to Reeb-Rascos' (2016) focus on student interactions with text as a means for self and social exploration, programs aimed at "bibliotherapeutic intervention" use book clubs geared toward developing prosocial skills through discussing literature (Tijms et. al., 2018). Reading motivation is an important aspect of success in school, especially for adolescents, who often experience a decrease in positive attitudes towards reading. This decrease disproportionately affects students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and the resulting declines in overall academic performance persist through graduation and eventually into adulthood. The authors note that this disparity, coupled with the increased demand on students'

social-emotional skills in secondary school, can put at risk students at an even further disadvantage.

Bibliotherapy is designed to create opportunities for self-exploration and problem solving through discussions about stories that are parallel to the participants' lives. Because fiction allows readers to immerse themselves in a story, they can learn how to cope with the "real world" through their responses to and discussions about what they have read. Researchers found that the bibliotherapy intervention participants demonstrated increased positive attitude towards reading, improved reading comprehension, and "reported higher self-efficacy beliefs about their social– emotional competences" (p. 539). This study provides promising evidence for closer study of bibliotherapy as a successful means for addressing academic and social skills in at-risk students (though there are also studies that suggest this same method works for gifted students). In a similar study conducted with prisoners, Billington (2011) designed a prison-based research project investigating the relationship between reading and personal reflection, growth, and connection with others and participation in a bibliotherapeutic reading program. Most programs the author explores use canonical literature as a shared text because it promotes deeper thinking and reflection compared to self-help or popular literature. The participants reported that reading literature and "getting lost" in the story allowed them to think past their current circumstances and interact with the text on a reflective and transformational level.

The program relies on the assumption that by focusing on the relationship readers have to the works and one another, they may begin to view texts as models for human experiences and thus become more reflective about their own situations. In interpreting and reinterpreting characters, situations, and their connections to the reader, the participants were able to reflect on their own states of mind and were able to, in some cases, challenge their perceptions about

themselves and the world. Billington proposes that further research is conducted to officially document and analyze what appear to be very promising emotional and mental effects of literature reading groups (especially those deemed a high risk). These findings indicate that similar approaches to bibliotherapy might prove fruitful in vulnerable student populations.

Summary and Gaps in the Literature

Given the compelling evidence reviewed here that hints at the potential for literature to bridge gaps not only in crucial soft skills but also persistent and troubling disparities in achievement and access to relevant and effective instruction, this study aims to explore classrooms of teachers who are taking on this work with high school students. This group is especially important to explore since the majority of studies on curriculum-embedded SEL programs take place with elementary age or younger students (Hamilton et al., 2019; Yeager, 2017). By better understanding how secondary ELA classroom teachers choose and use literature to enhance both academic and social-emotional competency, we can gain insight into the training, development, and motivation of teachers who harness the multiple benefits of literacy instruction and use this to inform the practices of current teachers and the methods of preparing pre-service secondary ELA teacher candidates.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop an understanding of how teachers used literature in secondary school ELA curriculum in order to impact student success in academics as well as in crucial "life skills" that will influence students' lives long after they graduate (Turner & Felisberti, 2018). This chapter outlines and contextualizes the case study design chosen, describes the criteria and methods used for teacher recruitment, and presents a brief overview of the individual cases (classrooms) discussed in the study. Finally, the data analysis methods will be articulated and a brief discussion of the researcher's positionality and approach for protecting participant confidentiality will be presented.

Case Study Design and Justification

An exploratory case study design (Yin, 2018) was used to understand how ELA teachers select and design instruction using literature as a means of developing social-emotional skills. A case study is preferable for investigating the answers to these questions since it allows the researcher to develop an understanding of a phenomenon in a real-life setting with several factors at play (Yin, 2003). Case studies help answer the "how" and the "why" (Yin, 2003). For the purposes of this study, each individual classroom was considered a "case" comprised of evidence from three main components of the classroom: teachers, students (through the use of student work), and lesson plans. A multiple-case study design has potential to yield more compelling and robust evidence, so multiple classrooms will be identified for this study. If similarities are observed between classrooms, the potential for generalizability is also increased (Yin, 2003). A case study is effective for research questions that aim to understand the *how* of a situation in which the researcher has no control over the behavior of the subjects.

Setting and Participants

Case Selection:

Three secondary public school English teachers were invited to participate in this study. These teachers were selected from a pool of those who met the following inclusion criteria:

1) self-identify as implementing teaching practices that feature literature as a tool for developing social-emotional skills

2) have been teaching at least three years

3) whose students represent the community of the school and thus are not selected based on prior academics for participation in a particular class (e.g., Advanced Placement).

For the purpose of this study, only teachers who worked with adolescents were to be considered, given the gap in the literature regarding SEL programs in secondary classrooms. Since there are no set standards or curriculum SEL designated for the school district and state where the study took place, participants had to self-identify as to whether they used these practices. More experienced teachers were preferred given the reality that many new educators are juggling multiple responsibilities like induction and are still adjusting to the profession, so they might be less likely to take on the additional work of incorporating SEL into their instruction or may do so less consistently. Though more experienced teachers were preferred, the criteria include those newer to the profession as they may be more open to innovative approaches to the curriculum. Finally, teachers of diverse populations were preferred as a way of understanding how integrating academic and soft skills in curriculum can benefit marginalized students, not just students in advanced courses.

These participants were recruited through a district newsletter disseminated to secondary ELA teachers by a literacy resource teacher and a social media teacher page. Care was taken to

select a sample from urban public middle and high schools that represented students from the historically "at-risk" populations, as they may benefit more from programs geared towards social-emotional development (Okonofua, 2018).

***Cases**:*

Teacher AB.

AB was the most experienced teacher in the study with 25 years of service and a background in special education; this teacher served as a district resource teacher for many years before her transition to teaching middle school English Language Arts courses. She currently serves as ASB advisor. Teacher AB works at a traditional public middle school serving approximately 836 students; 31.9% of all students at this school are designated as English Language Learners (ELL) and 95.1% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (ed-data.org, 2022). Just under 18% of students at AB's school are considered to be chronically absent based on data reported for the 2020-2021 school year (ed-data.org, 2022).

The class that I observed was a mixed grade-level group of students ranging from 6-8th grade. This particular class is a focused reading class, which emphasizes reading skills for students behind grade level. These students in particular were placed in the course via teacher recommendation, Lexile level, and classroom behavior. The average Lexile level of the class I visited ranged from 190-500 (first grade to early second grade) and the teacher described the students as having a "history of poor behavior." Table 3.1 articulates the demographic breakdown of the students in AB's class compared to that of the whole school. AB's class has a higher percentage of English Language Learners and students with individualized education

plans (IEP) than the general school populations, but that is to be expected given its status as a focused reading ELA course.

Table 1: AB class versus whole school demographic breakdown

	Grade Level	Total # of Students	IEPS	ELL	African American	Latino	Asian	Filipino	Pacific Islander	Two or more Races	American Indian	White
AB	6-8	28	46%	57%	15%	79%	0	0	0	3%	0	3%
Whole School	6-8	836	19%	33%	6%	75%	13%	.6%	.5%	2%	.1%	1.6%

Teacher CD.

Teacher CD is a teacher at a large comprehensive public high school enrolling more than 2,200 students. Just over 53% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch, and 8% of the total school population is designated as English Learners (caschooldashoard.org, 2022). Teacher CD has 14 years of experience and currently serves as ASB advisor, in addition to her duties as an ELA teacher. The class I observed was a freshman level English Language Arts cluster class. Cluster courses assign smaller groups of high-achieving students to mixed-ability classes to help ensure that "gifted" students have peers of similar academic level to work with while avoiding ability-grouped classes (Kulik & Kulik, 1990). The students identified as "high-performing" were GATE-tested and/or identified by teachers as advanced.

CD's class generally mimics the total school population *except* Hispanic/Latino students. In the class period I observed, there were only 3 Hispanic/Latino students enrolled, while the overall school population is almost 24% Hispanic/Latino. There were also about half the number of students with individualized education plans in the class I observed, as compared to the total

population of the school. See Table 2 for a comparative breakdown of CD's class against the whole school population.

Table 2: CD class versus whole school demographic breakdown

Case	Grade Level	Total # of Students	IEPS	ELL	African American	Latino	Asian	Filipino	Pacific Islander	Two or more Races	American Indian	White
CD	9	32	6%	7%	6%	9%	29%	30%	0%	10%	0	16%
Whole School	9-12	2,289	11.4%	8%	4%	24%	22%	24%	.5%	13.5 %	.3%	11.2 %

Teacher EF.

Teacher EF works at a small public charter school comprised of a little over 400 students, 26% of which are designated English Language Learners and 76% qualify for free and reduced lunch (caschooldashoard.org, 2022). The class I observed was a 12th grade Advanced Placement Literature course. In my initial search criteria I indicated that I would prefer to only include teachers whose classes represent the larger school demographic; at EF's site AP curriculum is used for ELA courses regardless of student level, so the class I observed still meets my initial criteria in that it is a heterogeneous mix of skill levels and students are not filtered into the course (it is offered to all seniors).

Teacher EF has 7 years of experience as an English Language Arts teacher and is currently the site ASB advisor. The demographics of EF's classroom closely match those of the school site. See Table 3 for a comparison of EF's class across the total demographic information for the school site.

Table 3: EF class versus whole school demographic breakdown

Case	Grade Level	Total # of Students	IEPS	ELL	African American	Latino	Asian	Filipino	Pacific Islander	Two or more Races	American Indian	White
EF	12	27	17%	20%	7%	81%	3%	0%	0%	2%	0	7%
Whole School	9-12	413	21%	26%	9.4%	78%	1.2%	2.4%	0%	3%	.2%	5.3%

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected from multiple data sources in order to provide a layered understanding of the factors that influence how and why teachers select literature and how they design and execute learning opportunities in their classrooms for development of social skills. Once cases were identified, data collection began for each case simultaneously. Each case study was analyzed and written discretely and revisited after completion for a cross-case synthesis. Table 4 shows how different tools and documents collected from the study correspond to the research questions and provides the framework most applicable for interpreting the findings.

Table 4: Research Questions and Data Source Inventory

Research Question	Data Source	Interview Question, if applicable	Document Source, if applicable	Framework
What training or preparation do teachers receive in order to integrate SEL practices into their standards-based English curriculum?	Initial Interview	1, 2, 3		Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

How do teachers select the literature they use in their curriculum?	Initial interview Final Interview Classroom observations	4, 5,6, 7 2.1, 2.2	Lesson/Unit plan documents	Transactional Theory Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
How do teachers define and measure their success in using literature to address SEL in their students?	Initial interview Final Interview Classroom observations	8, 9, 10 2.3, 2.4, 2.5	Lesson/Unit plan documents Classroom observations Student work/artifacts	Transactional Theory Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Interviews

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each teacher in order to facilitate a natural dialogue between researcher and participants, while still maintaining a focus on the critical questions of professional development, curriculum development and text selection, lesson design, and self-assessment (Creswell, 2013). A series of open-ended questions was used to guide the interviews and gain a deeper understanding of how participants have been prepared for implementing SEL competencies in their ELA curriculum, select texts for class study, and define and assess their success in doing so (see Appendix A). An initial interview was conducted prior to classroom observations in order to gather information about the teacher's training and philosophy towards ELA education and SEL practices, in addition to any practical information about the lessons I was to observe, including collecting lesson materials when available. A final interview was conducted at the close of the unit of instruction. This interview focused on the objectives each teacher had for the unit in terms of SEL and ELA (see Appendix B). Interviews

were primarily conducted via a teleconferencing platform due to ease of scheduling, but one participant was interviewed both times in person. Interviews were recorded for transcription purposes using the zoom teleconferencing program when not conducted in person. The in-person interviews were recorded with the participant's permission and transcribed using an audio-recording program.

Observations

Two in-person classroom observations were conducted with each teacher within the same unit of instruction in order to add depth and validity to the information shared during the semi-structured interviews (Yin, 2018). Field notes were recorded using the observation protocol in Appendix C to ensure consistency across classroom data collection and clear connections to the research questions of the study (Burkeholder, 2019). Audio recording was also completed for each observation to aid in transcribing conversations and group work and ensure accuracy of the field notes.

Record review

Each teacher was asked to provide a sample lesson plan or unit plan, which was reviewed for intentional SEL connections with literature. The formats of these plans varied significantly between the participants. Participant AB submitted a very loose outline of the unit I would observe, noting the texts she would be using and the summative assessment that she would administer to her students, in addition to the steps of the lessons I would sit in on. CD's lesson plans were adapted from San Diego Unified School Districts "Relationships and Identity" 9th grade ELA and Ethnic studies curriculum and consisted of detailed slides for each lesson of the unit I observed, as well as supplementary materials like graphic organizers. EF presented the

most complete plans, providing me with a detailed unit plan that articulated each phase of the unit and the corresponding ELA standards-based goals, in addition to student work samples and texts covered. These records helped provide more concrete examples of the intentionality of the teachers in designing learning experiences that ensure that social and emotional skills are fostered and their degree of completeness provided interesting data points in and of themselves, which will be discussed further in Chapter 4 and 5. Table 5 provides a breakdown of the artifacts supplied during the course of the study and the texts used in each unit.

Table 5: Artifacts collected

Teacher	Lesson Plans/Lesson Documents	Texts featured in unit	Student Work	Other
AB	Rough outline and SEL Daily Warm Up for classes observed; summative assessment prompt	The 100 Dresses, Informational article from 3D curriculum	Drawings Summative writing assessment Annotations	
CD	Lesson plan + agenda for classes observed; summative assessment prompt; graphic organizers; slides	"The Hill We Climb" "A Wreath for Emmett Till" Informational article on code-switching	Summative Writing assessment "Identity Character Heads"	Unit Plan
EF	Lesson plan + agenda for classes observed; summative assessment prompt; graphic	*The Tragedie of Macbeth*	Summative Writing Assessment "Character Heads"	Unit Plan

organizers;
slides

Data Collection Timeline

Once eligible participants were identified, interviews and classroom visits were scheduled. Initial interviews were conducted prior to the classroom visits, which occurred within the same unit of instruction (2-4 weeks). Lesson plans were collected from CD and EF during the initial interview (EF also provided a detailed unit plan at this time). AB verbally provided a rough outline of the classes I would observe. Content analysis was conducted on classroom assessments and student work samples, so these were also collected during classroom observations when available or obtained from the participant afterwards if they had not occurred during the observation. A content analysis tool was used to assist in analyzing the data (see Appendix D). Field notes were recorded during observations. See Table 6 for the timeline of each data collection phase.

Table 6: Data collection timeline

Initial interview	Observation #1 (in person)	Observation #2 (in person)	Final interview
Content Analysis (ongoing)			

Data storage and management

All data was collected digitally and stored in a password-protected digital drive, in addition to an external hard drive that was stored in a locked area of the researcher's residence. Coding was performed on a digital document for the initial exploratory theme-building round

and then transferred to the CAQDAS program Nvivo, which was used to compile and organize the data across cases.

Data analysis approach

Four rounds of coding were performed in order to move from exploratory theme-building to a refined understanding of the processes the participant teachers go through when implementing SEL in their courses (Saldana, 2016). Descriptive coding was used to first organize the data once it was collected and transcribed in order to discover themes and subtopics within the various data points, using the Transactional Theory and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy frameworks as touchstones for finding commonalities across the data.

In order to offer a deeper understanding of each case in, in addition to the initial descriptive codes, *in vivo* coding was utilized wherever possible to "zoom in" (Saldana, p. 95, 2021) on the nuances of each teachers' process and methods during the second pass over the raw data. *In vivo* coding was helpful in this instance due to the exploratory nature of the case study and the relative uniqueness of each classroom environment and teacher. Once initial topics were identified, axial coding was employed to help further refine the categories that emerged and the relationships between them, using the theoretical frameworks again as a means to organize and essentialize the data; finally, selective coding was used to connect and organize the data into holistic themes across all three cases (Burkeholder, 2019).

Memo-writing:

In addition to the coding process outlined above, analytic memo writing was employed to connect the coding process to the identified research questions and Transactional Theory and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy frameworks. Analytic memos document "how the process of inquiry is taking shape" and can assist in digesting and connecting data across sources, cases, and become a data source in and of themselves (Saldana, p. 58, 2021). Reflective memos were written after each initial coding round using the research questions and theoretical frameworks as a matrix through which to connect and compare the raw data to the purpose and foundation of the study. See Appendix E for an example of these memos.

Protection of Human Subjects

This study posed minimal risk to participants and human subjects were not harmed during this study. Full IRB approval was secured before the study took place. A written form was provided for participant consent (see Consent form in Appendix F) and signed by all participants. Identities were not recorded; respondents were assigned pseudonyms.

Positionality/Reflexivity Statement

As an English teacher and instructional coach who has worked with high school students and educators for over ten years, I come to this study with multiple professional identities. It is important for me to be aware of my knowledge of English Language Arts pedagogy and role as an observer so as not to become so focused on evaluating practices that I neglect to clearly observe and document them. I also bring with me my own understanding of and experiences in ELA secondary education as a teacher and student, as well as my personal beliefs about using

SEL in an English Language Arts classroom. While I have never formally received training or professional development in using SEL explicitly with literature to drive my instruction, I became very familiar with Transactional Theory and Rosenblatt's student-centered method of teaching literature early on in my career as a teacher and often used it to guide my approach to instruction. I believe that one of the most powerful aspects of an ELA course lies in the potential for literature to speak to our hearts and minds and have experimented with many strategies and texts to use my class as means for developing my students' emotional and intellectual selves. However, I would also describe myself as an educator who believes that texts bring an innate value in and of themselves and that reader-response is only one tool a teacher may use to engage their students in literature instruction and should not be the exclusive means by which to explore a text. My own views on how much and the best method for toggling between the inherent value of a text and the student-created value of a text through its interaction with a reader on multiple levels for multiple purposes are still developing; however, every effort was made to approach each case with a desire to learn and understand from what I see as free from personal biases as possible.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study, organized by case. Within each case, the findings will be presented through overarching themes from the findings and divided into sub-themes. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how English Language Arts (ELA) teachers integrate Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies into their standards-based curricula. The driving question underpinning this study was: *How do secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers use literature to enhance and develop social-emotional learning (SEL) in their adolescent students?* More specifically, this question addresses the following sub-questions:

1. What training or preparation do teachers receive in order to integrate SEL practices into their standards-based English curriculum?
2. How do teachers select the literature they use in their curriculum?
3. How do teachers define and measure their success in using literature to address SEL in their students?

Three main themes emerged during the course of the study: Beliefs and Goals, Resources, and Pedagogy.

Theme One: Beliefs and Goals

This theme provides insight into the beliefs each participant held about the role of social-emotional learning and ELA education for adolescents. The narrative of this section includes participants' descriptions of their motivations for fusing ELA and SEL together in their curriculum. Finally, this theme presents the participants' discussion of the goals they have for

SEL and ELA instruction in their course *in general*. More granular discussion of unit and lesson outcomes will be presented in the *Pedagogy* theme.

Theme Two: Resources

In this section, the data centers around the resources each participant uses, both past and present, to facilitate instruction that supports ELA standards and SEL competencies. This narrative will convey the formal and informal learning experiences around SEL described in each case. Finally, the sources of knowledge each participant uses to inform their decision making are also presented.

Theme Three: Pedagogy

For this chapter, pedagogy will be defined as the methods and practices a teacher implements in their classroom. The narrative in this section will describe the classroom environment, relationships, outcomes, activities, assessments and instructional strategies employed by each case towards SEL and ELA goals.

Table 7 demonstrates how each theme and subsequent sub-theme correspond to the main research question and the three sub questions that fold into it. In each narrative I will present the findings organized by major themes; sub-themes will be explored within each theme and are indicated by an *in vivo* code from each participants' interview data to help ground each section in the language of the participant.

Table 7: Research question and theme alignment

RQ: How do secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers use literature to enhance and develop social-emotional learning (SEL) in their adolescent students?		
Major Themes	Sub-themes	Related Research Sub-Question
Beliefs and goals	-ELA goals -SEL goals -Beliefs about a successful ELA/SEL experience	1, 2
Resources	-Knowledge of SEL -Knowledge of students -Text selection	1, 2
Pedagogy	-Classroom atmosphere -Relationships -Outcomes -Instructional strategies	2, 3

Case Overview:

This multiple-case study consisted of three secondary school English Language Arts teachers. Participants were selected based on their self-identification as using SEL within their ELA curriculum, years of experience, and the diversity of the students in their class observed for the study. AB had 25 years of experience as both a special education teacher and district resource before arriving at the public middle school she is currently at. The course she invited the researcher to observe was a Focused Reading course, which is a supplemental mixed-grade ELA

course for sixth to eighth graders. Students are referred to by reading scores or teacher recommendation. CD, a teacher with 11 years of experience, was an ASB advisor and taught 9th grade ELA courses at a large public high school. The class observed for this study was a 9th grade cluster ELA course using a district-created curriculum. EF, a teacher at a small public charter school, had 7 years of experience and served as ASB advisor, in addition to her role as an ELA teacher. The course observed for the study was a 12th grade English course using the College Board AP Literature curriculum, though students were not tracked into this course. At EF's site, all ELA courses use pre-AP and AP curriculum. All of the classes observed matched the demographics of the whole school in general (i.e., race, gender, ELL, and students with IEPs), with the exception of AB, who's featured class had significantly more African American, ELL and IEP students than the school site and CD's class, who had significantly less Latino students enrolled in her course than the school average.

Data Collection:

Data was collected over a 10-week period. The researcher conducted two semi-structured interviews with each participant, one before the first observation and then a final interview after the last observation. In addition to the interviews, two classroom observations were conducted with the same unit of instruction, typically 2-3 weeks apart from each other. Care was taken to observe the same period for each teacher to ensure consistency of the observations. The researcher used field notes and an observation protocol (Appendix C) to document the lessons, as well as audio recording and transcription to assist with accuracy. Documents related to the unit were also collected throughout the study; typical documents shared were: lesson plans, unit plans, slideshows, graphic organizers, printed excerpts of the readings covered in the lessons

observed, and student work samples. A lesson plan analysis tool (Appendix D) was used to assess the connections between SEL and ELA goals and outcomes.

Case Findings: AB

Overview of Unit:

AB teaches at a mid-sized urban public middle school serving approximately 878 students. AB's class was a mixed grade group of sixth through eighth graders selected for a "Focused Reading" course based on lexile level and behavior history. The topic of the unit observed was bullying; AB used the 3D curriculum, an English Language Development reading intervention program with an asset-based focus on teaching English to second-language learners. AB supplemented the unit on bullying with a shared reading of *The Hundred Dresses* by Eleanor Estes. Table 8 provides an overview of the unit and includes the unit focus, SEL and ELA outcomes, classroom activities, and assessment methods for the outcomes articulated by AB.

Table 8: AB Unit Overview

Curriculum used: *English 3D*		**Unit Essential Question:** "What makes someone a bully?"	
Texts used: *The Hundred Dresses* by Eleanor Estes, "What is cyberbullying?" (informational article from 3D textbook)			
Outcomes	Instructional Strategies/Class activities	Formal assessments	Informal Assessments
ELA: Reading for main idea Understanding character motivation	Shared reading (small groups) Annotating the text Station work (small groups with teacher	Quiz Analysis paragraph	Discussions Annotations Exit slips

	and independent work)		
SEL: Empathy	Shared reading (small groups) SEL Warm-Ups	"A look inside the bully" drawing	Discussions Wait time before talking Situations outside of class

Theme #1: Beliefs and Goals

ELA Goals: "I mean, the dream is they see the movie, they read the book, and they say the book is way better"

AB's philosophy behind what she does in her classroom is rooted in text literacy. Throughout our time together, she emphasized this as her main purpose regardless of where a student begins in her class:

> You know, you gotta be a reader. Now, I think everyone can learn to read. I tell my kids that all the time. You see a Mc Donald's sign, that's a symbol and it makes meaning in your life and that's reading. So now we just have to break it down into letters that are now symbols that create meaning for you.

She presented her ELA goals for her students as having multiple layers; first, she prioritizes what she calls "functional literacy," which she described as "being a reader" and students using "their literacy skills to enhance their lives." AB often referenced the particular challenges her students face because many are English learners and identified "cultural literacy" as an aim for her students in addition to functional literacy, mentioning that "it keeps you in the loop when you know things." In addition to the functional and cultural piece, AB emphasized that enjoying literature was also a goal for her, noting that "that's kind of my goal…great lifelong readers, yes,

but to create functional readers that can really use their literacy skills to enhance their lives would probably be a shorter term, more attainable goal." AB acknowledged the challenge in this goal in part because "the college-bound myth has really kind of pushed kids away from enjoying literature because it is always 'read a book, write about it." The push and pull between functional literacy and becoming a "great lifelong reader" was evident in the format or AB's classes; students worked on functional literacy during independent work time through word work and fluency practice with books that are at their grade level and tackled more difficult books with the guidance of AB in small groups.

SEL Goals: "The dream is over, it's kind of on you. So what do you do every day for you?"

AB's approach to SEL is framed by the changes of adolescence. She is aware of the fact that many of her students will be taking on more responsibility and freedom at this age and she wants them to be prepared mentally for this shift. AB referenced the fact that students in middle school have less attention from the adults in their lives, both out of and in school. The unit observed for this study was focused on bullying and what makes a person choose to bully. AB stated that the unit isn't about "to tell them don't be a bully, because it's way bigger than that" but was to self-reflect and "recognize the bully in ourselves." The theme of self-reflection is echoed in the other SEL topics she mentioned: self-sufficiency, respect, and gratitude. AB emphasized the importance of being able to pause and reflect before speaking or making a choice:

> Well the number one skill that we work on a lot is stop and think….I share with them, you know, I get emails and I'm like, this person did not stop and think they just sent that out and that's unfortunate. So we talk a lot about, 'just give it a second.' Think about the person delivering the message to you. Where are they coming from? You know, that's a huge skill set even for adults, frankly.

Like her ELA goals, AB's approach towards SEL is focused on both practical skills (ie: stopping to think before you say something) and deeper personal development (self-reflecting on the "bully in ourselves"). AB grounded much of her "teaching moments" for SEL in personal experiences that she expanded to apply to her students' lives.

Beliefs about a successful SEL and ELA experience: "I understand that we've all got lots of struggles. It's not a problem."

Throughout my classroom visits and interviews, AB mentioned the challenges she (and her students) encounter on the path to literacy. She referenced chronic absenteeism and the lingering effects of COVID-19 on her students and their families, in addition to the alienation they face in their other classes, noting "in your [other] classes you're pretty much lost," and that for some of her students, because of their reading level they are "marginalized" and "teachers don't attend" to them. AB sees her class as a place where students are "known" and cared for. When asked what she thought was crucial for a successful experience in an ELA classroom, she said that students:

> …have to feel safe and cared for. They have to have a sense that the teacher is not there to, you know, catch up, but rather just be there to support you, cheerlead for you, care about you, care about your whole person. You know, not be stressing about standards-based grading short essay responses, you know, all this psycho babble that means nothing to a teenager. So I think for me, just creating a really warm, comfortable, loving, happy, fun, silly, relaxed environment really supports their ability to just kind of just relax and learn something.

The difference between a "caring" teacher and one that "stresses out" about standards-based grading was echoed throughout my interviews and observations with AB and her method of blending ELA and SEL together, while attending to the functional literacy goal she has for all of her students. AB knows that her students have many obstacles that can impede their work in her

class, but she sees a successful outcome for her course would be for "them to enjoy the work and grow a little bit from it. You know, always connect that SEL stuff to it." Practicality and using language and concepts that feel relevant to her students was a consistent theme in AB's discussion of how and why she incorporates certain SEL and ELA topics into her class.

Theme #2: Resources

Knowledge of SEL: "I think I understood the concept before I heard the label"

AB defined social-emotional learning as being empathetic and able to self-reflect. The majority of AB's SEL knowledge came from her own life experiences rather than through formalized learning. She referenced her own family as pivotal in helping her understand "how emotions and how your social interactions impact and affect your family life and your academic life." As she entered a credential program "they started labeling it more" but said she has received "zero" formal training in SEL and how to implement it in her ELA curriculum. In classroom observations students were completing warm-ups related to SEL that were purchased through Teachers Pay Teachers. When asked about the types of resources she uses to integrate SEL in her curriculum, AB mentioned Edpuzzle and Brain Pop but said that "I feel they are very surface. They're very 'right there.' They say, like, 'don't be a bully. Stand up.' Well, what does that even mean to a 13 year old?" The majority of SEL activities students do in AB's class are of the "do it yourself" variety, created by using AB's knowledge of her students. The SEL activities I observed were often embedded into the questioning she used in her discussion of texts, so they did not stand alone as an SEL lesson like the Teachers Pay Teachers SEL warm-ups, for example. They appeared more subtly and were intertwined in the ELA goals of the unit, like a drawing students made of a bully after a small group reading session. Rather than articulating

specific SEL "moments," AB seemed to weave them throughout her lessons in unscripted teaching opportunities where the content is connected to "real life" and springs from discussion of a text being used in class.

Knowledge of Students: "I try to figure out, what's the buzz, what's really going on with them?"

Student feedback: AB relied heavily on her knowledge of students to inform the activities and choices she made in her classroom and lesson design, noting that she "[digs in] to find out the little niches and places that they need extra support and extra work. And so that's not going to be through any curriculum or anything out there." She mentioned creating Google surveys and exit slips to get feedback from students on the how lessons or books are going for them, saying "it is my 9th or 10th year here [school site] so I have a pretty good finger on the pulse of, you know, what kids like to read and where they are." Student feedback, both written and observed, was very important to AB and she referenced past experiences with texts that students "hated" and explained that she does not continue with books or assignments that the class does not like, noting that " I don't wanna drag anyone through a book. It's enough work as it is. I want the whole thing to kind of lift itself."

Text Selection: In addition to the informational text AB drew from the 3D curriculum, she looks for texts that relate to students' personal experiences or ones where they can "relate to and learn from the characters." AB gives the example of the success of Sandra Cisneros' story "Eleven" because, for many of her students "one of the worst things that ever happened to them was having a sibling." AB is sensitive to the fact that while she feels she can "understand where they [students] are coming from" she doesn't always have the same experiences, noting

> in my culture every baby is a gift from God and it's super celebrated and it doesn't cause economic hardship for us, but when you're number six or number seven you know that your mom is gonna spend less time with you, there's gonna be less money. There's gonna be less, less stuff. So, and when you, when they look back in their little lives, frequently the birth of a sibling is something they consider to be an unhappy event.

AB also pays attention to the academic needs of her class, choosing texts not only for their qualitative aspects (relatability, student background knowledge) but also mentioned quantitative aspects like difficulty and complexity. Because the majority of her students' lexile levels are between 190-500 (first grade to early second grade), AB typically uses the shared reading strategy, where she and her students have the same text that she reads aloud to them, so "I also try to pick something that I actually find somewhat interesting." In the classes observed for the student, the students were reading *The Hundred Dresses*, which is a 870 lexile level and was presented via a shared reading. AB was keenly aware that the 3D curriculum and *The Hundred Dresses* "looked babyish" so she made an effort to convert both to PDF documents so they "looked like grade level work." It was evident in our conversations, and in what I observed, that it was important to AB that her students not only relate to the texts they read, but that they not feel ashamed or embarrassed about the levels of the materials and instead focus on how the readings are enjoyable or relevant to their lives.

Theme #3: Pedagogy

Classroom Atmosphere: "This is a place where you can get out your journal and get on your journey"

AB placed a heavy emphasis on a positive classroom environment as being crucial to her students' ability to learn, especially since they may have different experiences in their other classes. AB's room was organized into 6 tables of at least 4 students; there were floating shelves

of books all around the room and faux candles that she lights during reading time, in addition to student-made posters that display different definitions of respect written on post-its; soft and relaxing music played in the background. AB relied on routines and predictability to provide stability for students; the general class layout is always the same: warm-up, collaborative word work, and then independent work/small group stations. During observations, the atmosphere was calm and still; while there was movement around the room, it didn't feel urgent or rushed. AB keeps an orderly classroom, but there isn't a sense of mandated participation; AB later expanded on this during the exit interview when she said,

> kids can pretty much be themselves. If one kid wants to talk the whole time, and everyone just sits there, fine. If they want to interrupt each other, or they have different points of view, fine. It just has to be really, you know, softer and calmer and then I think they will talk. I know when I took Spanish classes they would do that [force you to talk] and it's just very, it's uncomfortable, you know. So I mean, some people really believe in it [mandated participation] but it's just not my thing.

AB expressed her concern that students had negative experiences in their other classes, so she took care to make sure her class was a positive experience for them.

Relationships: "I think there's a sense of now we've been together for a while and we can be ourselves"

Student-teacher relationships: AB had a strong connection to her students in part because she has looped with the 7th and 8th graders in her class. She credited this with knowing her students and their abilities better than if she only had them from the beginning of the year. Looping allowed her to see more progress since "middle school is so short and there's such a moving target. So that's why I try to loop with as many of my kids as possible." Her relationship with her students was evidenced in the observations from the familiar way she greeted students as they walked in, to the way they shared personal experiences freely during small reading groups. AB had firm

expectations that she reinforced through gentle redirection during instruction, but also wanted her students to know she cares about them: “I want them to know I love them. I love, I love being their teacher.”

AB has a basic rewards system in her classroom to encourage positive behavior, but she said that the most–requested reward she is asked for is a positive call home. She recounts a student asking her for this very reward earlier in the year:

> [He said] Call my grandma and tell her I’m a good boy. And I'll do it on speaker. Yeah. In front of the whole class, you know, when I speak Spanish, I'm just like hey? It's [AB]. So you know that [student’s name] had a great day, and he's a good student. And thank you so much for your support from home ‘Click!’ Yeah, that's a phone call that will change his home life. Yeah, his life will be better because I chose to do that for him.

AB emphasized her role as an encouraging voice for her students throughout the interviews and observations, noting that while some teachers will call home to deliver negative news about a student, “I don't make negative phone calls. Yeah, I don't want my voice to be associated with a negative interaction in the family,” noting that this stance is “self-serving. It [calling home with negative news] hurts me. It takes away all that I can give them by me being the person who is going to, you know, share bad news.” AB recounted her own experience as a parent and how calls from her children’s schools were always negative in nature and made her less likely to want to engage with the teachers and staff. It was important to her that she only be a positive force in her students’ and their families’ lives and preferred to deal with behavior issues herself in class.

Student-Student Relationships: Students in AB’s classroom are given opportunities to cooperate and engage with one another on multiple levels. The seating arrangements encouraged discussion and students were practiced in cooperation; in the classes I observed, the daily warm up was followed by word-building exercise where students were given certain letters to make words out of. After they were given time to create words, students took turns sharing a stylus and wrote

words on the board, passing the stylus to one another and affirming each other's words when they were correct or respectfully pointing them out when they were not. AB explained to me that she spent time teaching the class how to self-regulate this activity, as she had minimal involvement both times. In other aspects of the lessons I observed, students had fewer chances to collaborate and the majority of the discourse I saw was between student and teacher.

Since AB's class is mixed grade level, she empowered her 8th graders to become mentors to the younger students in the class: "I sprinkle my eighth graders around the room. We have a meeting with my eighth graders at the beginning. I'm like you know what this is a chance for you to be somebody different." AB believed that this relationship-building opportunity is "a huge benefit for my eighth graders. It gives them a chance to kind of be big man on campus. It gives them a chance to model behavior for the sixth graders." This opportunity to be a mentor also gave her students an opportunity to develop pride and confidence; AB noted several times in our interviews that the focused reading course has potential to be embarrassing and shameful for her students, so she looks for ways to empower and engage them.

Outcomes: "I want them to be able to enjoy the book, enjoy the literature, understand the author's purpose. Like what, what do we get from this book? What do we know now that we didn't know before?"

Identified Outcomes for ELA: The unit I observed for this study was on the topic of bullying. AB's ELA goals were not explicitly identified through her submitted lesson plans, though in the interviews she expressed that she was hoping for students to be able to identify the main problem in the story and understand why the characters chose to be a bully, an upstander, or a bystander. In the lessons I observed, AB spent time making sure students could define bully, upstander, and bystander and identify them in the story *The Hundred Dresses*. She did not present a class-wide

learning outcome to her students in either lesson but reminded students that they were reading to find out about why people were bullies in both observations. In later discussions AB stated that she did not post learning outcomes ("the one on the board has been there all year") but instead reminds students of their purpose in the small group instruction she does.

Identified Outcomes for SEL: Like the ELA aspect of the unit, AB did not have explicit SEL goals stated in the lesson plan materials submitted for the study but had stated in the interviews that

> The goal of the unit is to help the children understand the motivation and the reality of what makes a person a bully, what? What is, what is, what is bullying? What is an upstand, or what's a bystander? What's the victim? But really looking more at what is the motivation for someone to bully another person, whether it be online or in person.

During the classroom observations, much of AB's questioning was directed towards why the bully in the story was choosing to treat the main character the way she did and occasionally asked students to think about their own experiences with similar people. The SEL warm-ups I observed were not explicitly linked to a particular text being covered, but addressed general SEL outcomes like identifying feelings and noting adjectives that can describe a person's character.

Instructional Strategies: "It's just a super low stress situation in here, I mean I do all the lifting. I read the text to them. I explain the vocabulary to them. I work in small groups."

Small group instruction: The bulk of both lessons observed for the study involved small group instruction where AB led a shared reading of an excerpt from *The Hundred Dresses*. She explained that small group instruction was critical to her practice because it allows her to stay aware of where all her students are at because she can have more one-on-one time with them, AB explained, " I mean, barely do anything whole class in here. Maybe a little CNN, student news,

everything's small group, everything, you know, little threes and fours like that. So I can hear what they're saying and I can understand." During our final interview AB expanded on her reasoning for small groups, noting that even if students in the independent group are off task while she is running a small group, she "knows for a fact" that everyone is learning something each day because she is able to have those personal touch-points during the small group sessions.

Questioning: Another strategy AB relied heavily on in both lessons I observed was the use of questioning when running the small groups. Her questions tended to fall into three categories: text-dependent, text to world connection, and text to self connection (Woodruff & Griffin, 2017). Text dependent questions are those that require the reader to return to the text they are reading to answer them. Text to world connection questions ask the reader to think about the content of the text and how it relates to the world in general. Finally, text to self connections prompt a reader to relate what they are reading to their own lives. Table 9 below demonstrates the different types of questioning AB uses with examples of the questions she asked for each category.

Table 9: AB Questioning Types and Examples

Question type	Description	Example (from observation)
Text-Dependent Question	Require the reader to return to the text they are reading to answer them	Why did these two characters upstand? What gave them the nerve and ability to upstand?" What else do they have that children don't have?
Text to World Connection	Ask the reader to think about the content of the text and how it relates to the world in general	What do other people do when they are experiencing the outside of a bully?

Text to Self Connection	Ask the reader to think about the content of the text and how it relates to the world in general	So when you have mental issues how do you feel inside? What is another example of what you see and see when you know someone being a bully?

Although AB did not explicitly articulate learning outcomes around main details and character motivation to her students, one third of her questions were related to what happened in the story and why characters acted the way they did. Roughly half of her questions were text to world connections where she asked questions about bullies in general, like why the students thought that adults were bullies versus children, and what issues a person might have that would cause them to be a bully. The smallest portion of her questioning was devoted to asking students to relate their own experiences with bullying to the text they were reading.

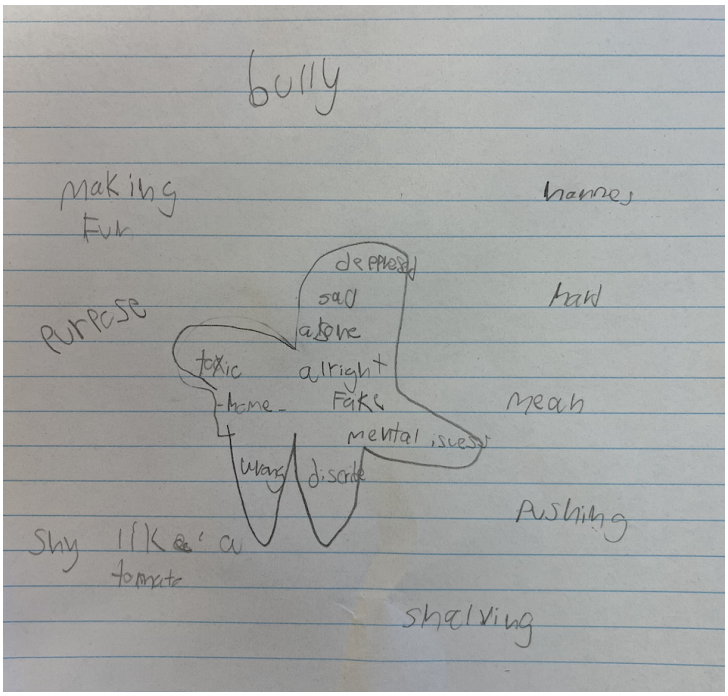
Scaffolding: AB scaffolded the majority of the reading work students did during the observations, though they completed warm-ups and journaling activities independently while she ran small groups. During our initial interview, AB shared that when teaching a story

> we don't really do foreshadowing or, you know, a lot of that higher stuff because it's just too hard for them. But I'll point stuff out. I'm like, that's a symbol. That red door's gonna mean something pretty soon. Like just kind of feeding it into them.

During the first observation, AB pulled a small group to discuss an excerpt from *The Hundred Dresses* and annotated with the students before they discussed the passage; she used metacognitive phrases like, "'I'm going to underline 'her eyes are dull… I think the author is trying to say she is sad" or signaled to students when an important part of the story was coming up: "This is where Peggy will try to justify her behavior." Another scaffold she used frequently

was to stop and summarize what had happened in the text to aid with comprehension, such as: "in this little paragraph here the author is trying to help us understand Peggy's behavior." AB used similar strategies in the second observation, but modeled how to complete a picture of how bullies feel on the inside and act on the outside, which students completed with her help (see Figure 3 A look inside the bully).

Figure 3: A look inside the bully



Assessment of outcomes: AB assessed ELA goals through a variety of formal assessments in the unit, including exit slips, annotations. She stated that students demonstrated that they had met her ELA goal for the unit through their performance on a summative quiz and written paragraph stating, that "they were perfectly able to understand the problem, and the story, which was that, uh, the girl could not be an upstander, and they understood why she couldn't do it." AB also noted that while her formal assessments like the quiz helped her measure the success of the unit,

“a couple of them that have very interesting things to say, but they are not able to produce the typical grade level standard, you know, reading, writing, speaking, listening” indicating a need for informal assessment opportunities as well.

The SEL goal AB laid out for the unit was assessed formally once during the second small reading group via the drawing (figure) but the remainder of the assessments were informal and primarily discussion-based. AB explained the challenge in formally assessing authentic SEL change in her class: “I will say this, it's a little bit like pouring a big pot of water into a coffee pot…I don't necessarily see it [my efforts] go all the way through.” She clarified this statement by explaining that she does not always see the final evidence of her work (“pouring…the water”) but believes that the work she is doing with her students on their social-emotional growth is important. She acknowledged that because drastic change isn’t always possible to see, she focused on their growth and the depth of their response when asked questions related to SEL outcomes. She says,

> you have to have that faith that what you say and do matters. I mean, it's like any parent, you, pray that what you taught them is in their mind when they're 17 years old at a party at the beach. You hope that you're still in their ear somehow. Yeah.... So I don't get to see it all.

Case Findings: CD

Overview of Unit:

CD teaches at a large comprehensive urban high school enrolling over 2,200 students. The class observed for this study was a 9th grade “cluster” course consisting of both gifted, at-grade level, and developing students. CD used the San Diego Unified Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum entitled: “Identity and Relationships.” This course is designed to satisfy both English

and Ethnic Studies requirements for graduation. Table 10 outlines the major components of the unit observed in this study, including the focus, outcomes and corresponding activities and assessments for each.

Table 10: CD Unit Overview

Curriculum used: San Diego Unified "Identity and Relationships"		**Unit Essential Question:** "How have others shaped your identity?"	
Texts used: Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give*, Amanda Gorman, "The Hill We Climb," Marilun Nelson "A Wreath for Emmett Till, "Learning How to Code Switch: Humbling but Necessary" (informational article)			
Outcomes	Instructional Strategies/Class activities	Formal assessments	Informal Assessments
ELA: Using evidence and reasoning to support claims Analysis of literature for author's craft	Whole class instruction Small group discussion Socratic seminar	Analytical paragraph (2) Socratic Seminar Summative Analytical paragraph	Discussions Annotations/graphic organizers
SEL: Empathy Open-mindedness	Small group discussion Socratic seminar	Socratic Seminar*	Discussions Facial expressions Wait time before talking Situations outside of class Pronoun usage

*****While the Socratic Seminar was intended to assess the ELA outcomes in the unit, CD used it as evidence that her students were improving in their ability to "pause and reflect," which was an SEL outcome she identified to me (but did not present formally to students).

Theme #1: Beliefs and Goals

ELA Goals: "I really feel like It's the gateway to everything else."

CD's perspective on the overall outcome of her ELA course had two prongs: she believes that a successful ELA education will prepare her students for their lives beyond school, stating that " I really feel like you can translate these skills anywhere else, no matter what you decide to do post high school," which is why she focuses on preparing students to be a "critical reader, writer, and thinker." However, CD also believed that the purpose of ELA is to "read other's perspectives and understand other people's logic and thinking." She referenced the importance of "seeing ourselves" in literature and making connections between "other people in the class and around the world." During our initial interview, CD described reading different texts as a way to "travel" and explore other cultures and ideas, even if you do not have the means to do so yourself.

SEL Goals: "...as much conversation as possible, so that they're having an opportunity to hear outside perspectives"

For CD, SEL goals are rooted firmly in student relationships. She purposefully focused the first weeks of the year on "building relationships and giving them ways to feel connected to one another" and finding similarities between each other. CD emphasized the importance of being able to listen to others and have "the confidence to share their own experiences and their own perspectives," which she feels is reflected in her focus on discussion and collaboration in her classes.

Beliefs about a successful SEL and ELA experience: "I just want them to go forward and feel like they have as many opportunities and tools as they can"

In my initial interview with CD, she referred to SEL and ELA competencies both as "tools" to help students in their future endeavors. When asked what she felt a successful blend of ELA and SEL would be, she explained that students would leave her class feeling "equipped" for both academic content and social skills to support their choices beyond high school. By our second interview, CD had more specific ideas about what that would look like, namely, being able to empathize with a character, for example, and then be able to apply that ability to think beneath the surface to real-life situations.

Theme #2: Resources

Knowledge of SEL: "What's the difference in the behaviors I'm seeing in my ELA class versus my AVID class, why is that?"

CD defines SEL as "being willing to listen to others and their other perspectives" as well as "understanding themselves." Like AB, CD's experiences with SEL training were limited and somewhat informal. She cited the AVID program as a key initiator in her exploration into SEL for her ELA classrooms. The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, originally developed by inner-city English teacher Mary Catherine Swanson, uses student-centered instructional strategies, paired with a focus collaboration and study skills like note-taking and time-management, to empower students to take ownership of their learning. Research on AVID has linked the program with increased academic outcomes at the k-12 and college levels (Wilson, et al., 2021; Huerta et al, 2013; Black et al, 2008) as well as positive increases in study and personal skills (Wilson, el al., 2021; Llamas et al., 2014) CD noticed that

her AVID courses were more successful due in part to the relationships she had with her students and described it as "that light bulb moment of realizing I should be building these kinds of relationships with all my students." She also described incorporating SEL more formally in her course due to prompting from a district resource teacher:

> She asked how we would use a social-emotional learning piece in our classrooms, and I said, Well, I can think about how I would use this in my AVID class, but I don't really see how it would fit in my English class. And she said, Well, why not? Um so? Why, why wouldn't it fit? And so it's kind of been a journey since then of thinking like Why not?

CD's resources for incorporating SEL in her classroom were grounded by an already-existing program (AVID) that she drew inspiration from with the help and encouragement of her district colleague.

Knowledge of Students: "I think, trying to be aware of potential experiences, or different hardships that my students might have encountered to prepare them for that"

When asked about how she incorporates SEL into her classroom, CD kept returning to her students' experiences as a guide for how and what material she presents. She referenced the age group and gender of some of her students as a concern, stating that "I feel like a lot of the boys in particular this year are really immature," so she assigned more independent reading outside of class to give them a chance to absorb the material "so that they can kind of deal with those emotions on their own." She also explained that this year one of her students' family members was involved in a fatal drive-by shooting this year, and expressed concern that the class novel which describes an officer involved shooting, *The Hate U Give (THUG),* would be too "triggering." She offered this student an alternative text but they elected to read the same material as the rest of the class. CD had initially planned to conduct a close reading on the

shooting scene in THUG, but replaced it with Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb," because "I really felt like it would be really insensitive to have a piece, a writing piece just centered on that scene." Compared to the other participants, CD used her anecdotal knowledge of her students rather than deliberately collected feedback to make decisions on text choice and instructional activities.

Text Selection: When selecting text for her classes, CD mentioned thinking about her students' personal experiences and background knowledge, as well as the themes of the texts and how well they lay a foundation for subsequent units. Since CD used a pre-planned curriculum given by the district, texts are provided already but she stated that she doesn't "really care for the ones they have." For the unit observed, the anchor text was listed as Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diaries of a Part-time Indian,* with supplemental informational texts from commonlit. CD kept the same unit objectives, but changed the anchor text to *The Hate U Give* and added Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb" because it would challenge students and she felt they had enough background knowledge to understand the text. CD also added Marilyn Nelson's "A Wreath for Emmett Till" to tie in an informational text from commonlit about Emmett Till into the unit. Unlike AB and EF, CD did not mention using texts that students could relate to as a reason for choosing them; her explanations focused more on how texts would complement one another while still meeting the objectives of the curriculum.

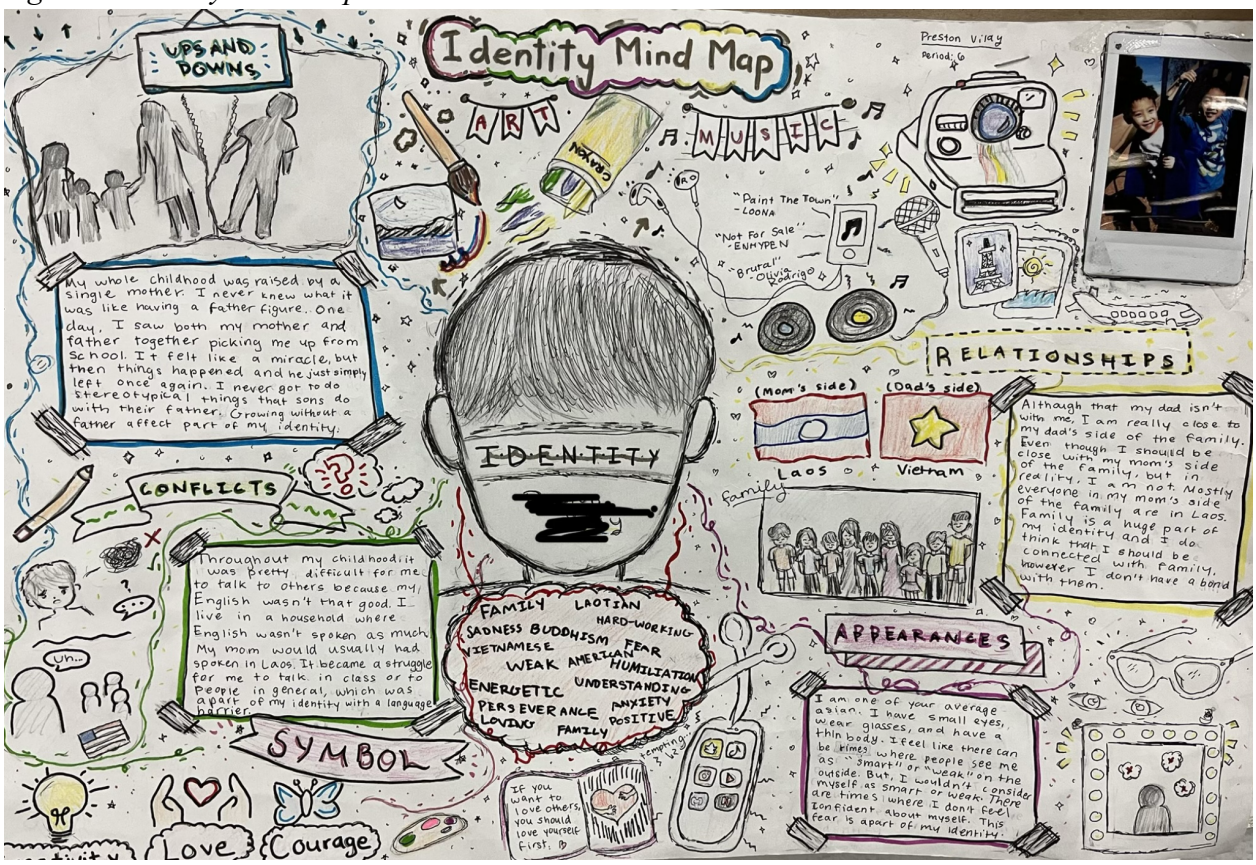
Theme #3 Pedagogy

Classroom Atmosphere: "I want them to always feel safe in here. And for me, that's my primary goal is for my students to feel safe and comfortable, so that they can share."

When asked about her SEL goals, CD would often end up discussing the classroom environment. She acknowledged that "writing is vulnerable" and leaves students "open and

exposed to other people" so one of her primary goals was to "provide a safe space" to share their thoughts and writing out loud. She referenced her classroom design, stating "I think it's really evident like in smaller things like my seating chart. I prefer tables because I want them working in groups." During the classroom observation portion of the study, I noted student art around identity was displayed on the walls (see figure 4: Identity mind maps), as was a calendar with school happenings and student birthdays listed. Desks were clustered together into tables with 4 students per table. CD had a microwave and snacks against one wall and a sign encouraging students to "take one." It was clear that CD had created an environment meant to celebrate and include the students in the room, and to address some of their basic needs as well.

Figure 4: Identity mind maps



Relationships: "I try to follow the patterns that they're going to read something. They're going to write about it on their own, and then they're going to share with their group and then have a chance to look back at their writing again."

Student-teacher relationships: CD described caring for her students and giving them a safe space to share their thinking, as well as being mindful of "triggers." CD seemed to have knowledge of her students beyond just their academic skills. She was very aware of a potential trigger for one of her students, whose brother had been the target of a drive by shooting. She is also very aware of some of the different issues facing students; she mentioned LGBTQ awareness and pronoun usage and how it was important for her to introduce her own at the beginning of the year to align herself as an ally for LGBTQ students. During both of my visits, CD's classroom was open

before class and 10-12 ASB students were working on various projects there and easily chatted with CD about their weekends or goings on at school.

Student-Student Relationships: CD discussed the importance of community and referenced her seating arrangements and the activities she does at the beginning of the school year that help foster community. During the classes I observed, there was a predictable collaborative structure, which she referenced in our interviews as well. The process included peer discussion at tables where students were provided opportunities to talk with one another about their work and it was expected that they do so in both of the lessons I observed. In these lessons, students were given opportunities to discuss what they noticed about the poems that they read, though CD said that her emphasis on discussion and collaboration is based on "the necessity to have an open mind ….So it's sometimes some more controversial ideas that are presented, or that are coming out of what they've their own experiences. So giving them, I really feel like It's an important tool for them, a space for them to be able to do that." While I did not witness student discussion of controversial topics during my observations, the texts covered in the course of the unit certainly raise issues about racism, prejudice, ageism, and violence.

Outcomes:

Identified Outcomes for ELA: CD outlined her ELA goals for the unit as related to making claims and using evidence and reasoning about author techniques like diction, figurative language, and allusions. The lesson plan materials for both classroom observations provided a learning outcome of the lesson and success criteria. For lesson one, the stated goal was around *understanding* the elements of an effective analysis paragraph, while the second observation learning outcome was *creating* an analysis paragraph. See Table 11for learning outcomes and

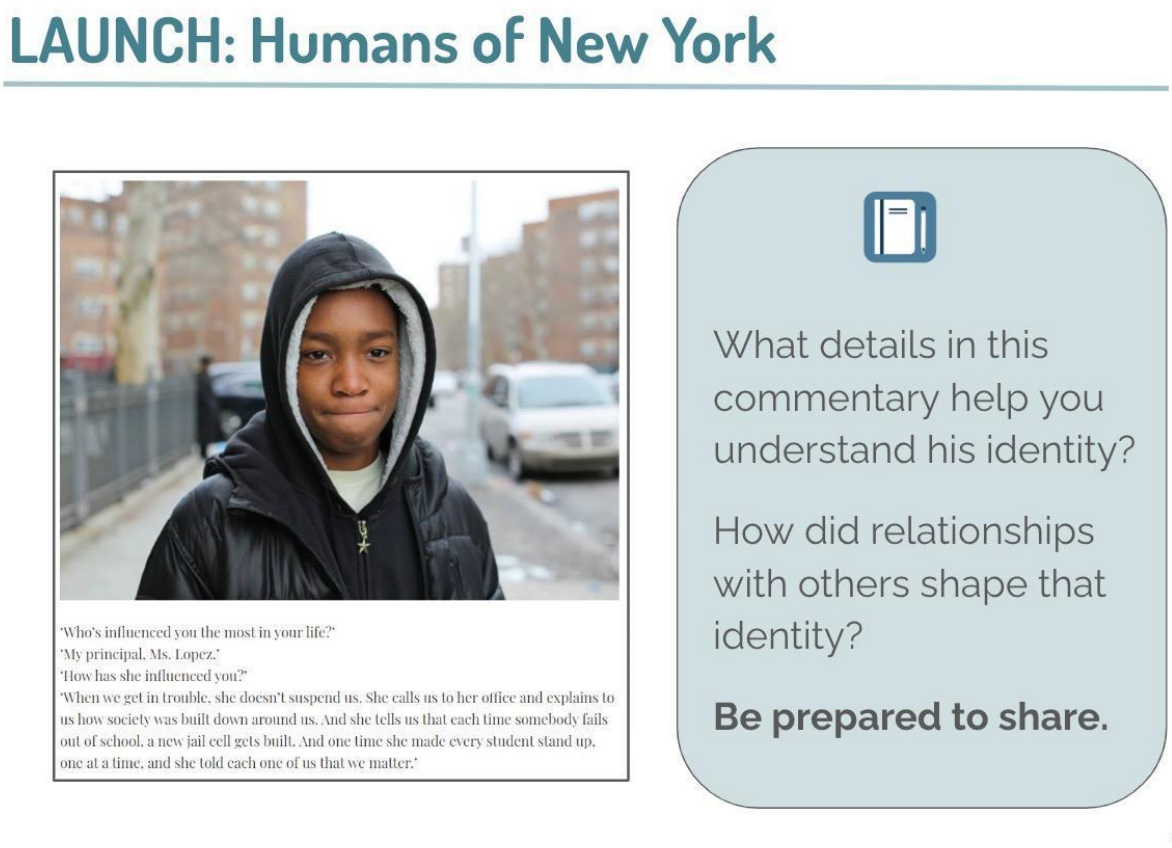
success criteria for each lesson. During each observation of CD, she presented these outcomes at the beginning of class, which are outlined in Table 11.

Table 11: CD Learning outcomes

Observation #	Learning Outcome	Success Criteria
1	Understand the elements of an effective analytical paragraph	-I can analyze a stylistic technique -I can make a claim -I can support my claim with evidence -I can explain my reasoning
2	Write an analytical paragraph.	-I can make a claim related directly to a prompt. -I can use evidence to support my ideas. -I can explain my reasoning.

Identified Outcomes for SEL: The essential question of the unit was "How have others shaped your identity?" This essential question was not brought up in either interview by CD, though it was written on her whiteboard and present in the slideshows she shared for the classroom observations. While not articulated in the lesson materials or during the classes observed, during our interviews, CD stated that the SEL goals for the unit were open-mindedness and empathy. CD referenced these two goals most frequently when discussing how and why she uses small groups, but the connections to these goals in the actual classroom activities were less clear. In my second observation, students completed a warm up where they were asked to make inferences about a teenager's identity and relationships using a social media caption (see Figure 5: Humans of New York activity), though the outcomes for this activity were not connected to the learning outcomes for the lesson for the students.

Figure 5: Humans of New York activity



Instructional Strategies: "I try to follow the pattern that they're going to read something, they're going to write about it on their own, and then they're going to share with their group and then have a chance to look back at their writing again."

Whole class instruction: CD's routine was similar both times I observed her classroom and both lessons were conducted whole-class, with everyone completing the same steps at the same time. In both lessons. students started the class reading *The Hate U Give* independently, then CD would present the lesson objective to the class, pass out a reading, go over the instructions in

detail, then have students read the text and discuss it in their table groups. CD also used whole-class discussion time to take responses from individual students and build on them when appropriate.

Small group discussion: Throughout her participation in the study, CD emphasized the importance of conversation in achieving the SEL goals for the unit and both lessons I observed had ample opportunity for students to discuss, even if they did so at varying levels. During both of the observations I completed, students did the majority of the work on their own and shared very little when prompted to discuss literary elements at their tables. While not observed during the study, CD's classes participated in a Socratic Seminar, though she noted, "I know a lot of people skip them. I personally don't and I actually spend a little bit more time helping them to understand the first few…[because] the necessity to have an open mind comes from those conversations." In our exit interview, CD excitedly referenced the Socratic Seminar as the most impactful assessment of the SEL outcomes in the unit, even if it was not designed to be so. Her analysis focused on a few students in particular, so it is not possible to say if participation in this activity was greater than what I observed during class visits.

Prompting & Questioning: The prompts CD used for both whole class and small group discussion were all text-dependent and centered around comprehension and summary, except for one, when she asked students if they had ever attended a funeral before reading "A Wreath for Emmett Till." See Table 12 for the examples of the prompts and questions CD used for the texts featured in each classroom observation.

Table 12: CD Texts, prompt, and question examples

Text	Written Prompt	Verbal Prompt/Questions

“The Hill We Climb”	In a well-written paragraph, analyze and specific technique Gorman uses to develop a theme.	(after assigning sections to each table): “work with your table to come up with one sentence or less for each of those 5 sections” “Remember right now we are just focusing on understanding what we have read”
“A Wreath for Emmett Till”	In a well-written paragraph, analyze and specific technique Nelson uses to develop a theme.	“Have any of you had the unfortunate experience of attending a funeral?” “Note any phrases that just stuck out to you…even if you can’t recall why yet…” “Your first read is just to understand.”

CD spent the beginning of each lesson reminding students that their readings and annotations would ultimately feed into an analysis paragraph they would write about the text using a claim, evidence, and reasoning format to explore the author's techniques. In both of my observations, CD’s oral prompts tended to focus on comprehension, with later directions to look for specific lines or techniques to identify. In our later interview, CD noted that students often got to the “meat” of their discussions the day after my visit, since they needed ample time to digest the reading before they could discuss it fluidly with one another.

Scaffolding: CD referenced scaffolding as being a critical part of her students’ success in the Socratic Seminar assessment, and I observed her using direct instruction to help students understand the writing prompts presented for each lesson observed. CD explained that by the end of the unit, students could clearly state the theme of a work and explain the moves an author

made, but still needed help with using academic language to describe these moves. She said that during the Socratic Seminar on "A Wreath for Emmett Till"

> there was some really good conversation about diction. I did have to supply that term to them, but you know they were talking about word choice, and why she [Marlilyn Nelson] would pick such graphic language to describe how he [Emmett Till] looked, and how his and about the attack and his death.

CD also noted that students required more scaffolding than she expected for "The Hill We Climb, saying "I was kind of surprised at how much background knowledge I had to give them about that, because I guess it's, you know. It was not that long ago, but they were like in seventh grade or sixth grade, and they weren't paying that much attention to the world at that time." CD specifically chose "The Hill We Climb" because she thought it would be relatable to her students, but realized it was not accessible enough given their (lack of) recollection of the events of the most recent presidential election.

Assessment of outcomes: " it's critical that students…know I'm not looking for perfection. I'm looking for you to make progress from where you came in."

Formal assessments: CD used the following formal assessments in this unit to measure her students' ELA outcomes: analytical paragraphs (2), Socratic Seminar, and a final analytical paragraph that served as a summative assessment. She stated that her students got "a little bit better at writing like a theme statement and identifying a theme" and that while she saw a "tiny bit of growth and analysis…a lot more of them were able, as the unit went on, to write better claims and more specific claims."

CD was also very pleased with the outcome of the Socratic Seminar; she referenced a specific student who tends to "have a hard time thinking about what an author's intention could have been or why an author would do something" who discussed the significance of apple

blossoms in “A Wreath for Emmett Till.” This student “did a little bit more research on apple blossoms, and found that they live for 10 to 14 days, and that he [Emmett Till] was 14.” CD felt that the Socratic Seminar gave this student an opportunity to conduct research into an author’s technique and “get a little bit deeper with it, too.” Since students were also reading *The Hate U Give,* CD saw students making intertextual connections, noting that they started to compare the death of one of the characters in THUG to Emmett Till and that students saw how the age of each made it easier to blame the character in THUG versus Emmett Till because Emmett Till was 14, like many of her students. She said of the experience:

> It was a nice contrast for them to be able to see when you're even younger it's hard for people to turn away, or for people to brush that [Emmett’s murder] aside with some justification about something that another choice that somebody has made in their life….And so it was really interesting for them I think, and gave them a lot of pause and reflection. I was really kind of nervous about how some of them would take it. I feel like a lot of the boys in particular this year are really immature… but they were really respectful and really thoughtful, and I think that was the fact that he is the same age. It's really powerful to them.

Informal assessments: While the Socratic Seminar was intended to assess the ELA outcomes in the unit, CD used it as evidence that her students were improving in their ability to “pause and reflect.” She admitted that she does not formally assess SEL skills, instead “looking throughout the year for growth and changes in responses and things like that.” Some of the criteria she looks for “how they interact with one another when we're having other conversations,” noting that “you can tell that by their facial expressions and what not, that they're thinking about it, and they're not just going with their gut instinct to blurt something out about it.” Like AB and EF, CD did not have set criteria through which she assesses baseline SEL skills and subsequent growth, but instead relies on what she sees and hears informally to witness the change in her students.

Case findings: EF

Unit Overview:

EF teaches in a small urban public charter high school of approximately 400 students. The class she invited me to observe for this study was a 12th grade English course. Although EF used the College Board's AP Literature curriculum, her class is considered core senior English that all 12th graders are enrolled in. The focus of the featured unit was "What drives human action?," with an emphasis on ambition, given that the text used for the unit was Shakespeare's *The Tragedie of Macbeth*. Table 13 provides an overview of the outcomes for the unit, as well as the class activities and assessments CD used over the course of the unit.

Table 13: EF Unit Overview

Curriculum used: College Board Advanced Placement Literature Curriculum		**Unit Essential Question:** "What drives human action?"	
Texts used: William Shakespeare, *The Tragedie of Macbeth*, selected clips from Joel Cohen's 2021 film "Macbeth"			
Outcomes	Instructional Strategies/Class activities	Formal assessments	Informal Assessments
ELA: Understanding character motivation Claim, evidence, reasoning	Small group discussion "Class knowledge" notes In-class presentations	"ACES" paragraph Character head illustration Unit reflections Macbeth scene mini film	small and whole group discussions in-class presentations participation in group google doc notes
SEL:	Small group discussion	Character head illustration	Discussions, small and whole group

Empathy Communication Growth Mindset Sharing Listening	In-class presentations Film project roles	Unit reflections	

Theme #1: Beliefs and Goals

ELA Goals: "Being able to express yourself, express your voice, express your thoughts. You will be able to be successful in any career if you're able to write and do those things and read."

EF described her ELA course as a place to learn critical reading, writing, and speaking skills, especially when it comes to student goals outside of her classroom. While she mentioned that her philosophy around the importance of English is "always developing a little bit," she frequently returned to the notion that she wanted students to "see the real world application of literature and…to leave with writing skills that transcend into whatever career they want." EF referenced two friends, a police officer and a welder, who use writing extensively in their careers and confided in her that they lack confidence in their communication skills. She reflected that "ELA can help all that. It can transcend" adding, " I just feel like it can make happier and better people."

EF spoke passionately about the power of literature to "help you understand the world and the people you are trying to serve," noting that "we've kind of gone away from understanding the human story." The theme of understanding a universal human story became a

significant portion of what EF would share throughout our interviews and in her unit on *Macbeth*, and became a second layer to her goal of preparing students for college and career. She melded the two, stating

> We have lost sight of purpose or people, and all of our jobs are built to serve people. But if we only understand a very minimal story, or maybe like a tik tok trend or two, we don't understand that each human being in front of us is this very complex person? Um, that we can't sum up in two minutes, and if we don't understand that, then it's a very meaningless life.

Like AB and CD, EF maintains the two goals of functional literacy and personal development as the linchpin to her course and the way she adapts curriculum. This interplay between goals was evident throughout her interviews and apparent in the design of her unit, which was the most comprehensive of the three participants.

SEL goals: "being able to communicate on a level of depth to me is an important skill…not just like, 'how are you doing?' but being able to see humans for humans."

EF's reasons for incorporating SEL into her course were similar to the reasons she feels an ELA education is important: understanding the layers and complexities of people, including ourselves, can help us lead a more productive and ultimately more meaningful life. She saw this goal as working hand in hand with literature and discussed them together, saying that she wanted students to "be able to reflect for [themselves]...communicate with others…and [be] able to find value in the arts and in the world." EF put an emphasis on authentic communication, noting that "being able to communicate on a level of depth to me is an important skill…not just like, 'how are you doing?' but being able to see humans for humans." Because EF wants her students to be able to communicate on a deeper level, she sees ELA as a space to "encourage people to share

their thoughts [and] show empathy…even if it's simply you listen and just say, 'thank you for being in the space."

Beliefs about a successful SEL and ELA experience: "My goals for combining SEL and ELA are for kids to be able to experience the world and the complexities of the people in the world"

To EF, an effective blend of ELA and SEL will create reflective students who seek out opportunities to learn about others and share about themselves. She sees this as happening through dialogue with peers, texts, and self. She referenced a recent poetry unit where she felt the blend of ELA and SEL achieved this aim. Students composed and recited "Where I am from" poems, a template that prompts students to share about themselves in a structured form, created by poet George Ella Lyon (see Figure 6: Where I am from poem template).

Figure 6: Where I am from poem template

"Where I'm from" - template for exercise in Class #1
(from poem by George Ella Lyon)

I am from _____(specific ordinary item), from _____(product name) and _____.

I am from the _____ (home description... adjective, adjective, sensory detail).

I am from the _____ (plant, flower, natural item), the _____ (plant, flower, natural detail)

I am from _____ (family tradition) and _____ (family trait), from _____ (name of family member) and _____ (another family name) and _____ (family name).

I am from the _____ (description of family tendency) and _____ (another one).

From _____ (something you were told as a child) and _____ (another).

I am from (representation of religion, or lack of it). Further description.

I'm from _____ (place of birth and family ancestry), _____ (two food items representing your family).

From the _____ (specific family story about a specific person and detail), the _____ (another detail, and the _____ (another detail about another family member).

I am from _____ (location of family pictures, mementos, archives and several more lines indicating their worth).

This activity is a staple in many English Language Arts classrooms and seemed to exemplify EF's hopes for social-emotional learning in her classroom. EF stated that the "SEL component was being able to share out your cultural background, being able to share your experience in your story and giving that space where you put that into words in your own way." After the poems were created, she had 3 students share each day until they had all been shared. EF said of the experience:

> …all the audience does is, listen. They don't say anything to you. They just snap at the end. Yeah, you cry halfway through and don't make it through…. And I said, this is not a big assignment. It's like ten points in the grade book, and you just stand up and read it. And that was really powerful… I had them do a

> reflection at the end of the unit. We reflected on their writing, and all the different big projects that we did. I had them list their favorite poem that we read, and I'm not through all of them yet, because that was just this week, But the majority said "Where I am from" [poem] is their favorite, and they explain they really like hearing about my classmates. I liked sharing about myself. This made me think about things for my childhood that I hadn't thought about in a long time, and it helps me kind of see the value in poetry.

This unit had occurred right before the unit I observed and EF felt it had laid the foundation for the level and types of student relationships I saw during the course of my observations of the unit.

Theme #2: Resources

Knowledge of SEL: "During COVID and the pandemic they were trying to push forward social-emotional learning a lot more but it ended up being a lot of just meditation videos and a lot of share out circles"

EF acknowledged difficulty defining social-emotional learning, stating that "it's a really broad topic," but said that she believes that "being able to communicate with one another…[and] on a level of depth…is an important skill." She also mentioned "being reflective and…mindful of your own emotional state" as being key components of social-emotional competence. Like AB and CD, EF has had no formal SEL training, but said that in her undergraduate program "we would do things that would push our content a little further than just a book, like 'how do you get kids to open up with that reading?...but nothing specifically SEL." Her first formal experience with SEL was through her role as an advisory teacher where she "heard about it as data that could be tracked," but that it was "kind of forced upon me" through a planned advisory curriculum and noted that that materials did not feel very authentic, noting that "it ended up being a lot of just meditation videos and a lot of share out circles…so it was other people kind of

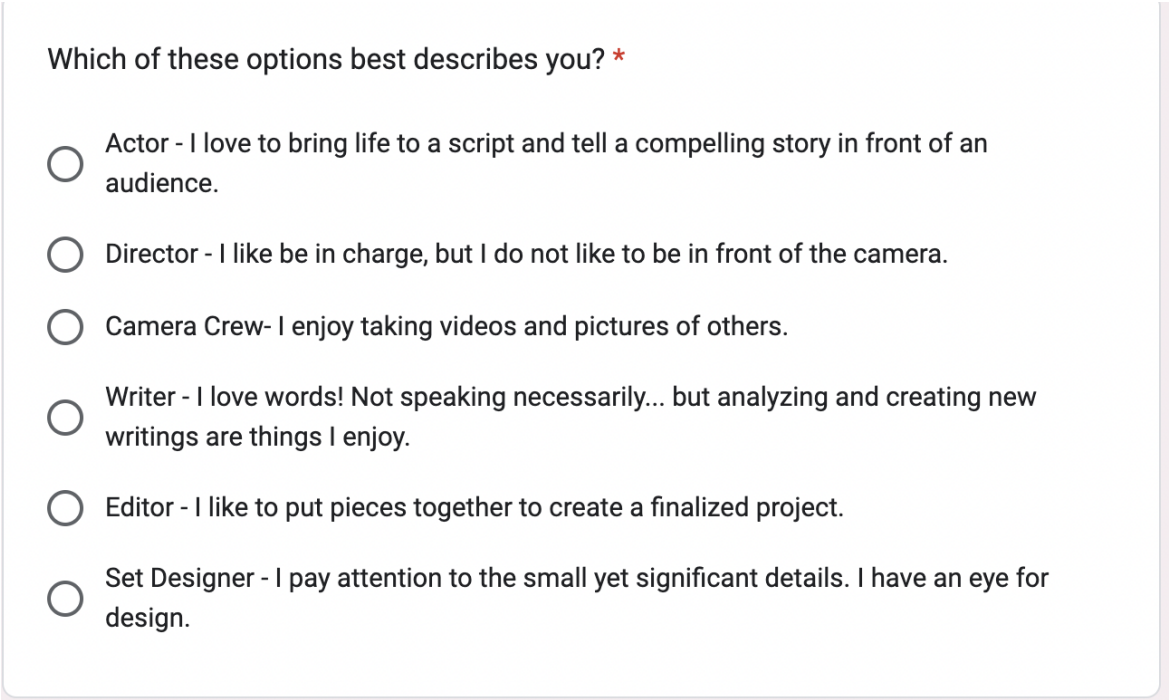
pushing it out and labeling it." After this initial experience, however, "after reading about it [SEL]...and trying to define it in my own terms, I think that I have been exposed to it much earlier. That's just when I first heard about it."

EF shared that after she learned more about SEL, she began to draw more on her own high school experiences for creating SEL-centered activities in her classroom, saying that she thinks about "projects that have stayed with me and [their] social and emotional impact and things of that nature. So sometimes I try and recreate them for the classroom." While she did not mention specific resources used for SEL activities, EF said that "once in a while I'll pull something from conferences like Penny Kittle or Kelly Gallagher." Like AB and CD, EF re-purposed non-SEL materials for her uses in the classroom and noted no significant SEL training in her seven years of teaching.

Knowledge of Students: "how can you teach if you don't actually know their hesitations with learning from the get-go?"

Student feedback: EF looks to student feedback as a way of gauging the success of her curricular and instructional choices, saying "feedback is good," and helps her know if "they see value in [these] activities and that it's not just me." She provides formal opportunities for feedback via end of unit reflections and but also elicits student feedback via activities like a google form where she had students rate their preferred roles for the film project in the unit (see Figure 7, *Shakespeare unit initial survey*). Using the information about her students, EF grouped them according to their self-reported strength to write and film a scene from *Macbeth.*

Figure 7: Shakespeare unit initial survey



Similarly to AB, EF used formalized means to collect student feedback to inform how she might create groups, versus the more organic and anecdotal ways CD collected data on her students. *Text Selection:* EF relied heavily on her knowledge of students to select texts for her units. While she does use the AP Literature curriculum, she described it as "very broad" and explained that this allowed her to choose "any literature. So I have full free reign, and for me it is kind of testing [texts] out every year how kids react." EF's approach to text selection is flexible and iterative, saying that after each unit "I just reassess the text and see how it went…see what students produced from it and then I decide from there." EF uses a variety of texts in her class and considers different aspects of her students when selecting them. For some choices, she uses SEL concepts like empathy to drive her decisions. For example, she mentioned using *Things Fall Apart* by, calling it the "most valuable text I teach all year" because

> it's just a world that a bulk of students have never read about or have never had to kind of put themselves into someone else's shoes, and you have a difficult protagonist, who isn't

> very likable and…him in the culture is out of their realm, and so they're really quick to judge…by the end they're pretty in tune with the culture, and so [when the author] shifts the narrator in the last chapter to the White colonizer, and how he describes Africa… it's so crushing, and that ending is crushing, and I think that emphasizes in the best way possible the danger of a single story, and how you can absolutely degrade entire groups of people based on a single story, and it makes them analyze their world and what they've been told as well. How many times have we received a single story? How many times have we judged someone off a single story, and so that one I chose just because all of the lessons that we can take out of it in the conversations that we have.

While EF believes that students can relate to many characters even if they are not obviously similar, she discussed using the novel *Under the Feet of Jesus* by Helena Maria Viramontes because of its easily accessible relevance to her student's lives. She presented an excerpt of the novel for an AP practice prompt "and the kids liked it so much that I decided to do the entire novel." She explained that, in addition to her students' interest in the book,

> that one I chose because it aligns with a lot of our kids' back stories…. immigration is a huge theme, and it follows a family [of] migrant farm workers.Your protagonist isn't killed off, and it ends with [her] fight[ing] back. She's working against systems that are kind of against her in the story, and she ends with this very light of hope, like she's a kind of a beacon of hope at the end, and she in strong protagonist, and I just wanted to cry at the end of last year with the level of conversation that kids were having. They were coming to class with the story read. They were referencing, and I just told them, I said, I don't care how the [AP] test goes. You've arrived. This is how a college class would look. This is how I hope you have conversations about people in real life. This is really powerful. So those are how I pick kind of the big novels.

In the unit EF presented for the study, she used Shakespeare's *The Tragedie of Macbeth.* She explained that she chose to include a Shakespeare play because her students, seniors, had not yet been taught one at the school and that since Shakespeare is the most referenced author on the AP Literature exam, "I feel they need that exposure." EF felt that the play was doable even though her students had no exposure to Shakespeare because it is "only about one hundred pages," but also that she "chose Macbeth because I think for seniors, that ambition is so high. But there's some danger with ambition, so I think they can really relate to that." EF represented a blend of

AB and CD's approaches to selecting texts, considering both the academic (and testing) needs of her students, but also took into consideration how they might relate to and receive the text on a personal level.

Theme #3 Pedagogy

Classroom Atmosphere: "..if kids aren't comfortable sharing out and taking that first step and being vulnerable…then I think everything else kind of fizzles out."

EF placed a high importance on a learning environment that is supportive and safe, explaining that students need to be able to share their thinking before they write and "they're not going to be comfortable putting it onto a page if they can't even say it in your room." She referenced that when discussing literature, many of her seniors "have the thoughts in their head. They have an interpretation. They have something that is of value to bring to the class, but they mostly don't have the confidence or the comfort level" so it becomes even more important that she provide an environment that allows them to feel safe being vulnerable. EF noted that this year many of her students are friends, so "the classroom atmosphere started off really well." Still, EF builds a supportive classroom atmosphere through formal and informal means: she provided consistent group work and opportunities to collaborate and puts an emphasis on building collective knowledge as a class. The class itself consisted of 7 tables with 4 seats per table. Student art adorned the walls and EF had posters of famous women of color posted on one wall of her room. During both observations she had instrumental music playing during the first 10 minutes of class while students completed a warm up. The feeling of the classroom itself was calm but fast-paced. EF had a predictable routine that was replicated in each observation (warm up, pair-share, share

out, present learning objectives, direct instruction/modeling, group work); students transitioned easily between these steps, which implied that this is a typical format for EF's classes.

Relationships: "At my first school in my undergrad it was stressed really heavily to build relationships with kids. And I don't think you can build relationships without the social and emotional component."

Student-teacher relationships: EF appeared to genuinely enjoy being around her students; during my two observations she greeted students at the door by name and asked them questions unrelated to class, such as asking about a soccer game she knew one had played in, or a scholarship application. In my discussions with EF and during my classroom visits, it became clear that she viewed students as an equal participant in knowledge-building. She conveyed this through the organization of her instruction, which dedicated the majority of class time to collaboration and discussion, which is evident in her unit plan document (Figure 6: EF weekly plan).

Figure 8: EF weekly plan

Act 1 & Act 2: *Character Motivation*	*Act 3 & 4:* *Character Action*	*Act 5:* *Significance of Setting*	*Thematic Significance*	*Interpretation, Claim, Evidence. Commentary*
Graded activities: **I do** Character Motivation Cornell Notes + Rubric Act 1, Scene iii MCQ + Analysis Notes (in class) **You do together/We do** Act 1, Scene v MCQ + (analysis) Rubric (in class) **You do alone** Act 1, Scene vii (graded automatically) **You do together** Act 2, Scene i MCQ + (analysis) Rubric **You do alone** Character Motivation ACES paragraph (ACES rubric) **Time frame:** **1 Week**	**Graded activities:** **I do** Character Action Cornell Notes + Rubric Act 3, Scene i MCQ + Analysis Notes (in class) **You do together/We do** Act 3, Scene iv MCQ + (analysis) Rubric (in class) **You do together** Act 4, Scene i MCQ + (analysis) Rubric **You do alone** Act 4, Scene iii MCQ - (Graded Automatically) **You do alone** Character Action ACES paragraph (ACES rubric- will connect to their scene performance task later on) **Time frame:** **1 Week**	**Graded activities:** **I do** Setting Significance Cornell Notes + Rubric Act 5, Scene i MCQ + Analysis Notes (in class) **You do together/We do** Act 5, Scene iii MCQ + (analysis) Rubric (in class) **You do alone:** Act 5, Final Scenes MCQ + (analysis) Rubric **I do/We do:** Theme Notes/Looking at themes in Macbeth + notes (in class check) **You do alone** Character Action ACES paragraph (ACES rubric- which SCENE that we studied in class, best connects to a theme we studied from Macbeth?) **Time frame:** **1 Week**	**Graded activities:** Macbeth Scene Performance/Reflection (speaking & listening unit final-special rubric) Macbeth final essay - draft #1. (essay rubric) **Time frame:** **1 Week**	Macbeth final essay - draft #2. (Video identification of ACES paragraph elements) Macbeth final essay (rubric adapted from College Board) End with Progress Check #3. **Graded activities:** **Time frame:** **1 Week**

EF used the Gradual Release of Responsibility instructional framework (Fisher & Frey, 2014) to strategically organize her instruction and deliberately include plenty of opportunities for collaboration.

When students spoke, she affirmed them, following their contributions with statements like, “I like how ___ said that,” “It’s interesting how you brought that out, because…” and “that’s a cool connection I had not thought of before…” During classroom instruction, EF repeatedly reminded her students that they were building collective knowledge and reinforced this through the whole-class share outs each group did during my visits. It was evident that EF saw the students as the center of the learning environment, and not herself.

Student-student relationships: Collaboration was a foundational aspect of EF's classroom. In both of my classroom visits the majority of the instructional time was spent in group discussions. Because of this, students worked and talked easily together, regardless of what group they were in. In the first observation students shared with peers who had chosen to analyze the same character as them. During the second observation, students were discussing a scene from the film version of Macbeth and working on their film projects with a group EF had created using their feedback on the Google survey (*Figure 7: Shakespeare unit initial survey*). The dialogue between students was dynamic and self-sustained–they usually ran out of time to talk and kept on topic during discussions. They asked each other questions about the material that went beyond the surface (ie: when discussing one another's drawings, "why did you include a rose on the crown?" "how is this character related to real life?") and corresponded to EF's prompts for the whole class. Students also affirmed one another and easily yielded and gained the floor when discussing. Students also had opportunities to share what their small group had discussed with the whole class. They designated spokespersons easily and listened to one another share. The expectation of collaboration was implicit, and students responded by doing it consistently and doing it well.

Outcomes: "[it] was interesting to hear their view of this character is not just one dimensional, that there were reasons they did what they did."

Identified ELA Outcomes: For this study, EF provided a very detailed overview of the unit (Figure 9: EF-created unit plan) that listed the skills students would master by the end of the unit: "Analyze what textual details reveal about the narrator's perspective and motives, Analyze the function of contrasting characters, Examine the relationship between characters and their setting, Develop textually sustained arguments about interpretations of a text."

Figure 9: EF-created unit plan

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Focus standard(s): AP Skills: 3.1 Explain the function of character, 3.2 Explain the function of setting, 3.3 Explain the function of plot and structure, 3.4 Develop textually substantiated arguments about interpretations of part or all of a text.

• Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
• Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters/archetypes are introduced and developed).
• Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
• Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence</td></tr>
<tr><td>Skills:
Analyze what textual details reveal about the narrator's perspective and motives.
Analyze the function of contrasting characters
Examine the relationship between characters and their setting
Develop textually sustained arguments about interpretations of a text (essay not paragraph)</td><td>Concepts:
Developing Inferences
The impact of decisions
Connecting social, cultural, and historical elements from text to world (Thematic Significance)
Creating a strong interpretation of the literary elements used by the author to convey the story
Supporting claim through well selected evidence followed by strong commentary</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Essential Question/Theme:
What motivates the actions of people?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit Assessment:</td><td>Rubrics</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Final Macbeth Scene: Multiple Choice Question Assessment (Unit Final - Reading Assessment)
• Macbeth Scene Performance/Reflection (speaking & listening unit final)
• Macbeth Final Essay (writing final)
• Progress Check #3. & Progress Check Reflection (language reflection)</td><td>Final Macbeth Scene: Multiple Choice Question Assessment Rubric
Macbeth Scene Performance/Reflection
Final Macbeth Essay Rubric (adapted from College Board, but broken down for further direction)
Free Response Question 3: Literary Argument Rubric</td></tr>
</table>

When we discussed the goals for her unit in the interview, she described them as "understanding character motivation" and using "claim, evidence, and reasoning" to "pinpoint the intentional decisions made by the author and being able to explain that a bit more." During each observation EF presented the learning objective for the lesson to students, along with the relevance of the objective; these were also posted to EF's google classroom. See table 14 for each objective and its corresponding relevance statement.

Table 14: EF learning outcomes and relevance statements

Observation #	Learning Outcome	Relevance Statement

1	By the end of class, students will understand specific character motivations and response to conflict as demonstrated by their completion of the Character Head assignment in Google Classrooms.	“We'll get together and we will do character head, small group discussions and then we're gonna do whole class presentations. But that's where we get to start to talk about what motivates our character, How do we see these characters outside of the play? Because these motivations are not just limited to Macbeth not just limited to Shakespeare. There's a reason why these plays have existed and survived as long as they have. And it's because they are relatable to us. So my hope is that through this conversation we can get to some understanding of those universal themes”
2	By the end of the period students will work together to educate their peers and form a collective class background knowledge over Macbeth and Shakespeare as demonstrated by their Shakespeare Research Project Presentations and the completion of the final column in their KWL charts.	“There is a virtual consensus that background knowledge is essential for reading comprehension. Put simply, the more you know about a topic, the easier it is to read a text, understand it, and retain the information.”

Identified SEL Outcomes: In our interviews, EF stated that the SEL outcome of the unit was empathy and the ability to understand characters’ motivations. While EF formally presented this outcome through certain assignments, like the character head (Figure 10: Character head assignment prompt and Figure 11: Character head student example) it was not framed as a specific SEL outcome in the observed lessons or in the unit documents she submitted for the study. In our conversations, EF frequently referenced students needing the ability to be open to others’ ideas and interpretations, but did not explicitly state that this was a social-emotional competency she was focusing on for the unit.

Figure 10: Character head assignment prompt

Character Head and Analysis Assignment
After reading acts 1-4 in Macbeth, select one major character from the play to analyze.

- Macbeth
- Lady Macbeth
- King Duncan
- Banquo
- Malcom
- Macduff
- The Weird Sisters

Create a Character Head digitally or by hand
Your character's head must include:

- Character's name in large font.
- Include two significant character quotes. These can be said by the character or said about the character.
- Include a minimum of two images relevant to the character (concrete or abstract).
- Include a minimum of three adjectives to describe the character.
- Briefly describe a turning point event OR conflict involving the character. (On the back or the front.)
- Write a motivation statement for the character, What is happening "under the surface" that drives them to act the way they do?
- Real World Connection: When do your character's motivations and actions connect to the real world? When is an example of someone acting similarly due to shared motivations? (You can also connect this to other characters from books, movies, tv shows, video games, etc.)
- The quality of your work should reflect knowledge and understanding of your character.

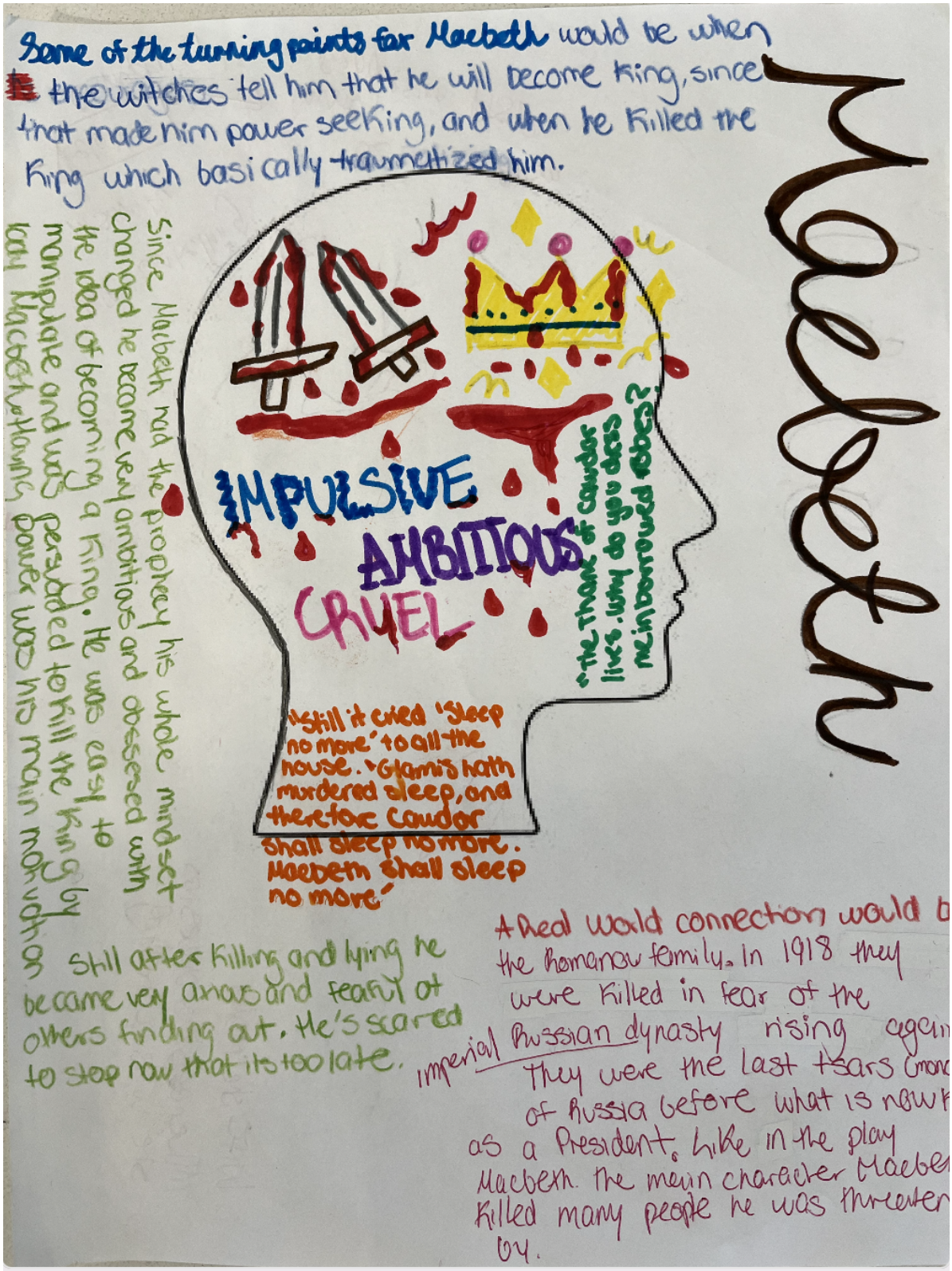
Written element must:
Explain the items on your character's head: the character quotes, the images, the adjectives, the turning point, the motivation statement, the real world connection. This can either be found on the back of the head or typed on an additional sheet of paper.

Your chat/discussion with the class:
Should include the major features of the character and the significance of that character's actions. On Monday, you will meet with other scholars that studied the same character as you and help lead the discussion about your character by explaining the details in your project.

Additional instructions for project completion:

- The head needs an attractive color scheme with virtually no white space. (See examples from the novel *Homegoing* below.
- All text on the head and in the written element should be legible, dark, and attractive. Final text should be in pen/marker or typed.
- Proofread and ensure that your paper and head are free from mistakes in grammar, spelling, and mechanics.

Figure 11: Character head student example



Instructional Strategies: "I think talking…creates a social-emotional element of understanding of peers' experience"

Small group discussion: The majority of EF's instructional time in the featured unit was spent in small group discussion. While EF would present the instructions or prompts to the whole class, most of the talk happened in groups of 3-4 students. In the first lesson I observed, students were grouped according to the character they chose to illustrate for the character head assignment. The purpose was to share their work on the character head (Figure 8: Character Head Student Example) and collectively decide as a group what to present to the whole class about their characters. In EF's weekly plan (Figure 6: EF Weekly Unit Plan), she also articulated deliberate small group opportunities for each act of the play.

Collaborative project: In this unit, EF included a collaborative film project where students would select a scene from Macbeth to recreate. Students were intentionally grouped based on the feedback they gave on the Shakespeare unit initial survey (Figure 5: Shakespeare Initial Unit Survey). Each student had a specific role to complete during the process and the group worked on a collaborative google doc where they wrote their screenplay. In the second classroom observation, students were arranged in these groups to discuss a scene from Joel Cohen's 2021 version of "Macbeth." They were analyzing directorial choices for Macbeth's soliloquy in Act 5, scene 5; each table was assigned a different question and shared out with the whole class. Students were able to discuss the scene thoughtfully using details from the scene using probing language ("tell me more about that"), affirmations ("but you said it so well!") and summarizing the words of others ("Like ____ said, it kind of helps the audience empathize…). Once the groups had finished sharing, EF asked them to continue working on their scenes.

Prompts/questioning: While EF spent much of the classes I observed moving from small group to small group, she facilitated the conversations and work students did with specific prompts and follow-up questions when they shared (both in the small and whole-class discussion). The questions and prompts she presented fell into the following categories: text-dependent, text to world connection, open-ended, and text-to-self, though this was limited in the classes I observed. Table 15 demonstrates examples of the types of questions EF used to facilitate conversations in the classes I observed.

Table 15: EF small group question types & examples

Text-dependent	-In your opinion. which moment/scene from Acts 1-3 has revealed the most about your character? Explain. -What is your character's biggest motivation? Explain why you think this
	Why do you think the director… -Chose to have Macbeth looking at Lady Macbeth's corpse instead of being told by Seyton? -Chose to have the performance in black and white? What mood does this create? -Chooses to have Macbeth walk down a staircase as he talks…. The farther down he goes the farther the shadow covers his face? What might this represent? -Chooses to have Macbeth whisper "Out out, brief candle!" Even though in the play it ends in an explanation point? -Chose to place Macbeth alone in the scene instead of having Seyton around him?
Text to world	How do we see these characters outside of the play?

	Why/How is your character relatable to a modern day audience?
Text to self	How many of you have ever been manipulated by someone because they wanted you to do something for your family?

Assessment of outcomes: "I feel like they have a really strong understanding of character motivation, and they're able to see that motivation in others play out a little bit more"

Formal assessments: EF used the following formal assessments in this unit to measure her students' ELA outcomes: "ACES" paragraph, Character head illustration, and the Macbeth scene mini film. She was pleased with their understanding of characters and that students had very effective conversations: "I think discussion wise, I would say yes…[they] mastered in a lot of ways. Sometimes it feels like a little mini college class in here." EF did note, however, that her students' ability to discuss was stronger than their writing because they lack stamina. She stated,

> I would say we can write a very strong analysis paragraph, but putting it together for a very strong analysis essay, we're not quite there at this point in the unit…I noticed that we hit the first paragraph very strongly and then the second and third kind of taper out.

The skills around understanding setting and details were assessed in the mini film, though EF acknowledged that

> we ended up doing more compare and contrast than I had originally anticipated…I mostly wanted to use the film as just tools for understanding…but it ended up being really nice for them to compare what was in the play versus what was in the film or compare different scenes in general.

EF felt that the film project also helped her students strengthen their ability to "analyze the characters, figure out the characters in the scene, their major motivations that you wanted to push

through and what they should look like, analyze the setting where you want that to take place," as well as explore author's purpose as they decided how to "highlight some of the key factors that you want people to take away from your scene."

EF was pleased with the outcome of the character head assignment as well, stating that

> [the] character heads were a really cool demonstration of that [choosing quotations to support your thinking] on top of symbolism with the images. So we're hitting all these ELA standards in that they're able to identify and discuss and support. But then, with SEL, what was fun was to see their interpretations again, kind of creating that empathy piece."

The character head assignment also facilitated what EF called "aha moments" in the group discussions, stating that "I would notice that kids would have different adjectives on there, and some would be really harsh on their character, and another kid would bring that in and say, oh, well I actually saw her this way," which in the end

> helped them become more confident with differences in opinions and knowing that it's okay to have interpreted it one way, but being open to others…when they presented those character heads as a group, they would share out sometimes those discussions as well, well, we didn't all agree on this piece mm-hmm. so we saw it this way and this way. So, um, I think in that, that emotional, bringing in those social-emotional realms is kind of more of that real world skill that you oftentimes won't see the world the same as someone else. Right. Um, but there's still a lot that you can learn from those differences.

In addition to the character head assignment, which was intended to assess both SEL and ELA goals, EF assigned an end of unit reflection to her students which was designed to elicit feedback about the unit as a whole, as well as students' self-assessment of how they participated in the collaborative film project.

Informal assessments: EF admitted that planning for formal assessments is more challenging for SEL skills, saying "it's hard to put SEL into numerical data." While both the character head assignment and the mini film project were formal assessments for ELA skills, they also informally assessed SEL skills like empathy and communication. EF noted that she "was very

happy with how much they worked together in the groups," and that because of the type of collaboration the project required, "understanding group dynamics in general was an unexpected or a really nice addition to this unit." The character head assignment also created an avenue for her to learn more about her students, but also provided them an opportunity to connect more deeply to the characters and develop their social-emotional skills:

> It's funny to see which characters kids gravitate to or empathize with just because in their conversations they might share, well, I think this is because of something I've witnessed in my own life or something I've been through. And so I think talking like that creates a social-emotional element of understanding peers' experience. But it becomes kind of a safe experience to talk through it, because you're talking about it with Shakespeare and you've never killed a king, but maybe you've done something kind of bad to receive power or you felt that you were in a spot like Lady Macbeth where you were confined. Um, and maybe you made a decision to kind of put yourself in a better life and, um, it maybe was a decision that you're not super proud of, but you felt caught up in the moment. So that's where SEL kind of ties with It.

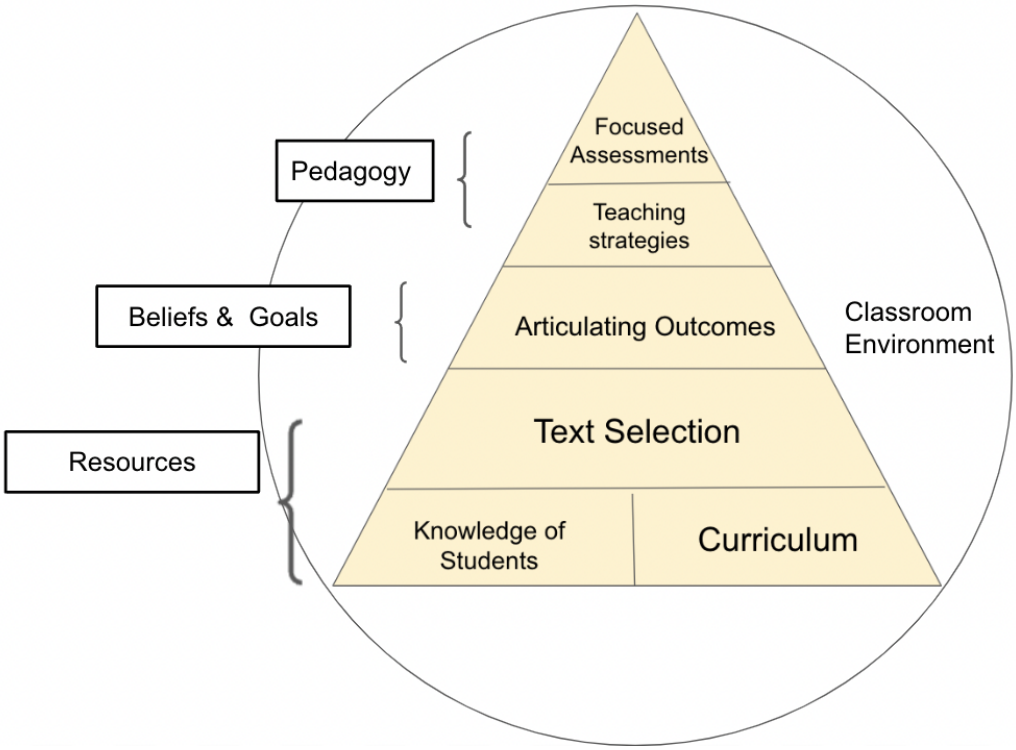
Overall, EF found her unit to be a success on both SEL and ELA fronts, but identified work that still needed to be done for students to be ready for the Advanced Placement exam. However, she felt students did well in identifying with characters that seem very different from themselves, which was a major aim for the unit.

Conclusion

During the course of this study, three overarching themes emerged through analysis of each individual case and their work on SEL skills in the ELA classroom using literature: Beliefs and Goals, Resources, and Pedagogy. When looking across cases, all three participants described their experiences with planning for SEL-focused ELA instruction through a discussion of resources and their individual beliefs and goals about ELA and SEL instruction, which informed their approach to selecting texts and designing instruction for each unit. Through my in-class

observations of each participant, I was able to see similarities between how their pedagogy reflected (at least in design) the outcomes they articulated using the resources at their disposal, as well as their own personal experiences with social-emotional learning. Figure 9 depicts the interaction between the different themes and the resulting sub-themes that emerged from a cross-case analysis of the participants. A cross-case analysis and discussion of the findings in the context of the literature will be presented in Chapter 5, followed by implications for practice and recommendations for further research.

Figure 12: Components of SEL-Integrated ELA Instruction



Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand the methods of teachers who deliberately integrate SEL skills into their secondary English Language Arts lessons. This chapter begins with a brief cross-case analysis that will present the general patterns amongst the data from each case. Then, the major findings of the study across the cases will be discussed using the research questions to frame these findings in the context of research and theory. The chapter concludes with implications for secondary literacy education and recommendations for practice, suggestions for further research, and a brief summary of the limitations of the study.

Summary and Discussion of Results

Cross Case Analysis

This study endeavored to answer the question: "How do secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers use literature to enhance and develop social-emotional learning (SEL) in their adolescent students?" The participants in the study saw the ELA classroom and literature as a means for addressing important SEL skills, and had almost identical beliefs about what the aim of ELA instruction is meant to do: produce functionally literate people who find enjoyment in and exposure to new people and ideas through reading. While all three participants expressed that SEL was an important, achievable goal and demonstrated the qualities of Culturally Proficient teachers that value relationships and teach the "whole child" (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Gay, 2000), their approaches to ELA and SEL-infused instruction is still in the nascent phase. The experiences of the teachers in this study mirror those of teachers across the nation, with researchers noting that while school-wide implementation of SEL is considered the most effective approach, many campuses offer SEL instruction inconsistently and on an individual

teacher basis (Bridgeland et al., 2013), which is insufficient for large-scale change. Based on the findings in Chapter 4, it is clear that SEL is still very much an ambiguous element of the ELA classroom, even for teachers who self-identify as using it purposefully. One reason for this may be that recognition of what SEL is and the subsequent implementation of strategies that develop SEL is inconsistent (Jones, et al., p. 2, 2019). EF mentioned in her interview that defining SEL was difficult because it was "such a broad topic" and, like AB and CD, had received no formal professional development on it. Lack of a clear SEL model and framework may have led to "mushier" outcomes and activities for SEL since there were no concrete standards to tie them to. If a district or school site has not made a commitment to identify a model and standards for social-emotional learning instruction, there is no foundation from which to identify outcomes, plan instruction, or have a standard understanding of what SEL even is.

Without a shared definition and vision of what SEL instruction looks like, it is very difficult to train teachers in it, let alone expect they will be able to plan for and assess it in a systematic way (Reed & Sheridan, 2021). This is evidenced by the various experiences teachers in the study had with SEL training (or lack thereof) or materials. When teachers *did* have SEL-adjacent experiences like EF and the advisory curriculum she said was "forced" upon her, or AB's comment that most SEL resources were "very surface," they were described negatively or portrayed as inauthentic. While not explicitly an SEL resource, CD's positive experience with the AVID curriculum points to potential for professional development in a standardized, outcome-oriented program to be successful, which will be discussed in further detail in the "recommendation" section of this chapter. Not surprisingly, inadequate SEL materials and training are a common barrier to successful implementation of social-emotional teaching strategies, as evidenced in much of the literature (Anyon, et al., 2016; Kress et. al., 2004). It is

important to note that, despite having no official training in SEL, all of the participants in the study more or less agreed upon the definition of what SEL is, identifying it as perspective-taking, empathy, communication, and self-reflection, which are key competencies in many SEL models, including the SEL six domains that the Harvard Taxonomy Project identified in its analysis of 34-widely-adopted SEL frameworks (Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning, EASEL, 2022). This continuity across teachers indicates that teachers may already, without committing to an SEL program or standards, identify the address soft skills in their students, albeit informally, if they display traits of being a Culturally Proficient teacher.

The study also revealed that there are competing needs for teachers' attention when deciding what text to use in their classrooms and why, which mirrored the diverging and long standing opinions that exist on a larger scale concerning the purpose of texts chosen for ELA instruction. Namely, should they prepare students for college or be relevant to students' lives and read for enjoyment? (Applebee, 1974; Hosic, 1917). The teachers in this study were no exception, and described using both qualitative and quantitative data to select texts for their lessons, which reflects the aesthetic (enjoyment) and efferent (informational) aspects of Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory model of reading (1968). For the participants, designated curriculum provided by their sites was a starting point for what they might select, but they all used their knowledge of their students to "vet" and ultimately determine what they might choose, which corresponds to a Culturally Relevant teaching approach, where teachers consider relevance, relatability when selecting learning materials (Gay, 2000). CD mentioned that the unit she submitted for the study initially identified the Sherman Alexie novel *The Absolutely True Diaries of a Part Time Indian* as the novel study but she felt that students would relate to *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas more on a thematic level. AB and EF described similar

experiences, both choosing texts that they described as ones "[students] can relate to" and that "align with a lot of our kids' backstories."

However, qualitative measures like interest and relevance were not the only aspects of a text the teachers in this study looked for. EF mentioned the AP test as a need to consider when selecting the text for her unit, noting that even though her students may not directly relate to *Macbeth* at the outset, "I feel they need that exposure." She also felt that, since her students were seniors, with careful planning, they could connect and find relevance with the theme of ambition in the play. CD looked at the themes of the texts and how well they lay a foundation for subsequent units. AB mentioned quantitative aspects like difficulty and complexity. Since her students' lexile levels fell far below their grades levels she adapted the texts to look "older," saying that she converts all of the texts in the class to PDFs so they "look like grade level work."

All three participants were guided by curriculum but ultimately demonstrated agency in their text selection, suggesting that teachers juggle multiple concerns when selecting texts, either consciously or subconsciously, and use relevance and background knowledge as a means to choose appropriate texts for SEL purposes rather than quantitative measures alone. Like their definitions of and attitude towards SEL, the teachers in the study described very similar methods and rationale for choosing texts. They also described concepts like transportation (ie: "getting lost in a book") and perspective taking (ie: CD's comment about using reading as a means to "travel" and meet new people) without naming them as such or realizing the biological and emotional benefits on students (Johnson, 2012; Mar & Oatley, 2008; Rosenblatt, 1938). All three participants described their desire for students to enjoy their reading and become immersed, pointing to Bruner's (1986) description of what makes literature unique, and connecting to Rosenblatt's concept of aesthetic reading (1978). As evidenced by the participants, teachers may

see "getting lost in a book" as a goal without realizing the biological and emotional benefits of doing so--by teaching preservice teachers more about the impacts of reading, we may help them formalize and systematize strategies for choosing and using texts.

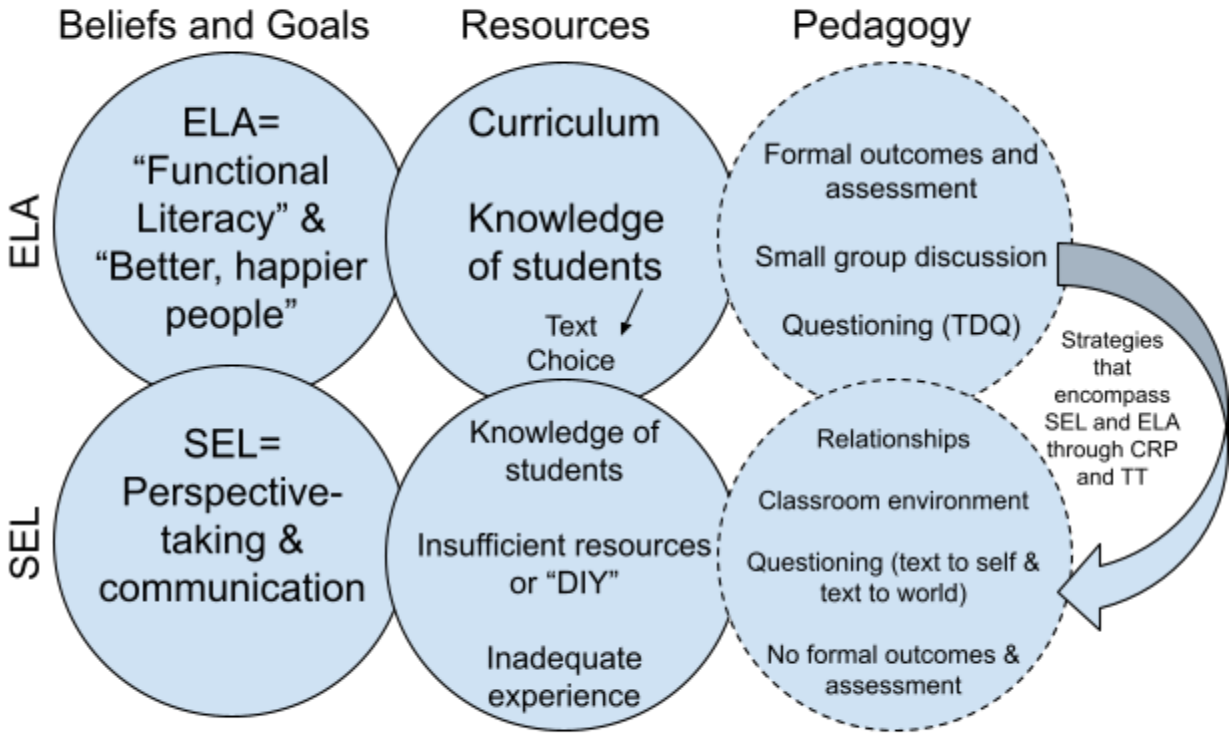
Defining SEL and measuring SEL outcomes proved even more difficult, as all of the teachers struggled to clearly define, present, and assess SEL competencies in their unit, which squares with the literature on the proliferation of SEL definitions and programs (Berg et al., 2017) and the resulting difficulty in creating common language, and therefore consistent implementation (Jones, et al., 2019). Though the most clearly articulated unit (EF's) was the most successful in establishing outcomes for SEL and ways to measure them, it was still unclear how EF established a baseline and determined SEL growth in each student. The participants described their SEL goals in generalities (ie: "What makes a bully?" or "be able to communicate with others") and did not link them explicitly to formal assessment opportunities defined as measuring SEL. Because the teachers did not have clear SEL definitions or standards to draw from, they–predictably–had difficulty articulating and assessing them. ELA outcomes, on the other hand, were clear for each unit and assessment, which suggests that clear standards and standards-aligned curriculum are associated with better-defined outcomes and ways to assess them.

One significant finding of the study was the crucial role of relationships and knowledge of students to the teachers' planning of the SEL components of their classroom. Student-teacher relationships are a key feature of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and were evident in multiple aspects of each participant's work, but especially in the classroom atmosphere, which is also called out in models for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Brown-Jeffey & Cooper, 2011). Classroom atmosphere became a very important aspect of each teacher's description of their

practice and this always went hand in hand with providing opportunities for collaboration and discussion. The most prevalent strategy teachers used was questioning; most of the questions used fell into the text-dependent, text-to self, and text-to-world categories. The classroom experiences the teachers in the study designed were informed heavily by reader-response and transactional theory, though to varying degrees of success. Each teacher had standards-based outcomes outlined for each text but allowed for various interpretations grounded in text and shared via conversation with peers and teacher, which aligns with Rosenblatt's theory that understanding is built through student dialogue between a "text's constraints and their peers' responses" (O'Flahavan & Wallis, 2005).

The emphasis on co-created knowledge is echoed in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, which is grounded in collaboration and the valuing of all voices and perspectives in the classroom as a means of empowering students in and out of the classroom (Gay, 2000). The common beliefs, resources and strategies across cases in each theme are demonstrated in Figure 13: Cross Case Analysis Findings. The separate elements of the figure represent elements of ELA and SEL instruction that remain to be integrated formally, but the arrow connecting the pedagogy theme illustrates elements of instruction that addressed both ELA and SEL needs through the teacher's (in this case subconscious) use of Culturally Proficient Pedagogy and Transactional theory. It was still important to keep these areas distinct, however, since only ELA outcomes were formally assessed by each participant.

Figure 13: Cross Case Analysis Findings



Research Question #1

RQ 1 was concerned with the training and resources teachers receive in service of integrating SEL competencies in their ELA coursework. The data collected from the three participants in the study indicated a gap in the professional development available for teachers for both social-emotional learning in general, as well as in integrating it into existing ELA curriculum.

Theme #2 Resources:

All three participants acknowledged different informal experiences as driving their own use of SEL competencies in the classroom, which ranged from being part of a large family to reflecting on one's own high school experience. They all described a process of "knowing" what SEL was without naming it, and *then* encountering it later in a professional setting where it was "labeled." Interestingly enough, this innate understanding was echoed in the three participants' definitions of SEL; though they worded their conceptions of SEL differently, they all cited empathy, communication, and self-reflection as crucial aspects of social-emotional learning, which aligned with the definition set out by the study *before* data was collected: "self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making" (Durlak et al., p. 400). This suggests that secondary students have very targeted SEL skills that teachers may naturally identify, indicating that there can be common SEL goals across classes (and even sites and districts), which would help in selecting an SEL model to use. All three teachers embodied traits of Culturally Proficient teachers, specifically around knowledge of students; through their understanding of who their students are academically, culturally, and emotionally, the three participants identified common needs across the adolescents in their classes (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The participants' experiences with inadequate training in SEL is consistent with the literature, as teachers often report little to no training, time, or formal support in developing and enacting SEL-focused activities in their practice (Martinez, 2016; Kress et. al., 2004). This lack of formal familiarity with SEL may also explain why none of the teachers in the study cited the positive impacts of SEL like improved academic outcomes, increased positive relationships with peers and adults, and emotional resiliency and connection to the community (Durlak et. al., 2011;

see also Taylor et. al., 2017; Beyer, 2017; Hawkins et. al., 1999) as reasons for implementing it, nor did they indicate they knew of these positive effects. Without a complete understanding of the potential power of a deliberate and systematic implementation of an SEL-integrated curriculum, teachers may be less likely to see the success and value of it (Reimers et. al., 2012).

The formalized SEL learning experiences described by two of the teachers were interesting in that they were still not aimed intentionally at SEL. One teacher described AVID as her inspiration for incorporating aspects of SEL in her classroom, and another cited an experience at a literacy conference session about mentor texts as an introduction to ways she might address SEL in her class. It was only in the teacher's interpretation of the material presented that it became a tool for professional development in the SEL realm. When it came to resources for SEL, the participants' experience varied, though it reflected the "DIY" theme of repurposing resources for one's own intentions. Two of the participants referenced using SEL resources that were inadequate and described them as "surface." There seemed to be a disconnect between what was offered as "authentic" SEL curriculum and material and what the teachers actually found useful. The participant's experiences ran parallel to Martinez's 2016 study of how teachers successfully implement SEL into their curriculum found that participating educators expressed a strong commitment to integrating SEL practices in a deliberate way but noted that they were most successful when they were integrated in the curriculum (not simply an "add-on") and when the school had a shared vocabulary for their expectations and experiences.This points to the challenge in developing standardized materials for a diverse population with different needs.

All three participants used their knowledge of their students to identify the social-emotional needs they wanted to focus on. In the absence of official training, teachers

relied on their personal beliefs about why SEL is important and discussed their own experiences when explaining the importance of SEL. This aligns with the "teaching the whole child" component of the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy model, and exemplifies the role of a culturally responsive teacher as being multidimensional themselves, bringing various elements of their own experiences in the world to the classroom (Gay, 2000). There was an interesting alignment of how each teacher defined SEL, with all three identifying empathy and "stop and think" as a major goal of their instruction. These two competencies overlap with the CASEL domains of Self-management and Social awareness (CASEL, 2023) and the "cognitive" and "social" domains of the Harvard Taxonomy project (Jones, et al, 2019).

Research Question #2

The second RQ of the study was concerned with how teachers select literature to use in their ELA/SEL-integrated lessons. While all of the participants used existing curriculum to guide their units, they exercised autonomy when choosing the final text to include. The teachers in the study primarily used knowledge of their students' experiences, interests, and reading abilities to choose texts, which is consistent with student-centered instructional models like Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1996) and Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory (1938). Furthermore, the *way* the participants utilized the text during lessons provides insight into how ELA teachers may subconsciously reference Transactional Theory when selecting texts for their classroom (Rosenblatt, 1968).

Theme #2 Resources:

All three teachers in the study enacted the student-centered approach towards text choice, but also considered quantitative measures like lexile level, difficulty and presence in curriculum or

tests, which mirrors the competing needs English programs must consider described in Applebee's (1974) work on the high school English canon. When selecting literature for their courses, the participants began with the established curriculum to guide what type of text to choose and what topic to address, but ultimately most frequently used what they knew about their students to select a text. All three teachers considered what their students would find relevant when choosing what to read; they interpreted relevance as students seeing themselves represented in the text (either directly through similar experiences/character background or race) or students being able to find more abstract connections to the text (like being able to empathize with Lady Macbeth's reaction to her limited social status in *Macbeth*). All three teachers described using literature to expose students to other perspectives to help them address bias through perspective-taking (Smagorinsky (2013; Kaufman & Libby, 2012; Belet, 2018). In EF and CD's case, they presented texts that, on the outset, might seem unrelatahle (ie: *Macbeth* and 12th graders in 2023 or *THUG*, which features predominantly black characters and CD's mostly-Asian, Filipino, and white students) but, through their activities and assignments, pushed students to understand and empathize with characters. Two of the teachers explicitly mentioned student enjoyment as a factor when choosing a text, and one of the participants discussed framing texts in the context of careers students were interested in. For EF, reading Macbeth challenged her students to connect to a character that seems difficult to relate to.

In addition to these qualitative aspects of the text, two of the teachers in the study considered aspects like lexile level and standards/Advanced Placement reading lists when selecting texts for their unit. Though never they explicitly stated reasons for doing so, the teachers in the study all chose texts that would be categorized as literature versus Young Adult fiction with the exception of AB, whose anchor text is designated as children's literature.

However, given the average Lexile level of her students, it appears that this text still had potential to be complex enough to require the "deep psychological processing of author's intentions and character's subjective experiences" (Demulder et. al., 2017) necessary to elicit social-emotional benefits. Interestingly, the participant's thought process for selecting texts and the criteria they used represented a combination of the competing factors that shaped the secondary english language arts reading list. Applebee's (1974) extensive cataloging of the evolution of high school canon illustrates the friction between teaching texts that convey national and cultural values, texts whose value lie in their ability to teach critical thinking and analysis, texts that provide models for composition skills, texts that prepare students for college, and texts that are read for enjoyment and personal connection. The three participants in the study considered all of these factors when discussing their curriculum, but their discussion of these texts tended to skew heavily towards how students would connect to and make sense of the texts versus the quantitative value of the text (Lexile level, difficulty, status as college-level text), even if the quantitative value of the text placed it in the challenging range.

Theme #3 Pedagogy:

The activities and techniques teachers chose to pair with the texts they selected followed Rosenblatt's model of Transactional Theory to varying degrees, but were present for all three participants through the use of text-dependent questions and student to student discussion. Analyzing the pedagogical moves of the teachers also provides potential insight into why the texts they chose did fall into the literature category versus young adult fiction regardless of whether the teacher stated using literature as a specific intention. All three participants used text-dependent questions in some form to engage their students with the texts in their unit. According to Fisher et al., (2015) there are four levels of text dependent questions, building in

complexity with each level; level one questions prompt the reader to discuss details and convey general understanding of the text, level two questions prompt students to locate and discuss aspects of the author's craft and technique, level three questions require the reader to think more abstractly about the text and its meaning or connection to other texts, and level four questions are open-ended opportunities for students to apply their learning in various ways (like a research project or, in the case of CD's class, a socratic seminar, or in EF's mini film project). Fisher and Frey (2012) note that not all texts warrant this level of questioning, however, and require a level of complexity that prompts deeper reading for meaning; in other words, not all texts are "worthy" of text-dependent questioning strategies (p. 2). This notion was reinforced by Bal and Veltkamps' 2013 study, which tracked the differences in empathy between readers of fiction and non-fiction and found that the mental workout required by readers of fiction tended to affect their helping behavior in a positive way, versus those who did not, who experienced no change. The most effective texts for affecting social-emotional learning tend to be more ambiguous, thus requiring readers to process the author's intentions and take on the perspectives of others in order to understand character motivations and actions. The psychological burden put on readers of fiction can be absent when reading non-literary texts, as often the purpose of this type of writing is to be predictable, easily read, and clearly understood. This meaningful transportation is not possible with all forms of fiction either, since popular fiction tends to provide clear answers on the outset, limiting these gaps and making it easier to read. The participants in this study engaged their students with the featured texts (except *The Hate U Give*, which is categorized as young adult fiction) using a mix of text-dependent questions and text-to-world and text-to-self connection prompts, suggesting that a crucial aspect of integrating SEL via text-to-world and text-to-self connection prompts must be a strong foundation of an appropriately complex text,

teacher-facilitated discussion with peers about the literary aspects of the texts using text-dependent questions, and opportunities for text-to-self and text-to-world connections.

The process the participants described in selecting texts mirrored the tensions outlined in the "evolution of the reading list" in Chapter 2, highlighting the still-current struggle to address the "whole" adolescent, especially in those who will soon enter college or the workforce. Knowledge of their students ended up being a foundational piece of how each teacher described their approach to SEL within the content, which a a key feature of Rosenblatt's work on using texts to explore student identity as well as a major tenet of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy suggesting the cruciality of knowing our students beyond just their academic and demographic data, but as people.

Research Question #3

RQ #3 was aimed at understanding how ELA teachers set goals for SEL-integrated instruction and measure their success towards these goals. All three teachers in the study had standards-based ELA outcomes articulated in their lesson and unit materials as well as formal methods for assessing these outcomes. SEL outcomes, however, were less clearly defined and therefore more challenging to measure. Participants reported measuring SEL skills like open-mindedness and empathy in informal ways such as through discussions and during outside of class interactions. The data collected towards this research question indicates the need for a systematic way to develop clear SEL outcomes, whether at the site, department, or grade level, and means by which to authentically assess them. The disparity between clear ELA goals and corresponding assessments and SEL goals and assessments presents an interesting conundrum; since all participants in the study used established curriculum with pre-set standards-based goals

and assessments, it is possible that these were more clearly articulated because they already existed, whereas the SEL goals for the unit were created by the teacher.

***Theme #1 Beliefs and Goals**:*

All of the participants in the study stated that they felt the role of their ELA classroom was to prepare students to be proficient readers and writers in order to be successful in their future endeavors. In tandem with this goal, the teachers expressed a desire to use literature to help students be open to other perspectives, self-reflect, and find enjoyment in reading. All three teachers described reading books as an opportunity for students to learn more about the world and, in turn, learn about themselves and "become better and happier people." The teachers believed SEL goals were teachable (Greenberg, et al., 2017) and that they were important (Bridgeland, 2013) yet had difficulty integrating SEL in a systematized way. Despite articulating these goals during interviews, the teachers acknowledged that they did not have formalized ways beyond classroom discussion to assess whether or not all students had made gains in social-emotional competencies. The classroom observations revealed multiple opportunities to practice social-emotional skills like collaboration, student discussion, text-dependent questions and assignments geared towards understanding character, but no formal means by which to measure whether or not students had become more empathetic or open to others' perspectives.

Theme #3 Pedagogy:

Each teacher had multiple assessments for measuring the ELA outcomes articulated in the unit (at least 2 per unit). For the most part, if social-emotional competency *was* measured, it was done so in an organic and unplanned way and did not happen across the board for all students. EF was the only teacher that said she included formal reflection assignments at the end of her unit that

assessed self-reflection, though the prompts were geared towards self-assessment on academic progress in the unit. Interestingly, both EF and AB had a drawing assignment that they used to assess student understanding of characters, which (perhaps unintentionally) also could have also "measured" the students' degree of empathy for the character. Discussion was a key aspect of the participants' pedagogy, whether through student-teacher discussion or peer-to-peer conversations. Two teachers measured social-emotional learning in this study through students' discussion with peers, though the discussions were not tracked in such a way that the teacher could assess each students' progress. AB, the teacher of the Focused Reading class, relied less on peer-peer discussion to gauge student empathy with the character than responses to her questions in the small groups she ran. She reported that small group instruction allowed her to know "what was going on" with her students more easily than whole-class instruction.

The nebulous task of defining success can be difficult in the best of circumstances with clear outcomes and tools for measuring growth. For the soft skills encompassed under the SEL umbrella, this can become even more challenging. The research outlined in Chapter two points to the difficulty in meaningfully integrating SEL without clear resources and time to do so. Since the teachers in the study took it upon themselves to integrate SEL into their own curriculum, it is not a surprise that the implementation was uneven.

Implications for Policy and Practice

It is clear that ELA teachers are aware that the students in their classrooms require more than just instruction in academic content and the participants in this study were no exception. Despite the knowledge and desire to incorporate SEL into their ELA curriculum, this study revealed that consistent implementation is still a challenge, particularly in setting clear and

measurable goals for social-emotional learning. Even the teacher who used the “Identity and Relationships" curriculum geared towards helping students “explore their own identity as well as the different identities of those around them in their diverse communities” (SDUSD Office of Instructional Innovation, 2022) did not have a reliable or consistent method for assessing SEL goals for the unit. Moreover, while the teachers all generally shared the same definition of social-emotional learning, none of them had an official source or model they referenced when discussing social-emotional learning, and they all shared that they had no formal training on SEL or implementing it in their classrooms. Despite this, many of the SEL-minded moves the participants made fell under the umbrella of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (ie: the emphasis on relationships, student-centered activities, inclusion of culturally relevant and high interest texts, and focus on addressing the academic and social needs of children). This suggests that Culturally Relevant pedagogy may be a precursor to more formal SEL instruction, and provide another entry point through which teachers may enter this work. Given the findings of the study, I suggest the following recommendations for policy and practice.

Site or district-wide commitment to an SEL model: It is clear that the three participants in this study would have benefitted from a clearly articulated vision and definition of what SEL is, and distinct criteria for evaluating a students’ mastery of the various domains of SEL. School or district-wide definitions of SEL, adoption of a model and associated standards, and consistent, sustained professional development in the chosen model might result in more deliberate, and thus successful, implementation of SEL instruction and assessment. School-wide adopting and implementation of a shared SEL model and standards is considered the one of the most effective methods of addressing social-emotional skills in students (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013; Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg, et al., 2017).

Collaborative curriculum development that fuses SEL and ELA: CD's experience with AVID as precursor to her interest in SEL provides an intriguing avenue through which to consider how existing curriculums might be layered onto standards-based curriculum. Exploring the AVID framework as a means for looking at instructional models and strategies for integrating SEL more purposefully and consistently in ELA classes might be a promising path forward, especially given that the program was originally developed for English Language Arts classes.

Teacher credentialing programs: In order to educate pre-service ELA teachers on various avenues through which English Language-content area teachers can impact their students' hard and soft skills, there should be a stronger emphasis on and training in the relational aspects of teaching. Whenever possible, programs should adopt and teach clear outcomes and strategies for creating authentic relationships with students and leveraging them to better design and implement ELA instruction that engages and empowers adolescents on social-emotional and academic levels. Credentialing programs should also consider deeper instruction and strategies for using and selecting texts for an ELA curriculum, as well as methods for successfully using student-centered instructional models like Reader-Response and Culturally Proficient Pedagogy to address instruction in literature specifically.

Site-based support for in-service teachers: To further inform and develop the practice of implementing deliberate and measurable SEL instruction for in-service teachers, sites should consider taking on this work schoolwide through professional learning communities (PLCs). Once an SEL model and set of standards is identified for the school, content-area PLCs can work to integrate SEL into their content curriculum by identifying focus standards that complement their content-area standards for each unit and ensuring that these SEL standards are represented in both formative and summative assessments. This will result in student data that PLCs can use

to inform next steps, as well as provide a means for measuring growth and impact of teaching. Work in content areas versus whole-staff or grade level is recommended since research suggests that the most effective integration of SEL into the curriculum is through content courses and involves teacher input into the activities and assessments developed to address social-emotional skills (Greenberg, et al., 2017; Durlak et al., 2011). PLCs would provide an ideal opportunity for context teachers to purposefully collaborate, though sites may consider focusing on certain SEL standards at the same time to ensure consistency and continuity across the disciplines.

Adopt tools for measuring SEL: Along with school or district-wide adoption of an SEL model, a shared assessment for SEL skills, like the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), should be considered for establishing baseline data. The test, which comes in different versions and lengths tailored to students from grades K-8 and 9-12, is aligned to the CASEL framework, so it would be preferable to use it in tandem with a model based on CASEL domains (LeBuffe, et al., 2018). An assessment could help districts or schools interested in integrating SEL instruction into their core program address the challenge of meaningfully measuring SEL competencies in students and thus enable teachers to plan SEL-integrated instruction more effectively.

Suggestions for further research

There is still much to be learned about how successful SEL programs geared towards adolescents work. Currently, the majority of them are for elementary-aged students, and those programs developed for secondary students lack current data on their viability (van de Sande, F. et al., 2019; Hamilton et al., 2019; Yeager, 2017). More research is needed on how to accurately measure SEL skills in a classroom setting, though the assessments suggested in the "Implications

for Practice" section seem to be promising avenues through which to formalize and measure SEL outcomes, though no one tool has been cited as being the best means for assessment (Nathanson, et al., 2016). I made suggestions for how secondary teaching credential programs might approach preparing credential candidates to leverage student relationships in order to plan for meaningful SEL-infused literature lessons, but it would be helpful to get a sense of how large credential programs are preparing their secondary ELA teachers to choose and use literature in light of the widely-recognized need for schools to reach the "whole child." Along these lines, more research is needed in understanding how "typical" ELA teachers use SEL in the classroom, given that the participants in this study prioritized and valued SEL. It would be important to understand how ELA teachers not currently motivated to use SEL practices define and see its relevance (or lack thereof) to their practice, as well as the barriers to implementing instruction and assessment in social-emotional skills. Thus, a broader sample of teachers would need to include those who do not prioritize SEL in their instruction, in order to garner more robust understandings of how ELA teachers in general approach soft skill development in their students.

Research on the impact of secondary ELA content-embedded SEL programs like Yale's RULER program would also provide a better understanding of how adolescents in particular respond to SEL instruction embedded in the school day in their content-area classes. Currently, the major of research in this area is for programs involving elementary school students (Brackett et al., 2019). Finally, more research is needed to understand how school leaders promote and sustain SEL instruction in their secondary schools in order to locate successful models and, as well as identify the structures needed to successfully integrate SEL on a school- or district-wide scale.

Limitations

Since teachers in this study self-identified their practice as SEL-focused, the strategies and pedagogical moves observed were dependent on the teacher and class and may not be generalizable to secondary ELA teachers nationwide. While the demographics of the classes in the study matched the general demographics of the larger school site, they do not represent the average classroom in the United States, especially in the case of participant AB. The teachers represented in this study self-identified as using SEL to support their ELA instruction, so the results of this case study may not depict the average ELA teacher or address teachers who do not use or know about SEL concepts in their instruction. In addition to their work in their classrooms, all three participants were also Associated Student Body (ASB) advisors, which suggests they may be more invested in the social-emotional development of students and spend more time out of class with students than most teachers. Holding this advisor position may give them more opportunity to observe student behaviors related to SEL and could potentially increase their rationale for addressing these skills in their content area classrooms. The inclusion of teachers who fit this profile may further impact the generalizability of the findings since the participants may differ significantly in their understanding of SEL skills and motivation for teaching them when compared with the average secondary teacher. Furthermore, like the participants in the study expressed, SEL strategies may feel "innate" or natural to a teacher, so it is possible that a better understanding of how teachers interpret what it means to "use" SEL in the classroom is needed. While multiple classroom visits were planned in order to avoid inauthentic observations, two visits may not be sufficient to grasp the full complexity of the classroom environment. Additionally, the presence of an outside observer may affect the natural atmosphere in the classroom, although care was taken to be as unobtrusive as possible. While

semi-structured interviews were chosen for their more natural approach, ultimately the information gleaned from them were from each participant's viewpoint and may not encapsulate a general worldview (Creswell, 2013).

Summary and Conclusion

While the classrooms we teach will only continue to become more dynamic and complex, there is promise for new methods through which adolescent students can receive critical lessons in both college/career skills and soft skills like cooperation and empathy for others. A growing number of studies have focused on the role of programs that formally address Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and their impacts on student success--both academic and social. Curriculum-based SEL programs have demonstrated positive effects in peer-to-peer collaboration, teacher-student relationships, and greater engagement in the classroom (Durlak et al., 2011), especially when teachers are given explicit tools and training in how to teach with SEL in mind (Shelemy et al., 2019). Teachers are also more likely to have success in teaching SEL competencies when they have a role in developing the curriculum and integrating it with their own (Martinez, 2016).

As evidenced by the participants in this study, ELA teachers in particular may have a distinctive role in weaving SEL instruction into their classrooms, as literature is a unique tool through which readers may develop and practice social skills like empathy, self-reflection, understanding diverse perspectives, and analyzing the behavior of others (Johnson et al., 2013; Vezzali et al., 2015; Barnes, 2018; Belet, 2018; Tijms et al., 2018). Literature has the potential to be used as a means for addressing the unique needs of at-risk students and those already engaging in risky or illegal behavior (Billington, 2011) if teachers take deliberate care in what they select and how they teach it with SEL in mind. Future consideration of content-embedded

SEL instruction might also be expanded to include other humanities courses like History, since they share much of the same emphasis on behavior analysis and a need for understanding diverse perspectives.

However, familiarity with the power literature has to shape emotional intelligence is just the beginning. Without a clear understanding of how to teach certain texts that evoke and exercise SEL competencies in our students and a deliberate means of measuring these competencies, the path to systematic integration of SEL into ELA classes has yet to be paved. More research is needed to understand how teachers currently define and implement SEL in their classrooms, as well as the role school leaders have in introducing and sustaining SEL work into content-area classrooms. A reliable means of assessing SEL skills is also crucial in selecting an appropriate model and articulating program goals that teachers can measure.

It has become increasingly clear that Generation Z arrives in our classrooms with current and future needs that elude some of our traditional methods of teaching secondary English Language Arts. A spotlight has been shone on the importance of developing the social-emotional skills of students in tandem with their reading and writing skills in recent years, and this study serves to illuminate the avenues through which SEL and critical academic skills may be addressed simultaneously by leveraging the suggested texts in existing standards-based ELA classrooms. By harnessing current research, the creativity of ELA teachers, and established methods from successful SEL programs, educators and researchers can better equip teachers and students for the important and often complex work that happens in the secondary ELA classroom.

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Appendix A

Initial Interview Questions

Research Questions	Interview Prompt
What training or preparation do teachers receive in order to integrate SEL practices into their standards-based English curriculum?	1. When did you first become aware of SEL? 2. Please describe the training or experiences you have received in integrating social-emotional competencies with your ELA curriculum. 3. Where do you look for resources in supporting your SEL work in the classroom?
How do teachers select the literature they use in their curriculum?	4. What is your philosophy regarding ELA education? ● What do you believe is crucial to a successful ELA classroom experience? ● What are your beliefs about the importance of ELA education? 5. When planning your class, what aspects of SEL do you focus on? Why? 6. What factors should be considered when selecting a work of literature to use in your classroom? 7. Using a past work of literature you have chosen to teach as an example, walk me through your thinking around the selection process.
How do teachers define and measure their success in using literature to address SEL in their students?	8. How do you define social-emotional skills? Which do you focus on the most in your classroom? Why? 9. What are your ultimate goals when

	integrating SEL and ELA skills? 10 How do you know when you have achieved these goals? (what do you see, hear, read, notice?)

Appendix B

Final Interview Questions

Research Questions	Interview Prompt
How do teachers select the literature they use in their curriculum?	2.1 How did the text(s) used in the observation classes support SEL and ELA skills? 2.2 Describe the aspect of the lessons you designed with SEL/ELA in mind.
How do teachers define and measure their success in using literature to address SEL in their students?	2.3 What were your goals for each observed lesson? 2.4 For the unit as a whole? 2.5 How did students demonstrate (or not) mastery of the goals you articulated above?

Appendix C: Observation protocol

Location:

Description of Date:

**Attach sketch of learning environment*

class:

Lesson objectives: Content: SEL: Timeline of events in class:	Observations: Teacher actions: Student actions: Materials used and student engagement with materials:
Researcher Comments:	

Appendix D: Lesson Plan Analysis Tool

Clarity of outcomes and relevance *(How are social-emotional and academic outcomes communicated to and assessed with students?)*			
1	2	3	4
There are no clearly outlined academic or social-emotional outcomes for the lesson	There are outcomes noted in the lesson, but they may only include academic *or* social-emotional goals and may not be reflected in the assessment for the lesson.	There are clearly outlined outcomes related to both academic and social-emotional learning and are reflected in the assessments for the lesson.	There are clearly outlined outcomes related to both academic and social-emotional learning and are reflected in the assessments for the lesson and referenced deliberately throughout the lesson, with opportunities for self-assessment.

Text choice and student connections *(How does the text choice reflect relevance to this group of students and their lived experiences in particular?)*			
1	2	3	4
The text(s) chosen for this lesson have no clear connection to the students in the classroom and/or have not been used in such a way that they are relevant to the class.	The text(s) chosen for this lesson may have a connection to students and their lived experiences, but may not be utlitized in such a way that their relevance is clear.	There is a clear connection between students' lives and the text chosen, which is demonstrated through deliberate, planned moments in the lesson.	There is a clear connection between students' lives and the text chosen throughout the entirety of the lesson, not just in discreet instances.

Classroom activities (*How is the lesson designed to engage learners with the material on an academic and social-emotional level?)*			
1	2	3	4
There is no evidence of an attempt to engage learners on an academic or social-emotional level.	There is an attempt to engage students on an academic *or* social-emotional level through the activities planned, but not both.	The activities planned provide specific, deliberate opportunities to practice academic skills and social-emotional skills.	The activities planned provide specific, deliberate opportunities to practice academic skills and social-emotional skills through a variety of modes.

Appendix E: Analytic memo example: Connecting raw interview data to RQ's and TF

What training or preparation do teachers receive in order to integrate SEL practices into their standards-based English curriculum?	AB uses pre-made SEL lessons through an online resource that students use every day. Past foci have been on character traits to go along with their discussions about character motivation. AB has no formal SEL training but says she keeps her classroom predictable and stable because students have so many other things going on in their lives. She refers to her class as an island and keeps the routine the same (CNN news, word warm up, independent learning while small groups are being run). She expressed that when she was a resource teacher she saw too much and feels like focusing on her small group of students makes her feel productive and effective. She has no formal preparation but uses her understanding of families and students to guide what she does in the classroom. SEL comes first for her "The umbrella of how I think is physical and mental health, emotional health and I can somehow justify my teaching" AB leverages her professional training as a teacher to use strategies that address **Culturally Proficient Pedagogy**: -Developmentally appropriate–scaffolding, reading for them, clear transitions and redirections, motivates and supports -Student/teacher relationships: -Classroom atmosphere–calm, inviting, predictable -Caring–wants to better her students' lives, reformats materials that may embarrass students (PDF of book) -Teaching whole child- only positive interactions with families–calls home to recognize good behavior, empowers students with focused lessons "You will soon be driving the car," 8th grade student mentorship for younger kids in class
How do teachers select the literature they use in their curriculum?	100 dresses was chosen because she knew it would be the most engaging for students because we can all relate to a bully (being bullied or being a bully–she mentions this multiple times throughout both lessons in the openings of the large group and the small groups). The lexile level is above the class, but she put in supports by reading out loud, modeling annotations, using questioning (TDQ and non TDQ) to lead their understanding–first it was recall, then she moved on to author's craft, characterizations, the

	extended into bullies in general–why do people act this way?--then to students' own experience. Students were able to make connections and inferences easily about character motivation and connect them to things they knew (like living in a place like city heights, cyber bullying, etc).
How do teachers define and measure their success in using literature to address SEL in their students?	AB stated that her goal for the unit was to be able to see why a bully does what they do. This had a few phases–first they had to understand the story, which they demonstrated through annotations and their answers to ABs TDQs. In the second observation, students were asked to draw an outline of a bully and put words on the inside of the bully to represent what was happening inside (these came from their conversations in the small group) and also action words on the outside to show what the bully does to others. In the lessons I saw there was an SEL activity (formal assessment) drawing (formal/ELA/SEL), and then student responses to questions (informal). Annotation was used but the students mimicked exactly what the teacher did so it may not show their true understanding. After the lessons I observed, the unit would then introduce a text on cyberbullying. The assessments for the unit are: **Transactional theory:** AB led students through a series of questions that required them to have a foundational understanding of the text (TEXT) but the later TDQs (level 4) asked students to think about bullies in general (READER, also TIME/CONTEXT) and the varied formative assessments (drawing, for example) were based on interpretations of the text, but simply what it said **finish text, tiered writing response to the story (vocal bank, sentence frames) —looking for a reader's theater, then go into 3d book and focus on cyber bullying**

Appendix F: Consent Form

Claremont Graduate University

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN HUMANIZING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CONTENT USING A SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING APPROACH
(IRB # 4283)

You are invited to volunteer for a research project. Volunteering may not benefit you directly, but you will be helping us explore how seasoned English Language Arts teachers use literature to address Social Emotional Learning and skills with their students. If you volunteer, you will participate in two interviews, provide lesson plans/student samples, and consent to two in-class observations. The interviews will take about one hour total of your time, and the classroom observations will be for the duration of the class periods you select. Volunteering for this study involves no more risk than what a typical person experiences on a regular day. Your involvement is entirely up to you. You may withdraw at any time for any reason. Please continue reading for more information about the study.

STUDY LEADERSHIP: This research project is led by Marisol Thayre, a doctoral student of education at Claremont Graduate University and San Diego State University and supervised by Thomas Luschei, a professor of education at Claremont Graduate University and Douglas Fisher, a professor of education at San Diego State University.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to better understand how English Language Arts (ELA) teachers use literature in the ELA curriculum to address Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and skills. The researcher is interested in the motivations, training, and practices of teachers who incorporate SEL in their standards-based ELA curriculum.

ELIGIBILITY: To be in this study, you must be a secondary English Language Arts teacher with three or more years of experience who uses literature to teach or enhance social emotional skills to your students. To be eligible to participate, you must also be able to adapt and/or create your own curriculum and share your lessons with the researcher. Preference will be given to volunteers who teach classes whose students represent the community of the school and thus are not selected based on prior academics for participation in a particular class (e.g., Advanced Placement).

PARTICIPATION: Three teachers total will be invited to participate in this study. During the study, you will be asked to complete a pre- interview featuring questions about your training, teaching philosophies, processes, and practices, in addition to a post- interview in which you will be asked to reflect on lessons you have taught. You will also be asked to share lesson or unit plans, student work, and any other artifacts you find to be pertinent to the study. In addition to the interview and artifact sharing, you will be asked to host two in-person observations in your classroom. Every effort will be made to limit disruption to the classroom, and no further preparation will be needed on your part for this observation portion of the study.

Sample Interview questions:
When did you first become aware of SEL?

Please describe the training or experiences you have received in integrating social emotional competencies with your ELA curriculum.

Where do you look for resources in supporting your SEL work in the classroom?

Risks Of Participation: The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal consist of a time commitment outside of work hours equivalent to one hour for the interviews. Some participants may potentially find it uncomfortable to share teaching materials and artifacts or be observed in their classrooms. Every effort will be made to minimize any negative ramifications of the study on the subjects.

Benefits Of Participation: We **do not** expect the study to benefit you personally. This study will benefit the researcher by helping me understand how practitioners in the field leverage ELA curriculum to address their student's social emotional needs while aiding in completing my dissertation. This study is also intended to benefit other educators in their understanding of how and why teachers supplement standards-based curriculum to support social emotional learning.

Compensation: You will not be directly compensated for participating in this study

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time without it being held against you. Your decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on your current or future connection with anyone at CGU.

Confidentiality: Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. We may share the data we collect with other researchers, but we will not reveal your identity with it. In order to protect the confidentiality of your responses, we will use password-protected data files, assign pseudonyms, and store all study materials in a locked, protected location. Interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes but will be erased once transcription and coding has been completed in order to protect your privacy.

Further Information: If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact Marisol Thayre at marisol.thayre@cgu.edu or (909) 838-4970. You may also contact Thomas Luschei at Thomas.luschei@cgu.edu or Douglas Fisher at dfisher@sdsu.edu. The CGU Institutional Review Board (IRB) has certified this project as exempt. If you have any ethical concerns about this project or about your rights as a human subject in research, you may contact the CGU IRB at (909) 607-9406 or at irb@cgu.edu. A copy of this form will be given to you if you wish to keep it.

Consent: Your signature below means that you understand the information on this form, that someone has answered any and all questions you may have about this study, and you voluntarily agree to participate in it.

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Printed Name of Participant _____

The undersigned researcher has reviewed the information in this consent form with the participant and answered any of his or her questions about the study.

Signature of Researcher _____ Date __**_____**_____

Printed Name of Researcher _____**_**Marisol Thayre**_**_____

Appendix G: IRB Approval

Admin	James Griffith (Exempt Protocol Administrator) James Griffith (RMP Administrator)
Protocol ID	4283
Panel	CGU Institutional Review Board (IRB-1)
PI	Marisol Thayre Signed 06/27/2022 7:56 PM PDT
PI Type	Student
Faculty Supervisor	Thomas Luschei 06/25/2022
Campus	CGU
Faculty Supervisor Acceptance Status	Accepted 06/30/2022 1:21 PM PDT
RMP Advisor	Completed / 07/18/2022 5:00 PM PDT
Study Sites	On Campus
Review Type	Expedited Review
Approval Status	Expedited Review Approved
Based On	(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior
Submitted By	Marisol Thayre
Date Received	06/30/2022
Date of Completion	09/23/2022
Date Approved	09/23/2022
Approval Expires	*Approved Without Renewal*
External Funding	No
In-person Contact w/Research Subjects	Research involves in-person interaction with subjects/participants
Consent Waived	Not Requested
Waiver of Documentation of Informed Consent	Not Requested
Vulnerable Subjects	• Not Applicable