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Social Emotional Learning for Latinx High School Students With Specific Learning Disabilities

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with Specific Learning Disabilities

By

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Claremont Graduate University

2023

Approval of the Dissertation Committee

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

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Abstract

Social Emotional Learning for Latinx High School Students with

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Social, emotional, and academic skills are essential to success in school, the workplace, our homes, and our communities, allowing individuals to contribute successfully and meaningfully to our society (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Jones & Kahn, 2017). The labor market acknowledges the importance of these skills as well, actively seeking employees who have the necessary skills to manage their emotions, collaborate with peers, and persist through challenges (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Researchers have established a link between the implementation of social emotional learning programs in schools and positive social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes for those students as adults (Durlak et al., 2011).

Students with specific learning disabilities have unique learning needs that can be supported through social, emotional, and specialized academic instruction (Elias, 2004). Research indicates social and emotional well-being, success in school, and career readiness for students with learning disabilities relies on teaching, practicing, and supporting the development of social emotional learning skills (Horowitz, Rawe, & Whittaker, 2017). Unfortunately, less than 20% of social emotional learning curriculum and programs consider the experiences of

special education students when evaluating the effectiveness of their instruction. (Berg, Osher, Same, Nolan, Benson, & Jacobs, 2017).

Latinx students also present with their own unique needs specifically related to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, influences, and interests. Meeting these challenges requires well-developed social emotional learning skills in addition to academic instruction. Educational research supports the need for culturally relevant SEL instruction by citing a significant discrepancy nationwide between the four-year high school graduation rate of 58% for Latinx students in general as compared to the graduation rate of 81% for Latinx students who participated in a specific SEL program at their high school (Johnson, Simon, & Mun, 2014).

The intersection of culture and ability for Latinx students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) allows researchers to focus specifically on the unique cultural and linguistic needs of Latinx students combined with the unique learning challenges faced by students with SLD. Unfortunately, there is a gap in the literature for this group of students, specifically at the high school level, and how SEL curriculum and instruction can support their unique social, emotional, and academic needs.

This study is important for several reasons. First, the high concentration of Latinx students in the Los Angeles area makes this an important subgroup of students to pay attention to when evaluating if our instructional programs and supports are having a positive impact on our students' academic, social, and emotional growth. Second, the literature has documented the significant academic, social, and emotional challenges that both Latinx students and students with disabilities face both in school and in adulthood, however there is a gap in the literature for understanding the unique experiences of Latinx students with disabilities. Examining the intersection between race and ability and focusing specifically on Latinx high school students

with specific learning disabilities will help fill this critical gap in the literature. Finally, the role SEL competencies play in giving students the skills they need to overcome adversity is a protective factor that we can provide for our Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities if we can be sure that they are benefitting from the instruction we are providing.

For this project, I used a case study approach to gather examples of how Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) are receiving social emotional support and instruction at one public high school and one nonpublic high school in Southern California. I conducted interviews, observed in classrooms, and reviewed school documents from both schools to identify examples of how Latinx high school students are developing and using their SEL skills. The information gathered from these sources were coded and analyzed to find patterns, themes, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

My results show that these two schools, the classroom teachers, the community partners, and the families who participated have significant concerns for the social and emotional well-being of their students and are utilizing many strategies to help support them. My results also show that the parents and students who participated are positively experiencing and benefitting from that support. These results have implications for policymakers and practitioners as we continue the quest to understand how Latinx students with specific learning disabilities experience social emotional support in the high school setting.

Dedication

      I would like to dedicate this project and the degree that goes with it to my parents, George and Ann Tucker. Without a doubt, they are the anchors for our family, our greatest cheerleaders, and the best role models of what a loving, successful marriage looks like. They are also the reason why education is such an important part of our lives. They put themselves (and each other!) through their undergrad and graduate programs and have both led extremely successful professional and personal lives. Yet when you meet them, they are the most genuine, honest, caring, generous, and friendly people you could ever meet! Mom and Dad, thank you for always believing in me. I love you both and am so thankful to be your daughter!

3rd John 4 – ALWAYS

Rob, Krista, Katy, and Jeff, thank you for helping our family stay connected, for adding humor to each and every Zoom call, and for being so incredibly supportive over the years. We each have our own gifts and I love the way our family fits together!

Joshua, Caleb, Luke, Kara, and Molly, your futures are so bright! I can't wait to see the many things you'll accomplish on your journey! Thank you for the joy and love each of you adds to our family!

Throughout my professional journey, several people have helped boost me along the way. Esther, I wouldn't be a principal if it wasn't for your mentoring and friendship. Thank you for always challenging me to push harder, take risks, have a vision, and of course, to dress for my next job. Dean, thank you for believing in me enough to recruit me twice! You are truly a visionary leader and I consider myself very fortunate to be able to learn and grow through your mentorship. Finally, to the many, many teachers I have had the honor of working with throughout my career, please know how much I respect and admire the work you do with your students every day. You play a vitally important role in your students' lives, and I hope you never forget that!

Finally, to the Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities – your courage inspires me! It has been my honor to put this project together and to represent you in this format. Thank you for allowing me into your lives and sharing your perspectives with me!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction

Social, emotional, and academic skills are essential to success in school, the workplace, our homes, and our communities, allowing individuals to contribute successfully and meaningfully to our society (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Jones & Kahn, 2017). The labor market acknowledges the importance of these skills as well, actively seeking employees who have the necessary skills to manage their emotions, collaborate with peers, and persist through challenges (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Researchers have established a link between the implementation of social emotional learning programs in schools and positive social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes for those students as adults (Durlak et al., 2011).

Currently, all fifty states have identified social emotional learning standards with instruction expected to occur at every grade level beginning with preschool and extending through high school (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Research has shown that educators believe in the value of teaching social emotional learning to students (Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, and Merrell, 2009; Civic Enterprises, 2013; Collie, Shapka, and Perry, 2012; Polou, 2017; Zinsser, Denham, Curby, and Shewark, 2015), however my own conversations with teachers have indicated that they do not feel there is adequate time, materials, or support to teach these skills along with the academic standards that are also required by states and districts. This conflict between what teachers believe to be best practice and the reality of teaching today led me to explore the influence that the school, the classroom, the community, and the families have on students' development of SEL skills, specifically focusing on high school Latinx students identified with specific learning disabilities.

This study will begin with background information on the development of the current SEL model and vocabulary that are used in schools today. This model sets the stage for the theoretical framework for this study by showing the variety of ways students receive support in developing these skills. Next, I will focus on the experiences and challenges faced by Latinx students and students with learning disabilities with an emphasis on the intersectionality between those two identifying factors. Finally, I will look at the unique experiences of English Learners who are identified as having special learning needs.

Use of the term "Latinx"

The term "Latinx" is defined by Merriam-Webster's online dictionary (2023) as "of, relating to, or marked by Latin American heritage used as a gender-neutral alternative to Latina or Latino". According to the PEW Research Center, it is a "pan-ethnic label", joining Hispanic and Latino in a list of words used to describe people who can trace their roots to Latin America and Spain (2023). It is not a popular term among the general Hispanic population, with only 23% of U.S. adults claiming to have heard the term before and only 3% stating they actually use it (PEW Research Center, 2023). Salinas's (2020) work with college students self-identifying as Latinx/a/o revealed other terms such as Latiné, Latinu, Latino, and Latina which were preferred over the term "Latinx". Some people say it has its roots with U.S. English speakers and ignores the gendered Spanish language while others see it as a gender-neutral and LGBTQIA+ inclusive term (PEW Research Center, 2023; Salinas, 2020). For the purposes of this study, I am using it to describe any student whose parents identified him/her as Hispanic on their enrollment paperwork when they entered the school system in which they currently attend. I chose to use this term for my project because it was the term used in many of my classes by my professors

and classmates during my Ph.D. program and it felt like the preferred term used by my university.

Background

The social struggles that students with learning disabilities face can be addressed through social emotional learning instruction (Elias, 2004). Research indicates social and emotional well-being, success in school, and career readiness for students with learning disabilities relies on teaching, practicing, and supporting the development of social emotional learning skills (Horowitz, Rawe, & Whittaker, 2017). Direct instruction in social emotional learning has been found to have a positive effect on general education students' attitudes, increased prosocial behaviors, improved grades, and a reduction in negative behavior issues which continued to be measurable up to six months after the instruction was delivered (Durlak et al., 2011).

Unfortunately, fewer than 20% of social emotional learning frameworks consider the experiences of students with disabilities when evaluating the effectiveness of social emotional learning programs (Berg, Osher, Same, Nolan, Benson, & Jacobs, 2017). The What Works Clearinghouse (2022) refers to six programs that have been evaluated for effectiveness with high school students with special needs. Of those six, three have "promising" results while the other three are rated as "uncertain effects." This compares to twenty-nine programs that have been evaluated for effectiveness with general education high school students with nine rated as "promising", four "strong", two "moderate" and sixteen "uncertain effects". One explanation for the lack of SEL programs proven to be effective with special education students is that the special education population is quite small in comparison to the general education population. For example, in the 2020-2021 school year, approximately 14.5% of students nationwide

enrolled in public education were identified as needing special education services (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022). The numbers vary state to state with Hawaii and Texas having only 11.3% of their total public school enrollment identified as needing special education services in the 2020-2021 school year while Maine identified 20% of their total public school enrollment as students with special needs (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022). California fell in the lower end in the range of states with 12.8% of the students enrolled in public schools being identified for special education services in that same school year (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022).

Of the students identified for special education services across the nation during the 2020-2021 school year, 33% were identified as having specific learning disabilities (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022). Data for individual states on the percentage of special education students who were identified with specific learning disabilities (SLD) included California and New Mexico at the top end of the range with 41% and 49% respectively and Kentucky and Maine at the lower end of the range with 19% and 29% respectively (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). According to Project IDEAL (2013) which supports pre-service special education teachers, students identified with SLD are at risk for academic, social, and emotional challenges. Considered a high incidence disability due to its prevalence among the special education population, Specific learning disabilities negatively impact psychological processes, academic achievement, and social emotional development (Project IDEAL, 2013). Project IDEAL (2013) posits that all social behaviors involve learning, therefore the instruction and support we provide to students with Specific learning disabilities is critical for both their academic development as well as their social emotional growth.

Within the group of special education students during the 2020-2021 school year, Latinx students comprised 27% of the total number of students with special needs nationwide and 39% of the students identified with SLD (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022). When examining data for specific states, the data show the states with smaller overall Latinx populations also have smaller percentages of Latinx students in special education. For example, data from 2019 show Maine had approximately 2.2% of its overall public school enrollment and just under 1% of its special education population identifying as Latinx (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). On the other end of the spectrum, New Mexico led the country with 61.7% of their public school enrollment identifying as Latinx (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). Data for the percentage of special education students who identify as Latinx in New Mexico was only available for the 2011-2012 school year with approximately 62% of their special education population identifying as Latinx (Data Display: New Mexico, 2011). California falls in the top quartile of the states with 54.3% of the students in K-12 public education and 56.8% of the special education population identifying as Latinx (Kidsdata.org, 2020). Los Angeles County enrolls Latinx students at a higher rate than the state overall with 67.3% of the students overall and 65% of the special education population identifying as Latinx (Kidsdata.org, 2020).

Despite the overall small size of the special education population as compared to the total enrollment in public schools across the nation, Latinx students in special education face a unique set of challenges as documented by the literature. For example, research has shown a disproportional drop-out rate for Latinx special education students with 35% dropping out in 2014-2015 compared to 9% of the general education Latinx students dropping out in that same year. (Horowitz, Rawe, & Whittaker, 2017; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018).

Educational researchers have also demonstrated the persistence of detrimental attitudes towards Latinx special education students. Dávila (2015) identified low expectations, disregard, and bullying behaviors towards Latinx students by the teaching staff in special education classrooms. Mossmond Keel, Cushing, and Awsumb (2018) also identified a lack of confidence among students with specific learning disabilities. They examined the perspectives of Latinx high school seniors with specific learning disabilities and concluded that the student participants perceived their family members had low expectations for them which manifested into a fear that they would not be successful in work, school, or independent living after graduating from high school.

We must adequately address whether social emotional learning instruction is meeting the needs of Latinx students with specific learning disabilities. The high concentration of Latinx students in the Los Angeles area, the significant challenges Latinx students and students with disabilities face, the intersection between race and ability for our Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities, and the importance of SEL competencies to overcome adversity provide the rationale for this project. In this work, the intersectionality between race and ability acknowledges that Latinx students with specific learning disabilities have unique needs that can be supported through the development of social emotional learning skills. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how the community, families, schools, and classrooms support the SEL development of high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities and the perceptions of administrators, teachers, parents, and students regarding the extent to which students are acquiring SEL competencies through their experiences and interactions at school, at home, and in the community.

To achieve this goal, a case study approach was taken in two high schools to develop an in-depth analysis of how Latinx high school students with SLD are receiving social emotional support and instruction. To accomplish this, I conducted interviews with school administrators, teachers, parents, and Latinx students with SLD to gain perspectives on methods used to support students' development of SEL skills as well as to identify the extent to which they feel students are acquiring SEL skills through the experiences and interactions in their communities, homes, schools, and classrooms. I also reviewed school documents such as written policies, handbooks, and the Local Control Accountability Plan to identify what the schools' goals are in supporting the development of SEL skills for their students. Finally, I conducted classroom and school observations to observe the students and understand how the school promotes SEL competencies and supports the unique learning needs of Latinx students with SLD. These interviews and observation notes were transcribed, coded, and themes were discovered leading to a greater understanding of how and to what extent Latinx students with Specific learning disabilities are experiencing the SEL support and developing the SEL competencies they need to be successful in school, at home, in their future careers, and in life.

Significance of the Topic

This study is important for two main reasons. First, it examines the impact of social emotional learning for a group of students who are more commonly acknowledged for their struggles and challenges rather than their achievements and adaptive skills. This deficit model approach is well-documented in literature as a barrier to overall success for marginalized groups such as Latinx students (Harry & Klingner, 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 1998). As culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, the literature states

Latinx young adults are at a significantly higher risk for dropping out of school, incarceration, living in poverty, not pursuing post-secondary education or training opportunities, and being under- or unemployed (Mossmond Keel et al., 2018). In addition, Latinx students face acculturative stress factors such as navigating language barriers, parents who are unfamiliar with the school system, family acculturation gaps, discrimination, low socioeconomic status (Castro-Olivo, 2014), and the "inhibiting environment" in the United States due to the legal and political climate regarding immigration (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017, p. 140). Students in special education must also overcome this deficit model as they are at a higher risk of being un- or under-employed, experience less success living independently, and have a greater chance of experiencing social and emotional difficulties (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2015). Students with Specific learning disabilities also have higher rates of chronic absenteeism and dropping out of school than their non-disabled peers (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2015).

Second, this study is important because there is a gap in the literature that does not adequately address whether social emotional learning instruction is meeting the needs of Latinx students with specific learning disabilities. Fewer than 20% of social emotional learning curriculum and programs consider the experiences of special education students when evaluating the effectiveness of their instruction (Berg et al., 2017) and resources to identify SEL programs and supports that are effective with special education students are difficult to find using commonly used sources such as What Works Clearinghouse. With approximately 12.8% of the special education population in California identified as Latinx (US Department of Education, 2022) and 41% of those students identified as having Specific learning disabilities (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022), it is imperative that we investigate the impact of our

efforts to support SEL development for Latinx students with Specific learning disabilities. These percentages are higher in California that in many other parts of the nation, making it even more urgent that we understand if our SEL instruction is culturally responsive, effective, and relevant for our students. If we cannot demonstrate that Latinx students with specific learning disabilities are benefiting from social emotional learning instruction, then we need to re-evaluate our practices, rewrite educational policy, and change our approach. This study will contribute towards a growing body of research regarding the importance of social emotional learning and will also fill in the gap in the literature for SEL development for Latinx students with Specific learning disabilities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I will provide a summary of relevant research on a variety of topics related to my project. I will begin with a brief history of how SEL has developed from theory into practice, including the recent concerns being raised in the research regarding how to make SEL more relevant for students of color and students with disabilities. I will also share the research regarding the unique learning needs of Latinx students, English Learners, and students with and without specific learning disabilities, and information regarding how SEL instruction can be used to support students who are identified in one or more of those groups. Finally, I will address teachers' perceptions of SEL and what the research says they need to be successful at supporting the SEL needs of their students. Finally, this section will reveal key gaps in the literature, some of which this project will begin to fill.

History of Social Emotional Learning

The roots of social emotional learning can be traced back to The Progressive Era, starting with Jane Adams, John Dewey, and Edward Thorndike (Osher, Kidron, Brackett, Dymnicki, Jones, & Weissberg, 2016). Adams believed education had the power and the responsibility to create better citizens who turned away from violence and instead focused their attention on improving society (Lockridge, 2015). Dewey experimented with his ideas about education at the Laboratory School in Chicago in the late 1890's by teaching children how to share, communicate with others, solve problems, think for themselves, and become active citizens that could help create a better society (Pegg, 2020). At the same time, Thorndike posited his theory of social intelligence which he defined as the process of learning to "act wisely in human relations" (Essex, 2018, para 2). Later in the 20th century, the work of other philosophers and educators

such as Brofenbrenner, Vygotsky, Zigler, and Bandura led to an understanding that human beings are social by nature and that behavior can be learned in an educational context with instruction and practice as well as in a social context through social interactions with others (Osher et al., 2016).

Non-cognitive Skills

While philosophers, educators, and activists agree social emotional development is important, there has been little consensus regarding what specific skills should be included, what to label them, and how to define them. For example, Farrington, Roderick, Allensworth, Nagaoka, Keyes, Johnson, & Beechum (2012) called these skills non-cognitive and defined them as "behaviors, skills, attitudes, and strategies that are crucial to academic performance in their classes, but that may not be reflected in their scores on cognitive tests" (p. 2). Garcia (2014) also identified them as non-cognitive skills but defined them as the "patterns of thought, feelings, and behavior of individuals that may continue to develop throughout their lives and that play some role in the education process" (p. 6). Included in Garcia's (2014) list are skills such as persistence, academic confidence, teamwork, organizational skills, creativity, and communication skills. Duckworth and Yeager (2015) posit a very general definition, stating non-cognitive skills are "positive personal qualities other than cognitive ability that lead to student success" (p. 239).

In addition to definitions, labels, and skills, there are a variety of frameworks researchers have developed to illustrate the concept of non-cognitive skills. One such framework developed by the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research outlines four foundational components that are needed to help children grow into independent, successful adults (Nagaoka,

Farrington, Ehrlich, Heath, Johnson, Dickson, Turner, Mayo, & Hayes, 2015). These four

components include self-regulation, knowledge and skills, mindsets, and values which are

developed over time in alignment with a child's age and developmental levels (Nagaoka et al.,

2015). They claim it is through relationships with adults and peers that children acquire and

integrate these skills into their everyday lives over time, however they do not claim to know how

this acquisition process of non-cognitive skills actually occurs (Nagaoka et al., 2015).

A framework proposed by Jones and Bouffard (2012) also promoted a developmental

approach to non-cognitive skills and stated these skills should not be directly taught to children.

In their framework, three conceptual categories (emotional processes, social/interpersonal skills,

and cognitive regulation) are developed over time through the natural interactions that occur

during the school day, at home, and in the community to produce outcomes such as academic

achievement and behavioral adjustment (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). According to this framework,

academic and non-cognitive skills develop and operate together therefore there is no need for a

special curriculum or instructional focus, rather the development of these skills takes place

through a "complex system of contexts, interactions, and relationships" (Jones & Bouffard, 2012,

p. 5).

The Partnership for 21st Century Learning Framework (2016) takes the opposite

perspective, citing the development of non-cognitive skills is not a developmental process but

rather is the direct result of standards and assessment, curriculum and instruction, professional

development, and learning environments. Additionally, Stafford-Brizard's "Building Blocks for

Learning" framework (2016) lands in the middle between a purely developmental approach and

the 21st Century Learning framework. The Building Blocks for Learning framework makes the

case for "comprehensive student development" (Stafford-Brizard, 2016, p 4) that acknowledges

children are exposed to a variety of factors outside the classroom yet inside the classroom they can also be taught a "measurable and malleable skill, behavior, or mindset" (p 5) to help them develop non-cognitive skills.

What these frameworks have in common is a commitment to supporting the development of the essential, non-academic skills that students need to be successful in life. Their differences, however, make it difficult to determine which vocabulary, approach, and evaluation tool to use to determine if students are actually acquiring and using these desired skills.

Social Emotional Learning

The term social emotional learning was proposed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) in 1994 (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2022). CASEL currently defines social emotional learning (SEL) as:

> The process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2022)

CASEL also identified and described five SEL competencies that form the foundation for their SEL framework (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Those competencies include (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013):

- Self-awareness – The ability to identify how thoughts and emotions impact behavior

- Self-management – The ability to manage thoughts, emotions, and behavior in specific situations; to set and make progress towards personal and academic goals

- Social awareness – The ability to empathize with others, see things from their perspective, and to identify school, family, and community sources of support

- Relationship skills – The ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships with diverse people; the ability to solve problems and negotiate conflicts with others in a positive, healthy manner

- Responsible decision making – The ability to make positive choices about behavior and social interactions by considering ethics, safety, potential consequences, personal well-being, and the well-being of others

I chose to use CASEL's framework for SEL as the foundation for this project because it has grown into a nation-wide framework for the implementation of SEL competencies and programs within the American school system. Additionally, CASEL's consistent use of the term "social emotional learning" (SEL) rather than "non-cognitive skills" makes it more relevant as evidenced by all fifty states having social emotional learning standards with instruction expected to occur at every grade level beginning with preschool and extending through high school (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Finally, CASEL is actively involved in ongoing research on the effectiveness of SEL instruction. In 2016, California joined seven other states and CASEL in a project called the Collaborating States Initiative (Blad, 2016). The goal of the project was for each state to develop SEL standards, identify materials to blend academic and SEL skills together, and create a plan for state-level support and professional development for teachers (Blad, 2016). Evidence of this collaborative work can be seen at the state level for California with an online resource guide and a list of guiding principles (California Department of

Education, 2021). It can also be seen at the district level in large districts within California such as Los Angeles Unified and Sacramento City Unified who each have a list of SEL skills they emphasize made public on their websites and links for teachers to sign up for in-person professional development sessions provided by the SEL department within each district. (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2019 and 2023; Sacramento City Unified School District, 2020 and 2023).

There are concerns that the current SEL frameworks are not culturally relevant for students of color and students with learning disabilities. Camangian and Cariaga state the current SEL instruction amounts to "hegemonic miseducation" (2022, p. 916) and "lacks an analysis of colonialism and oppression" (p. 916). They suggest educators focus on humanization over SEL as humanization "benefits the social and emotional health and well-being of historically oppressed and multiply-marginalized people." (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022, p. 905). By replacing traditional SEL with the concepts of equity and opportunity included in "Transformative SEL", researchers suggest that students could be taught the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to address issues such as power, privilege, prejudice, discrimination, and social justice (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Williams, 2019). DeMartino, Fetman, Tucker-White, and Brown (2022) argue that Transformative SEL is too conceptual to be effectively implemented in K-12 schools and posit that "Transformative Abolitionist SEL" should be adopted as the SEL framework to address the issues of equity and justice through an abolitionist teaching approach. CASEL (2023) is engaged in this conversation and has added information regarding Transformative SEL on its website, including what it is and what it looks like in practice.

Impact of SEL Instruction for General Education Students

The research is overwhelmingly positive when identifying and describing the impact of SEL instruction on school climate and on students' lives. For example, in studies of schools that implemented a specific but separate SEL curriculum, outcomes such as increased prosocial behavior, academic performance, positive attitudes, and positive behavior were documented. In schools that infused SEL in their academic instruction, researchers demonstrated similar results with an increase in positive behavior, improved student relationships, and an improvement in motivation leading to improved academic achievement. More details regarding these outcomes and the various settings the studies took place in will be described next.

First, research conducted by Durlak et al. (2011) provided empirical evidence that SEL instruction was important and created both short- and long-term benefits to students who participated in the instruction. This meta-analysis evaluated 213 SEL programs being implemented in kindergarten through 12th grade among over 270,000 students across the United States (Durlak et al., 2011). Their findings indicated that school-based, universal (used for the entire school rather than specific groups of students within a school) social emotional learning programs that were implemented following the SAFE (sequenced, active, focused, and explicit) guidelines had a significant positive impact on SEL competencies and students' attitudes towards themselves and others (Durlak et al., 2011). For example, based on student self-reporting rating scales, this meta-analysis showed students receiving this instruction demonstrated an increase in prosocial behavior defined as "behavior that is intended to help other people" (Cherry, 2018; Durlak et al., 2011). Increases in academic performance gathered from standardized test scores and grades were also noted in addition to a reduction in negative behavior such as conduct disorders and internalization of problems as measured by student, teacher, and parent rating

scales (Durlak et al., 2011). The effects of this instruction remained significant for at least six months after the instruction stopped (Durlak et al., 2011).

In another meta-analysis, Payton, Weissberg, Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Schellinger, and Pachan (2008) reviewed over three hundred studies measuring the impact of SEL instruction on kindergarten through eighth grade students. In their work, SEL instruction provided to general education students who were not displaying behavioral or emotional difficulties had a statistically significant impact on students' abilities to demonstrate SEL skills, maintain a positive attitude towards themselves and others, engage in more positive social behaviors, and improve their academic performance (Payton et al., 2008). For students showing early signs of behavioral or emotional difficulties, SEL instruction showed similar improvements in attitude and behavior, however they found the students were unable to maintain their gains in academic performance six months after the instruction stopped (Payton et al., 2008). The long-term effects of SEL instruction were documented in another meta-analysis concluding the impact of SEL instruction was statistically significant up to 195 weeks after the instruction ended in the studies analyzed (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017).

School climate is a measure often used as an indicator of effective SEL instruction and research has shown that SEL has a positive impact on specific aspects of school climate. For example, one study that used student behavior as an indicator of school climate involved The Positive Action SEL program. In this longitudinal study, middle and high school students showed a reduction in behavior issues as measured by student self-reports, surveys, and school discipline records after participating in the Positive Action program over the course of five years (Cotter Stalker, Wu, Evans, Smokowski, 2018). Another SEL program that was evaluated for its impact on student behavior was conducted by Gol-Guven (2017). This project used surveys,

class observations, and interviews with students to identify that after 8 months of instruction using the Lion's Quest SEL program, students in the experimental group demonstrated an increase in positive behavior and improved perceptions of the overall school climate (Gol-Guven, 2017). The data also showed that the control group actually demonstrated an increase in negative student behaviors and a decline in their perception of the overall school climate using the same measures during that same eight month period (Gol-Guven, 2017).

Another aspect of school climate that is examined in the SEL literature is that of feeling safe while at school. One SEL program that was studied for its impact on school climate based on whether the students felt safe was the Social Harmony program. Social Harmony is a SEL program that uses a restorative justice approach to encourage staff and students to solve problems in a safe, positive, and respectful way (Haymovitz, Houseal-Allport, Lee, & Svistova, 2018). In this study, researchers used concept mapping to identify the participants' perception of the impact this program after three years of implementation in a school serving students through eighth grade (Haymovitz et al., 2018). The study participants indicated an increase in feeling listened to, understood, and safe as well as an improvement in teacher-student relationships which also resulted in a perceived improvement in school climate (Haymovitz et al, 2018).

A second study in the SEL literature which used the perception of feeling safe as an indicator of school climate was conducted in a school district without a formally adopted and implemented SEL curriculum (Nickerson, Fredrick, Allen, & Jenkins, 2019). Rather than using a formal curriculum, the schools in this district followed initiatives and approaches to promote character education, prevent bullying, and use effective school-wide behavior management strategies (Nickerson et al., 2019). Data were collected from fourth through twelfth graders using the state's school climate survey (Nickerson et al., 2019). Results indicated that schools in which

the students reported receiving more instruction on SEL skills such as being responsible, solving conflicts, using self-control, caring for others, and taking ownership for their actions also reported lower concerns about bullying at their school (Nickerson et al., 2019). The researchers concluded that schools with fewer reported incidents of bullying are also schools where the students feel safe and thus have a more positive school climate (Nickerson et al., 2019).

In some schools, SEL instruction is not offered as a separate curriculum but rather is infused into core academic content areas. In 2012, Schechtman and Yaman researched the impact on students' behavior, relationships, and motivation to learn when SEL was infused into their literature classes. In their work, thirty-six pre-service teachers at a college in Israel and 1,137 fifth and sixth graders from twelve different Arab schools were placed in either a control or an experimental group (Schechtman & Yaman, 2012). While the academic content was the same for both groups, the experimental groups also received instruction in a social emotional learning component (Schechtman & Yaman, 2012). For example, all groups used Aesop's story "The Fox and the Crow" and learned about the characters, their traits, the sequence of events in the story, and the concept of cheating and how it affected other people (Schechtman & Yaman, 2012). The experimental group also participated in discussions on how it felt to get approval or be deprived of it, and how the perceptions of their peers affected them and their behavior (Schechtman & Yaman, 2012).

The results confirmed the researchers' hypothesis that the infusion of SEL into literature lessons resulted in improved student behavior, relationships, and motivation to learn as measured by student surveys (Schechtman & Yaman, 2012). In addition, the students in the experimental groups demonstrated higher levels of content acquisition than those in the control groups as measured by teacher created tests of the content taught during the unit (Schechtman & Yaman,

2012). The authors suggested that improved student behavior and motivation to learn led naturally to a more efficient and effective learning environment which contributed to the overall increase in academic growth shown by the students in the experimental group (Schechtman & Yaman, 2012).

From these findings, I believe there is evidence that SEL instruction (regardless of how it is implemented) has the potential to provide positive outcomes for students and school communities. It is also clear that there is more than one way to provide this support for students and that school leaders need to be clear in their rationale for their chosen implementation method. The impact of SEL instruction for students with disabilities will be addressed later in this chapter.

Teachers' Perceptions of Social Emotional Learning Instruction

While research demonstrates that SEL is important for students to be successful in school, at home, and in life (Durlak et al., 2011), the perspective of the teachers must also be explored to fully understand the benefits and challenges of providing SEL instruction in the classroom setting. In the studies described below, teachers expressed belief that SEL instruction has a positive impact on the students, however they need support in order to close the gap between the research on SEL and the actual implementation of it in their classrooms. In addition, several studies mention the importance of teacher efficacy on the success of SEL implementation. Teachers with a strong emotional intelligence and low levels of burnout were shown to be more effective in the classroom with supporting their students' SEL growth.

In a project conducted by Civic Enterprises and sponsored by CASEL (2013), a survey was given to prekindergarten through twelfth grade teachers across the United States in which

they were asked to evaluate the importance and implementation of SEL in schools today. Three themes emerged through the analysis. The first theme was that teachers understood, valued, and endorsed SEL for all students (Civic Enterprises, 2013). The survey results indicated that 95% of teachers surveyed believed SEL competencies were teachable and 97% believed that SEL competencies benefited all students regardless of background or socio-economic status (Civic Enterprises, 2013). It is important to note that the study did not cite data regarding teachers' beliefs about students with disabilities or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The second theme was that teachers believed SEL competencies helped students succeed in school, work, and in life (Civic Enterprises, 2013). Nearly 80% of the teachers surveyed believed SEL competencies had a positive impact on academic achievement, graduation rates, and behavior at school as well as a negative impact on bullying behavior (Civic Enterprises, 2013). The third theme was that teachers identified key strategies to support SEL instruction in their schools including allocating specific time for teaching SEL lessons, embedding SEL competencies into other academic areas, providing professional development for SEL, discussing SEL competencies with families, and adopting a schoolwide approach that ensured a common language and program for SEL instruction (Civic Enterprises, 2013).

In another project looking into teachers' perspectives on the best ways to approach SEL instruction, Zinsser, Denham, Curby, and Shewark (2015) researched how preschool teachers used their emotions and interactions with the students to support the students' social emotional development. Preschool teachers were observed for one month in which two groups were defined based on data collected using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System Pre-K (CLASS; Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). Teachers identified as the Highly Supportive group demonstrated stronger skills in providing emotional and instructional support for the students and a more

organized classroom environment than those identified as the Moderately Supportive group (Zinsser et al., 2015). Teachers were then interviewed and the results from the interviews were used to identify similarities and differences between the two groups of teachers (Zinsser et al., 2015, p. 907).

The data revealed the teachers in both groups had a general awareness of the importance of their work and the need to be prepared emotionally for what could be a challenging job (Zinsser et al., 2015). There was no significant difference in the quantity or quality of the discussions regarding emotions in their classrooms and all teachers were able to identify multiple purposes that these discussions met (Zinsser et al., 2015). The data revealed some differences between the Highly and Moderately Supportive groups of teachers, however. For example, when Highly Supportive teachers experienced a negative emotion in the classroom, they were more likely to model the coping strategies they wanted the children to use (Zinsser et al., 2015). In contrast, Moderately Supportive teachers were more likely to ignore their own emotions and pretend they were happy in front of the children (Zinsser et al., 2015). In addition, Highly Supportive teachers were more aware of their impact on the children's social-emotional development and more accepting of emotions in general (Zinsser et al., 2015). The researchers concluded that to improve SEL in the school setting, we must focus on "cultivating teachers' understanding of SEL and their own emotional competence" (Zinsser, et al., 2015, p. 916).

In a third study examining teachers' perceptions of SEL instruction and its importance for students, Buchanan et al. (2009) surveyed 263 elementary and middle school teachers to determine how much information and training on SEL the teachers received, their perceptions of the feasibility of using that training, their confidence level in teaching SEL, and any barriers that prevented its use in their classrooms (Buchanan et al., 2009). The results indicated that nearly all

the participants agreed that SEL competencies were important for students' success in school and in life and just over half of the respondents thought the classroom teachers were responsible for providing SEL instruction for the students (Buchanan et al., 2009). In the area of teacher training, almost 90% of the respondents expressed little to no satisfaction with the training or preparation they received to teach SEL, indicating a significant need for professional development (Buchanan et al., 2009). Finally, approximately one-third of the respondents stated it was feasible to dedicate one class period per week to SEL instruction (Buchanan et al., 2009). The researchers concluded this information provided important feedback to close the gap between research and practice and ensure students were receiving SEL instruction in their classrooms (Buchanan et al., 2009).

Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, and Jacobson (2009) also investigated the role of teachers' perceptions and experiences related to a district adopted SEL curriculum known as PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies). The study took place in a Pennsylvania school district in which the PATHS curriculum had been in place for three years and involved 133 elementary teachers in the district (Ransford et al., 2009). The results indicated that the strongest implementation of the curriculum occurred by teachers who reported lower levels of burnout, positive experiences with training and coaching, and strong administrative support for the implementation process (Ransford et al., 2009). Teacher burnout had the strongest negative effect on implementation quality while effective training and coaching had a strong positive effect on implementation quality and frequency of instruction (Ransford et al., 2009). The researchers also noted that when administrators participated in the training and coaching process, stronger program implementation occurred (Ransford et al., 2009). Of all the factors studied in this project, teachers reporting the highest levels of burnout and lowest levels of support (through

lack of training or lack of administrative support) also reported the lowest levels of implementation dosage and quality (Ransford et al., 2009).

Collie, Shapka, and Perry (2012) examined how the implementation of SEL instruction impacted teachers' experiences with stress, teaching efficacy, and job satisfaction. Teachers from seventeen different school districts in Canada were surveyed. The results indicated the teachers who were the most comfortable teaching SEL competencies in their classrooms also experienced the least amount of stress from student behavior issues and the strongest sense of teaching efficacy and job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2012). In addition, teachers who perceived better student behavior reported lower stress, greater teaching efficacy, and greater job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2012). The researchers concluded that teachers' beliefs about SEL instruction were closely related to their experiences with stress, teaching efficacy, and job satisfaction and therefore should be carefully considered when examining the effectiveness of SEL programs (Collie et al., 2012).

Another study examining the relationship between SEL instruction and teachers' experiences was conducted by Polou in 2017. In that project, the researcher examined the impact of teachers' emotional intelligence, their perceptions of SEL, and their ideas regarding teacher-student relationships on the emotional and behavioral struggles of their students (Polou, 2017). The results indicated teachers with stronger emotional intelligence who were more comfortable implementing SEL instruction were more likely to have positive relationships with students (Polou, 2017). From the students' perspective, the findings indicated students' emotional and behavioral challenges were primarily influenced by the ways in which teachers perceived and reacted to conflicts in the classroom (Polou, 2017). The researcher concluded the "quality of

teacher-child relationship and specifically conflict, is important for understanding the development of emotional and behavioral difficulties in the classroom" (Polou, 2017, p. 86).

These studies were very informative to me as I designed my study. I knew that the administrative perspective as important for school-wide goals, but based on this research, I also knew that I needed the teachers' perspectives to understand what SEL implementation actually felt like in the classroom setting. This research also highly influenced my interview questions for this project. Some of the questions I asked that aligned to this research on teacher perspectives included:

- What is your favorite part about teaching?

- What are some of the challenges that make teaching hard?

- What kind of support does your administrator provide for social emotional learning for your students? How about for you as an adult?

- How do you promote social emotional learning in your classroom?

- Tell me about a time when your school successfully promoted social emotional learning for students.

- What are the challenges with teaching social emotional learning skills to your students?

It was my goal to find out their own levels of satisfaction with teaching in general as well as their perceptions of how SEL support is provided at both high schools specifically through these interview questions.

Students with Learning Disabilities

Developing strong SEL competencies is especially important for young adults with learning disabilities as research has demonstrated that they run a higher risk of being un- or under-employed, experience less success living independently, and have a greater chance of experiencing social and emotional difficulties (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2015). In the studies described below, positive outcomes such as an increase in self-advocacy skills combined with a decrease in special education referrals and depression were noted for special education students participating in SEL programs.

Elias (2004) stated students with learning disabilities often struggle with social interactions, including misunderstanding jokes and figurative language, not connecting information from one conversation to another, and not understanding another person's perspective. Students with learning disabilities consistently rank themselves lower than their non-disabled peers in academic achievement and social skills, experience negative emotions more frequently than their non-disabled peers, and are more likely to be identified as disruptive or aggressive by their non-disabled peers (Bryan, Burstein, & Ergul, 2004; Krull, Wilbert, & Hennemann, 2014). They are also three times more likely than their non-disabled peers to be teased or bullied (Gunnel Ingesson, 2007), experience greater anxiety and less security in relationships with their peers (Al-Yagon & Mikulineer, 2004), and perceive themselves as being less socially capable (Lorger, Schmidt, & Vukman, 2015). Class placement also impacts the development of SEL competencies. Wiener and Tardiff (2004) concluded the amount of exposure special education students have to non-disabled peers impacts their quality of friendships, feelings of loneliness, and frequency of behavior issues at school. Dimitrellou and Hurry (2019) demonstrated that inclusive practices also increase a special education students' sense of belonging and academic achievement.

To address these challenges, instruction and support in SEL is especially important for special education students. The literature has shown specific research on a SEL curriculum called INSIGHTS in which participation in the program reduced the need for special education referrals by 5% for students in early elementary grades (McCormick, Neuhaus, Horn, O'Connor, White, Harding, Cappella, McClowry, 2019). Additionally, specific research on the PATHS curriculum demonstrated effectiveness for special education students by reducing both externalizing and internalizing problems and reducing self-reported levels of depression among students with previously demonstrated behavior issues (Kam, Greenberg, & Kusché, 2004). The effectiveness of a program called IMPACT on students with physical and intellectual disabilities was also demonstrated by Dryden, Desmarais, and Arsenault (2017). Their study showed an increase in the students' abilities to self-advocate to defend themselves from unwanted attention from peers (Dryden et al, 2017). Unfortunately, none of these studies address the unique needs of students with specific learning disabilities.

One research project that addressed the impact of providing SEL instruction to students with specific learning disabilities was conducted by Espelage, Rose, and Polanin (2016). In their work, both general education and special education middle school students were taught in inclusive classroom settings using the Second Step curriculum. Data self-reported in surveys by the special education students indicated an increase in willingness to intervene in bullying situations and an overall improvement in report card grades (improving from a C average to a B+ average) after three years of SEL instruction using this program (Espelage et al., 2016). There was no statistical improvement associated with empathic or caring behaviors between the groups, however (Espelage et al., 2016). The researchers hypothesized that the natural growth and

27

maturation process that occurs during the middle school years may account for the lack of statistical significance between the two groups in that area (Espelage et al., 2016).

Another piece of research investigating the needs of students with specific learning disabilities is from a study conducted by the National Center for Learning Disabilities (2015) in which researchers set out to identify protective factors that contributed to the success of young adults with Learning and Attention Issues (LAI). The results allowed the researchers to make the following conclusions (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2015):

- Mind-set, attitude, and feeling supported were more important than prior academic achievement for success after high school.

- Skills such as perseverance, resourcefulness, decisiveness, and a healthy lifestyle were indicators of success after high school.

- Self-confidence was high among all the most successful LAI participants in this study.

- Participants who reported having a supportive home life (despite challenges such as divorce) also reported higher levels of self-confidence. A supportive home life was also statistically more important than family income and demographics.

- Participants who had an active role in their IEP, 504, or transition plan meetings also demonstrated more proactivity in their education after high school.

- Mentoring for students with LAI during the transition process was important.

- Feeling connected with their school community and groups of people outside school was an indicator of greater post-secondary success.

- Students with optimistic, proactive parents demonstrated greater success after high school.

These studies highlight some of the benefits of SEL instruction for special education students across a variety of disabilities. The lack of research specifically focused on positive outcomes for students with specific learning disabilities is evident and contributes to the rationale for this project. The impact of community organizations and parents on student success in the study conducted by the National Center for Learning Disabilities (2015) also lends support to the use of CASEL's framework for SEL for this project as CASEL also incorporates the family and community as sources of support for SEL development in students.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse: Latinx Students

Latinx students present with their own unique needs specifically related to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, influences, and interests. These needs must be understood to ensure they have access to SEL instruction through culturally relevant ways. Educational research supports the need for culturally relevant SEL instruction by citing a significant discrepancy nationwide between the four-year high school graduation rate of 58% for Latinx students in general as compared to the graduation rate of 81% for Latinx students who participated in a specific SEL program at their high school (Johnson, Simon, & Mun, 2014). To further understand the unique issues faced by Latinx students, Calderon, Bustillos, and Vargas Poppe (2015) published a statistical brief citing:

- The Latinx population is one of the youngest and fastest-growing populations in the United States
- The majority of Latinx youth are born in the United States.
- 80% of all English Learners identified Spanish as their primary language.

- Latinx students are enrolling in college in record numbers but are less likely than Caucasian students to be enrolled in four-year institutions.

- Latinx students are less likely than Caucasian and African American students to attend graduate school and receive less federal aid than their non-Latinx peers.

In addition to the statistics listed above, it is important to understand the unique strengths and challenges faced by Latinx students in our nation's schools. In 2017, Gándara described the challenges of poverty, acculturation, and learning a new language but also highlighted the benefits of being bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural in a world that was becoming more globalized each day. She challenged educators to support Latinx students through establishing universal preschool, increasing opportunities to desegregate schools and implement dual-immersion programs, expanding the role and influence of programs such as AVID or Puente Project to promote college attendance, offering additional financial aid to first generation college students, and actively seeking ways to increase school connectedness to boost graduation rates (Gándara, 2017). Finally, she asserted that Latinx students specifically need Latinx role models to mentor them and support them through their educational experience to ensure they have every opportunity to complete their selected program and successfully graduate (Gándara, 2017).

The support systems, structure, and culture of a school also has an impact on the successes as well as the challenges faced by Latinx high school students (Conchas, 2001). Research shows that positive relationships between teachers and Latinx students is a key factor in promoting their success in school. Balagna, Young, and Smith (2013) interviewed Latinx students who were identified as being at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders and concluded that when the students in this project felt understood, trusted, and encouraged from a

30

teacher, they were "more willing to meet the teacher's expectations and confide in the teacher about difficulties at home and school" (Balagna, Young, & Smith, 2013, p. 112). Consistency and fairness with disciplinary practices was another indicator of positive teacher-student relationships with students acknowledging "an exchange of respect" between students and teachers helps them to feel supported and cared for while at school (Liang, Rocchino, Gutekunst, Paulvin, Li, & Elam-Snowden, 2019, p. 349). Lewis, Ream, Bocian, Cardullo, and Hammond (2012) studied the impact of teacher caring on Latinx. students' self-efficacy and achievement in middle school math. Their work showed that students' perceptions of whether their teacher cared about them had an impact on their confidence in math and their willingness to attempt solving more difficult math problems (Lewis et al., 2012). Their work also showed that as Latinx students gained confidence in their math skills, their achievement levels rose as well (Lewis et al., 2012). Finally, the data collected from this study showed "the magnitude of the direct link between caring and self-efficacy is more pronounced among Hispanics who have yet to demonstrate a thorough command of English." (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 22).

Relationships among students and their peers are another aspect of the support systems, structure, and culture of a school that have an impact on Latinx students. Issues between students and their peers such as microaggressions, racially charged interactions, and racism (Balagna, Young, & Smith, 2013) as well as prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination (Knudson-Martin, 2013) were described by students as being inhibiting factors to both academic and social emotional success at school. Balagna, Young, and Smith (2013) posit that school staff need to be aware of the "ingroup/outgroup dynamics in their school" to better understand the "existing undercurrents and facilitate system change to create an inclusive school culture for all groups" (p. 112).

Undocumented high school students, 54% of whom are Latinx (Connor, 2021), are especially susceptible to the impact of the school structure on their prospects for post-secondary success. Gonzales (2010) found a significant difference between the experiences and successes of undocumented Latinx students in the Los Angeles area based on the academic track they are placed on in high school. In his work, students who are placed in gifted and talented programs, specialized academies, and honors and AP courses were considered "positively tracked" while students who experienced a general curriculum were considered "negatively tracked" (Gonzales, 2010, p. 476). Gonzales (2010) concluded that positively tracked students experienced more connectedness, support, and advisement from school staff while the negatively tracked students were effectively "shut out of important opportunities and resources" (p. 482). Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, and Cortes (2009) support these findings by identifying positive relationships with adults in the school setting as an environmental protective factor that supports the success of undocumented Latinx high school students. In addition, after completing high school, undocumented students face unique legal and financial barriers to pursuing things such as a post-secondary education, employment, driver's licenses, and the right to vote which further challenges their opportunities for success (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Gonzales, Heredia, & Negrón-Gonzales, 2015).

Latinx families also benefit from specific supports to help them to be involved in the school system and their child's education. One frequently cited need in the literature is the need to communicate with parents in their preferred home language, recognizing that Spanish may not be the preferred home language for all Latinx families (Lieshoff, 2007). Smith, Stern, and Shatrova (2008) cited the frustration felt by Latinx families in a rural Midwestern school district when school communications were not sent home in Spanish and therefore limited their

opportunities to support their children or participate in special events. Research conducted by Torrez (2004) found that Latinx families in three districts in Southern California felt disconnected and uninformed regarding what high school courses are required for college admission because that information was not available in Spanish. This limited their involvement in their child's academic program during high school and helps to dispel the myth that Latinx parents do not have college aspirations for their children (Torrez, 2004). Torrez (2004) concluded that we need a more "effective policy of information acquisition on the part of Latino parents who do not need to be sold on the value of a college degree for their children's future success" (p. 59).

In addition to challenges related to communication, Latinx families also face barriers related to acculturation to a new school system, lack of transportation, and work schedules that don't always match school schedules (Jeynes, 2005) Researchers Vega, Lasser, and Fernandez (2017) posit that a school culture that is welcoming and inclusive is a critical component to parent involvement for Latinx families. In their work, they evaluated the impact of a family-school partnering program on Latinx family participation in their children's school and concluded that tangible barriers such as transportation and schedules had an impact, but the greater question that needed to be asked was whether families felt welcomed at the school (Vega, Lasser, & Fernandez, 2017). O'Donnell and Kirkner (2014) suggest that efforts to train school staff to "engage in more culturally appropriate outreach to families" (p. 229) should help make schools a more welcoming place for Latinx families.

Finally, families who live in fear of deportation need additional support and empathy to be actively engaged with their children's school. The chronic stress from worrying about whether families will be deported (Knudson-Martin, 2013) as well as the trauma that occurs when

families are separated due to deportation (Favela, 2018) are important factors for schools to consider when working with children affected by immigration issues. School staff need to have more empathy and a greater awareness of these emotional needs to provide a supportive, understanding environment (Favela, 2018). Frequent communication, opportunities for families to remain involved in their child's education, and expressions of care and concern for the children's well-being are also effective and supportive strategies cited in the literature (Favela, 2018).

Latinx Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

Combining culture and ability allows researchers to examine the intersectionality of identifying as Latinx while also being identified as a student with specific learning disabilities. This intersectionality, outlined within the Disability Critical Race Theory (also known as DisCrit) framework, looks at the "interdependent ways that racism and ableism shape notions of normalcy" and the ways those identities are used to justify decisions to provide or withhold educational opportunities for students of color (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016, p 55). Annamma and Morrison (2018) discuss the application of DisCrit in addressing implicit and explicit bias in the classroom setting. Addressing bias in teacher training programs at the college level and in school districts by focusing on the use of critical consciousness and praxis to correct "distorted" thinking about race (King, 2004, p. 73), Annamma and Morrison (2018) state teachers will have the skills to disrupt the deficit-based way of thinking and eliminate "dysconscious racism" from the classroom setting (p. 122),

The need to disrupt implicit and explicit bias is clear in the research with evidence of the persistence of prejudice directed towards Latinx special education students. While the data

34

collected for this study showed positive, respectful interactions between teachers and Latinx students, other researchers found evidence of persistent, negative attitudes with low expectations from teachers and school staff working with this population. Other researchers cited similar low expectations from the students' parents and lack of culturally and linguistically supportive transition services for students graduating from high school.

One example of negative attitudes was cited in a study conducted by Dávila (2015), in which school staff demonstrated low expectations, disregard, and bullying behaviors towards Latinx students in special education. This study revealed that this treatment not only marginalized Latinx students, but it also resulted in students refusing support from the staff which negatively impacted their opportunities for academic success (Dávila, 2015). Liang et al., (2020) cited similar experiences from high school students of color (in which 55% of the participants were Latinx) with students sharing stories of teachers ignoring them, laughing at them, calling them names, and accusing them of engaging in illicit activities to make money for new clothes.

The impact of the intersectionality between race and disability also has implications for Latinx students with specific learning disabilities as they prepare to transition out of high school and into adulthood. Additional work has been done to analyze the influence of teachers and parents on the transition process for Latinx students (Mossmond Keel et al., 2018). The results revealed the students viewed their future as being very rich and full yet challenging as they work to meet the expectations set by their families or by themselves (Mossmond Keel et al., 2018). The students also expressed that they felt their parents had low expectations of them which manifested into a fear that they would not be successful in work, school, or independent living after graduation from high school (Mossmond Keel et al., 2018). The parents and teachers in this

study expressed concerns about the challenges and struggles the students would face and what kind of support they needed to be successful (Mossmond Keel et al., 2018). The literature cites needs such as translation support for the students and their families, assistance with obtaining citizenship, access to staff who understand and respect Latinx culture, new methods for increasing family involvement, and additional resources for obtaining work experience and engaging in extra-curricular activities (Povenmire-Kirk, Lindstrom, & Bullis, 2010). The need for transition support services that were sensitive to the Latinx culture and native languages was a repeated theme in the literature (Gil-Kashiwabara et al., 2012; Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2010).

While these studies don't posit that every parent, teacher, or school staff member treat Latinx special education students negatively, they definitely show that we still have work to do to ensure that our Latinx special education students are being treated with the dignity, respect, and support that they deserve. This study will contribute towards that body of knowledge showing ways in which schools, parents, and communities are working together to support the needs of our Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities.

English Learners and Special Education

Several issues need to be addressed when referring to students who are dually identified as having special needs as well as being English Learners. One of those issues is examining the identification rates for both ELs and special education to determine the ways in which English Learners, including Latinx English Learners, are being disproportionately identified for special education. Possible reasons for that disproportional identification can be found in the assessment process, policies for the expected rate of second language acquisition, and the deficit model mindset that can be found in our education system even today. Additionally, the impact of being

an English Learner (and more specifically, a long-term English Learner who is defined as "a student who has been enrolled in a U.S. school for six years or more and has not been reclassified as fluent English proficient." (WestEd, 2016)) with special needs on the students' abilities to acquire and apply social emotional competencies in their everyday lives must be understood so that we can provide appropriate and adequate support for the students.

Disproportionality for students identified for special education who are also English Learners is an important topic in education research. Among the students identified as English Learners, Latinx students comprise the largest group (76.8% of English Learners in the United States identifying as Latinx) and the group with the largest proportion of students identified as English Learners (29.8% of all Latinx students being identified as English Learners) in the 2014-2015 school year (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). The enrollment trends of students in our nation and for individual states illustrates the complexity of identifying and solving the issue of disproportionality, however. Table 1 shows a comparison of English Learner, Latinx, and special education statistics from the U.S. as well as from four different states within the U.S. for the 2019-2020 school year (Kidsdata.org, 2020; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2022).

Table 1: Comparison of English Learner, Latinx, and special education statistics from the United States as a whole and four different states within the U.S.

State	% of students identified for special education	% of students identified as English Learners	% of students identified as Latinx	% of students in special education who are ELs	% of students in special education who are Latinx
Nationwide	13%	10.4%	28.4%	14.7%	27.83%
California	12.8%	18.6%	54.3%	26.37%	56.8%
Indiana	17.5	6.6%	13.6%	6.35%	10.66%
Florida	14.7%	10.0%	35.5%	8.58%	32.15%
Washington	13.5%	10.9	25.3%	16.51%	26.09%

Unfortunately, I could not find data showing the percentage of special education students who are also Latinx and English Learners. From these data, there is clearly the potential for significant discrepancies between individual state and nationwide trends when looking to determine if disproportionality exists (Counts, Katsiyannis, & Whitford, 2018).

In addition to the difficulty of identifying disproportionality, there are multiple reasons that English Learners are at a higher risk of being referred for special education, although no one factor is solely responsible for this issue (Sullivan, 2011). One of the contributing factors cited by researchers is that current legislation, policies, and practices expect English Learners to develop fluency in English at a much faster rate than language acquisition researchers have shown is reasonable (Artiles & Klingner, 2006; Counts et al, 2018; Hakuta, Goto Butler, & Witt, 2000; Sullivan, 2011). Researchers distinguish between oral English proficiency and academic English proficiency and conclude that even in the most successful classrooms, oral proficiency takes three to five years to develop while academic proficiency takes up to seven years (Hakuta et al., 2000). With educational policies that require English proficiency sooner than is realistically possible given these rates of language acquisition, teachers must be able to

distinguish between students who need to be assessed for special education versus students who need more time and instruction to develop fluency in academic English (Fernandez & Inserra, 2013). Unfortunately, general education teachers are rarely trained to make this distinction (Fernandez & Inserra, 2013). This creates a concern that "classifying ELLs into special education occurs much more often than it possibly should" (Fernandez & Inserra, 2013, p. 2).

Another reason English Learners are at risk for being disproportionally represented in special education programs is that the assessments used do not account for the cultural and linguistic differences among students (Counts et al, 2018; Sullivan, 2011). Speech therapists across the United States cite the greatest problem in accurately evaluating English Learners who are referred for special education is a lack of instruments that are appropriate and not culturally or linguistically biased (Roseberry-McKibbin & Hanlon, 2005). In addition, students are assessed for academic skills based on the assumption that higher language proficiency will equate to higher academic skills and lower language proficiency will equate to lower academic skills (MacSwan & Rolstad, 2006). With a critical lack of culturally and linguistically diverse teachers who understand the unique needs of English Learners, it is difficult to distinguish between a student's language needs and their learning challenges (Counts et al., 2018). The limitations of our current evaluation practices may mean that students' needs are not being identified or addressed appropriately (Santibañez & Umansky, 2018).

The use of intelligence tests as part of the special education assessment process is another risk factor for English Learners. The cultural bias of IQ tests was confirmed by the San Francisco Federal District Court in the case Larry P. v. Riles in 1971 (Garcia, 2015). The court's decision made it illegal in the state of California to use standardized intelligence tests to determine overall intelligence (IQ) for African American students due to the cultural bias inherent within the test

(Garcia, 2015). Unfortunately, these same intelligence tests can legally be used for English Learners despite their cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Garcia, 2015). The law states that the test must be translated into a student's primary language if the student is not proficient in English, however that translation does not mean that the student will be familiar with the object, concept, or cultural bias imbedded within that test (Garcia, 2015). Translating the test into a student's primary language does not erase the cultural biases that exist (Gunderson & Siegel, 2001). According to Sanatullova-Allison and Robison-Young (2016), proficiency in English accounts for at least 50% of the variance in scores for students taking intelligence tests. For example, a test that awards extra points for responding quickly is biased against a student whose culture values slow, deliberate actions (Gunderson & Siegel, 2001).

The final risk factor noted in literature on the topic of disproportionality among English Learners in special education is that of the deficit model mindset that exists in the policies and practices in our schools. The belief system behind the word disability leads the public to believe there is "proof of intrinsic deficit" in a child who qualifies for special education services (Harry & Klingner, 2007, p. 16). Research has shown that environmental factors such as poverty, a lack of consistent school attendance, and poor-quality instruction can all contribute to a student's lack of learned skills without pointing to the existence of an intrinsic deficit (Harry & Klingner, 2007). In addition, the concept of intrinsic deficit predisposes teachers to interpret cultural and racial differences as limitations rather than embracing the diversity represented in a multi-cultural classroom setting (Harry & Klingner, 2007). Teacher expectations tend to be lower for English Learners which in turn places limits on the students' opportunities to learn and creates fewer chances to succeed (Sanatullova-Allison & Robison-Young, 2016). A lack of effective instructional strategies to support the needs of English Learners also limits the students'

opportunities to learn thus making them more susceptible to being identified for special education (Counts et al., 2018; Linn & Hemmer, 2011). Children who are perceived negatively and are given limited opportunities to learn quickly become candidates for special education assessments because of the deficit model that exists in our schools (Harry & Klingner, 2007).

Literature indicates that students who are English Learners need additional support to acquire SEL competencies. Castro-Olivo, Preciado, Sanford, & Perry (2011) demonstrated that the longer students spent being classified as an English Learner and attending English Language Development (ELD) classes, the lower their scores of social emotional learning outcomes such as resiliency, acculturative stress, and ethnic identity (Castro-Olivo et al., 2011). These results were consistent on measures of social emotional learning for middle school students both when self-reporting and when teachers completed the evaluation tool. Additionally, Castro-Olivo et al. (2011) found the EL students in this study who spent five or more years in ELD classes had lower grade point averages than their EL peers who spend four or fewer years in English Language Development (ELD) classes. She posits that this negative impact of ELD programs on students social emotional learning skill acquisition indicates the need for "different or more intensive/individualized support" in language acquisition and recommends that educators develop evaluation tools to determine if their lack of progress is due to a learning disability or a social emotional learning challenge (Castro-Olivo, 2011, p. 170).

Thompson (2015) supported these findings in her research with Long Term English Learners (LTELs) by demonstrating how the stigma of being labeled an English Learner in high school was more detrimental than supportive as the label came with very little additional academic or social emotional support. Soland and Sandilos (2021) also support these findings in their research on the connection between self-efficacy, academic achievement, and being labeled

as an English Learner. They found that ELs entering middle school have lower levels of self-efficacy and academic achievement than non-ELs and that these gaps do not change between fifth and eighth grade (Soland & Sandilos, 2021).

Okhremtchouk, Levine-Smith, and Clark (2018) examined the reclassification process for the state of California and found the opportunities for LTELs to take college-track courses become more and more limited the longer they remain classified as English Learners. Hill, Lee, and Hayes (2021) supported that finding and added the social stigma that also is felt by LTELs who are not able to redesignate. Both groups of researchers call for redesignation criteria that are objective, socially just, and that provide for the same academic opportunities for English Learners as are available non-English Learners (Hill, Lee, & Hayes, 2021; Okhremtchouk, Levine-Smith, & Clark, 2018).

Thompson (2017) further explains that the process to reclassify students is arbitrary from state to state because there is no agreed-upon definition of English language proficiency. In her quantitative analysis of reclassification data from Los Angeles Unified School District, she noted there appears to be a "reclassification window" in the upper elementary grades and that students who are not reclassified by that point become increasingly less likely to be reclassified before they graduate (Thompson, 2017, p. 347). Thompson (2017) also noted several other factors that explain the wide variation in the time it takes to reclassify a student. Some of those factors include gender, native language proficiency, education level of parents, and students who qualify for special education services.

Understanding the unique needs of the students who are dually identified as having special needs and being English Learners is an important part of being able to fully support students and their acquisition of knowledge, language, and SEL competencies.

Summary

The literature reviewed and summarized in this chapter reveals the complex issues faced by Latinx students, English Learners, and students with special needs, the positive impact that SEL instruction has on all students, and the perceptions teachers have regarding implementing SEL instruction into their classrooms. There are several gaps in the literature that this project will attempt to address. Those gaps include:

- The impact of SEL instruction for Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities

- The perceptions of special education teachers of the impact of SEL instruction on Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities.

- The collective impact of schools, parents, and communities working together to support the SEL development of Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities.

It is my hope that the information gathered from this project will add to the current body of knowledge in determining the most effective strategies for supporting the SEL development for Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities. With this knowledge, we can be sure that this significant group of students are benefitting from the SEL instruction we are providing.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Questions

Researchers have identified several ways in which students acquire SEL competencies, yet very few studies have demonstrated how individual characteristics and experiences impact the acquisition of these essential skills (McCormick et al., 2019). With that in mind, the research questions guiding this study are:

- What are some examples of schoolwide practices, policies, and culture in place in public and nonpublic high schools to support the SEL development of high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities?

- What are some examples of classroom instruction and climate aspects in public and nonpublic high school classrooms that are used to support the SEL development of high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities?

- In what ways do the partnerships between families, caregivers, and schools support the SEL development of high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities?

- How do the perceptions of the various school community members (administrators, teachers, parents, and students) about how well the school, classrooms, families, and community partnerships work together to promote the development of SEL competencies for Latinx high school students with SLD converge and diverge?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that is serving as the foundation for this project is Social Learning Theory which was first proposed by Albert Bandura in 1977 to explain the process by

which people learn from one another (David, 2019). He believed learning was a cognitive process through which people learned appropriate social and emotional behavior by observing others, imitating how they behave, and then modeling that behavior for others (David, 2019). In 1994, CASEL took Bandura's Social Learning Theory and used it to identify and define specific domains of social emotional behavior that people acquire by observing, imitating, and modeling (CASEL, 2022). The current framework posits there are five domains of social emotional learning that are integral to an individual's development and success. Those five domains include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

The current framework also shows that those competencies are learned through four key settings that provide layers of support. The outermost key setting is that of community partnerships (CASEL, 2022). This layer is responsible for providing learning opportunities that help students understand they are part of a broader community that extends beyond the home and classroom environments (CASEL, 2022). Through contributing to the community, working with mentors, and establishing relationships with people with a variety of backgrounds, age levels, and belief systems, CASEL states students will develop their SEL skills by finding connection, belonging, and support (CASEL, 2022).

The next key setting that supports the development of SEL competencies is the home and the support provided by families and caregivers (CASEL, 2022). CASEL explains that since parents are a child's first teachers, they have a unique understanding of the development, experiences, culture, and learning needs of the child (CASEL, 2022). Schools have the responsibility to partner with families using two-way, open communication and to create a

school culture that reflects the norms, values, and culture of the community (CASEL, 2022). According to CASEL, this partnership is necessary to support the SEL development of students.

The third key setting that supports the development of SEL competencies is the school itself (CASEL, 2022). CASEL posits that a healthy school climate is essential to ensuring the active engagement of students and staff in the work of integrating SEL instruction and practices into the academic and behavioral supports provided for the students (CASEL, 2022). They state an environment that "infuses SEL into every part of a students' educational experience will promote positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes for all students" (CASEL, 2022, Our SEL Framework section, para. 2).

The innermost key setting in this framework contributing to the acquisition of SEL skills is the classroom setting (CASEL, 2022). In the classroom setting, instructional strategies such as explicit instruction, cooperative learning, project-based learning, and the integration of SEL into academic curriculum are methods that CASEL (2020) states will enhance the acquisition of SEL competencies. Additionally, CASEL suggests that these instructional strategies are most effective in classrooms in which there are positive, caring relationships between teachers and students (CASEL, 2022).

The graphic for this framework is as follows (CASEL, 2022):
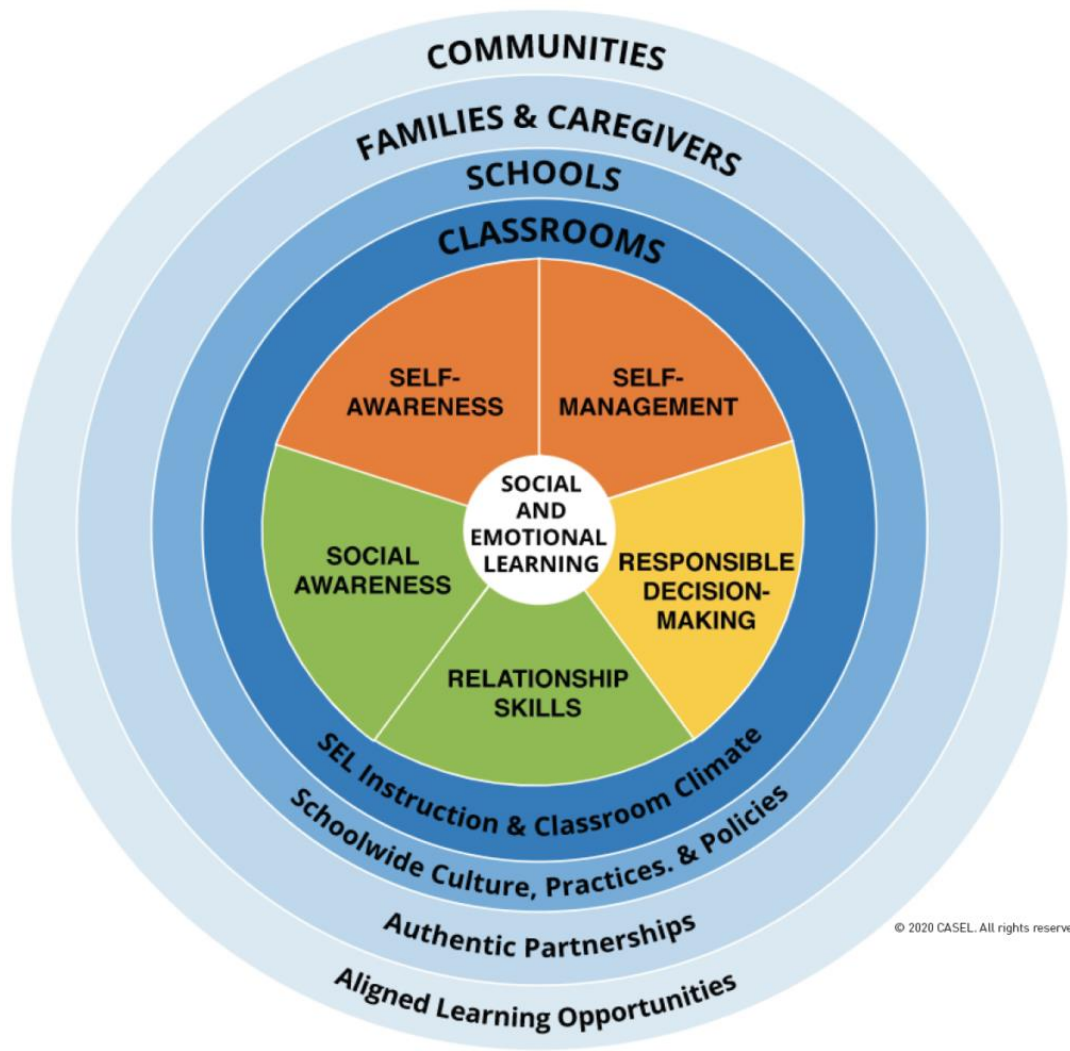
I selected this framework for my project because it is not a purely developmental approach. My project is looking at the current SEL skills Latinx students with SLD have mastered, not the trajectory they followed to acquire those skills. Additionally, students with SLD often do not follow the same developmental trajectory as their non-disabled peers, therefore it is not appropriate to evaluate a special education student's SEL skills by their chronological age. I also selected this framework because it accounts for the influence of families, communities, and schools in supporting students as they develop these skills. The goal of this

47

project is to understand the SEL instruction and support offered by districts, schools, teachers, and families and the impact of that support on the student participants. I feel the CASEL framework is the most comprehensive look at social emotional learning and non-cognitive skills and provides the most appropriate foundation for my project.

As stated in chapter two, there are concerns that the current SEL frameworks are not culturally relevant for students of color and students with learning disabilities. Researchers have expressed concerns that traditional SEL models promote a white, Eurocentric view of emotions and how to manage them as well as perpetuating the "white, normative, neoliberal structures wherein SEL is tied to some form of 'achievement'" (DeMartino et al., 2022, p. 158). Camangian and Cariaga (2022) suggest educators focus on humanization over SEL as humanization "benefits the social and emotional health and well-being of historically oppressed and multiply-marginalized people." (p. 905). Alternate frameworks to better meet the needs of all students have been proposed, including "Transformative SEL" and "Transformative Abolitionist SEL" (DeMartino et al., 2022; Jagers et al., 2022). CASEL (2023) is engaged in this conversation and has added information regarding Transformative SEL on its website, including what it is and what it looks like in practice. Recommendations for future research and implementation of equitable, socially just SEL frameworks will be addressed in chapter five.

Methods

Case Study

I selected a comparative, multi-site case study model for this project because my goal was to conduct an in-depth qualitative analysis of SEL development for Latinx students with specific learning disabilities from two different school sites. The case study approach was

appropriate for this project as it allowed me to draw conclusions and generate themes regarding how Latinx students with SLD experienced SEL instruction through their school, homes, and communities through their experiences and interactions with others in those environments. (Creswell, 2014). Including two very different school sites allowed me to compare and contrast different settings and approaches and the impact of each on the students and their growth and development.

Participants

My original goal was to identify two public high schools within the same district that would be considered mid-range schools as compared to other high schools in Southern California. I was interested in mid-range schools as I felt they would provide the most generalizable information and because I felt mid-range schools would allow me to gather information most relevant to my research questions and draw conclusions that were representative of other mid-range schools and districts in Southern California. Due to the Covid pandemic and the return to on-campus learning the same year in which I was conducting my study, I had to change my plans and, with IRB approval, decided to include one public high school and one nonpublic high school to participate in my project. The following section will describe that decision making process and the factors that influenced this shift for this project.

Due to the change in plans for participants and the need to include one public and one nonpublic high school, selection and recruitment of the school sites occurred in two different ways. The first method was through purposeful sampling. I used purposeful sampling to help me select a public high school district within the ten counties of Southern California that could be considered a mid-range district when considering overall enrollment of Hispanic students and

special education students. Those ten counties included Imperial, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties (Southern California, 2020). The mid-ranges shown throughout this study represent the 25th through the 75th percentile ranges for all districts in Southern California. I calculated the mid-range as for enrollment of students identifying as Hispanic from data obtained from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2019) and the mid-range for enrollment of students with special needs from data obtained from DataQuest (2018). Table 2 shows the mid-range criteria for the selection of school districts.

Table 2 Mid-range criteria for the selection of school districts

Criteria	Mid-range districts
Overall enrollment of students identifying as Hispanic	51.8% - 65.9%
Overall identification of students needing special education services	10.17% - 12.49%

Of the 157 high school and unified school districts in Southern California, twelve met the criteria listed above for enrollment of Hispanic and special education students.

Once I had identified those twelve districts, I use purposeful sampling once again to identify the high schools within those districts who met the same criteria for overall enrollment of Hispanic and special education students plus seven additional criteria. Of these seven additional criteria, four were selected because they were identified as themes throughout the literature as being positively impacted when students receive SEL instruction and support. I used the California School Dashboard as the source of data collection for this purposeful selection process. Table 3 shows these four criteria and the mid-ranges for high schools in Southern California (California School Dashboard, 2019).

Table 3: The four criteria identified in the literature as being positively impacted by SEL instruction and support and used to identify individual mid-range high schools in Southern California.

Criteria	Mid-range high schools
Graduation rate	85%-89%
% of students scoring at or above standard on the English Language Arts CAASPP assessment	52%-58%
% of students scoring at or above standard on the Math CAASPP assessment	25%-34%
Suspension rate	2%-4%

The three remaining criteria used to purposefully select mid-range high schools in Southern California included were not identified in the literature as factors influenced by SEL instruction and support, but instead gave insight into the overall size of the school and the students they serve. I used data from the Education Data Partnership website (http://www.ed-data.org/Comparisons) to identify the high schools who met these criteria. Table 4 shows the criteria and the mid-range criteria for high schools in Southern California.

Table 4 The final three criteria used to identify mid-range high schools in Southern California.

Criteria	Mid-range high schools
Overall enrollment	607-2254 students
% of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch	12.2%-66.9%
% of overall enrollment identified as English Learners	7.1%-79.4%

Unfortunately, I was not able to identify any high schools that met all the criteria listed above. To continue using purposeful sampling techniques to identify high schools that met as many of the identified criteria as possible, I decided to count how many of the nine criteria each high school met. This analysis clearly separated the high schools into two groups. The first group

met one or two of the criteria while the second group met four or more of the criteria. I decided to select schools that met at least four out of nine criteria. This allowed me to identify thirty-seven high schools from twelve different districts that met the purposes of this study.

Once the high schools had been identified, I researched the procedures required by each district to gain permission to conduct my project within their district. The impact of the Covid pandemic on the education system was clear by the responses I received from district representatives. Out of the twelve districts, eleven responded by saying the challenges of returning to in-person learning made it impossible for them to collaborate with me on this project.

One district superintendent granted permission for me to conduct this study within the high schools in their district. This district is home to four comprehensive high schools and is located on the border of three different counties in Southern California. Overall district enrollment is approximately 26,000 students with each high school averaging approximately 2,000 students enrolled in grades nine through twelve. The district was characterized by one of the assistant principals as a multi-generational community with a lot of investment and interest in the success of the schools and the community. This was evidenced by the passing of a multi-million dollar ballot measure to fund school improvement in 2016. I reached out to the four school principals but was not granted interviews with any of them. This eliminated my ability to request recommendations for which assistant principals and teachers to contact for interviews. At this point, I felt I was running out of options, so I reached out to my dissertation committee for suggestions on how to proceed. They were able to connect me with an alum from our university who previously worked within this district. Thankfully, this contact was able to connect me with a teacher at one of the high schools. This high school met the criteria for

suspension rate, percentage of English Learners, and overall enrollment and came with 2% of meeting the criteria for academic performance in ELA and math on the CAASPP tests. At the time of the study, the school staff and students were eagerly looking forward to moving into their new campus provided by the bond measure in the fall of 2022. This teacher became my liaison and ultimately connected me with three teachers and two assistant principals at the first high school and a counselor at a second high school. I was unable to gain any connections with parents or students from this public high school due to administrations' concerns regarding confidentiality.

Unfortunately, I also could not gain any traction with the second high school. The school counselor recommended that I reached out to all the teachers and assistant principals on the school website via email to see if anyone was interested. I received three responses indicating interest in participating, however after several attempts, we were unable to coordinate our schedules to conduct the interviews and the interested staff members eventually withdrew their consent.

Due to the negative impact of Covid on the accessibility of public high schools and the need to complete my project, I decided to use convenience sampling to identify a second high school for this study. The second high school selected met only one of the nine school criteria for participation in the project (percentage of English Learners) and came within 2% of meeting three additional criteria including graduation rate, suspension rate, and percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. It was selected based on convenience sampling and was accessible because I happen to work there. This school served as a contrast to the public high school already purposefully selected. The second school is a non-public school serving approximately 124 students with special needs in the Southern California area. A nonpublic

school is a private school that is certified by the state to specialize in serving students with

disabilities (California Department of Education, 2022). Table 5 compares the qualifying criteria

for each school.

Table 5: Qualifying criteria for each participating school compared to mid-range schools in Southern California.

Criteria	Public high school	Non-public high school	Mid-range high schools
% Hispanic	81.2%	31%	51.8%-64.8%
% special education	15.6%	100%	10.17%-12.49%
Graduation rate	94.2%	83%	85%-89%
Suspension rate	2.3%	<1%	2%-4%
ELA CAASPP scores (% testing at or above standard)	49.51%	0%	52%-58%
Math CAASPP scores (% testing at or above standard)	23.91%	0%	25%-34%
Overall enrollment	1,847	124	607-2,254
Free and reduced lunch rates	70%	10%	12.2%-66.9%
% ELs	7.1%	11%	7.1%-79.4%

One of the obvious contrasts between these two high schools is the difference in the

population of Hispanic students and students identified for special education services. With a

high percentage of Hispanic students and a relatively low percentage of special education

students at the public school, I was able to gather examples and strategies largely focused on

meeting the needs of Hispanic general education students. At the nonpublic school, their focus

was certainly more on meeting the needs of all the special education students regardless of their

racial/ethnic identity. Despite this difference in focus for each school, there were common themes that emerged in their own individual quests to meet the needs of their students.

Another major difference between the two schools is the population of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. The public high school clearly deals with a larger population of students whose families may struggle financially while the nonpublic school population appears to not present with that same challenge. This difference benefitted this project because it allowed me to gather data showing the need for SEL supports for all students regardless of their socio-economic status as well as other intersections between socio-economic status and identifying as Latinx or having a specific learning disability. This contrast between the two schools allowed me to point out the creative and innovative ways the two different schools were meeting those needs for their own unique population of students.

Finally, the similarities and difference in the four factors identified in the literature as being positively impacted by SEL supports were highlighted by using these two different schools for my project. The two schools showed a slight difference in graduation rate (the nonpublic high school is a little lower due to students who earned a certificate of completion rather than a diploma) and very low suspension rates which is a testament to their efforts to provide SEL support for the students. For ELA and Math CAASPP test scores, the public high school is very close to the mid-range for Southern California which tells me it could be considered a mid-range school for academic achievement. The nonpublic high school is far outside the mid-range, however since that school is comprised of only students with special needs, it is expected that the state test scores reflect their academic challenges. This difference is a benefit to this project because it shows how schools with different populations, different levels of academic

achievement, and different settings approach SEL support and will add to the body of knowledge regarding the impact of SEL support on student achievement.

After identifying the second participating school, the next step in the selection process was recruiting staff participants from the nonpublic school. To do this, I began by emailing all of the high school teachers and the school administrators who qualified for the project to see if anyone was interested in participating. Six teachers and three administrators responded positively. During this process, one of the teachers who agreed to participate went out on medical leave and was unable to be interviewed. The other five teachers and three administrators all agreed to participate.

The final step in the selection process was recruiting student participants. I worked with the assistant principal at the public high school to distribute my recruitment letter to families of Latinx students with specific learning disabilities (SLD), however I received no responses from any interested families. From the non-public high school, I used purposeful sampling to identify Latinx students with SLD as their primary eligibility to participate in this study. There were five students who met the criteria and two of the families gave consent for their child to be interviewed for this project. The parents themselves did not wish to be interviewed. Table 6 shows the actual number of participants from each high school and participant group and Table 7 shows additional details about each participant and the role he/she plays at the school site.

Table 6 Number of participants from each group and school site.

Participant Group	# of participants from public high school	# of participants from non-public high school
District/Executive Director	0	1 (Executive Director)
Principals	0	0
Assistant principals or other site administrators	2 (Assistant Principals)	2 (Other site administrators)
Classroom teachers	3	5
Students	0	2

Table 7 Participant pseudonyms, their school site, role, subject taught, and number of years in education.

Pseudonym	School site	Role	Subjects taught	# of years in education
Betty	Public high school	Teacher	Special education	18
Amanda	Public high school	Teacher	Special education, "collab" class	unknown
Sandra	Public high school	Teacher	History	22
Andrea	Public high school	Administrator	Assistant Principal	unknown
Maria	Public high school	Administrator	Assistant Principal	11
Salvador	Nonpublic high school	Teacher	Special education English, science, consumer math	20
Bethany	Nonpublic high school	Teacher	Special education English, math, financial awareness	16
Ramon	Nonpublic high school	Teacher	Special education, science	15
Jenna	Nonpublic high school	Teacher	Special education visual arts	15
Matt	Nonpublic high school	Teacher	Special education, applied tech	15
Julian	Nonpublic high school	Student	n/a	Senior
Daniel	Nonpublic high school	Student	n/a	Junior
Bryan	Nonpublic high school	Administrator	Clinical Director	30
Natalie	Nonpublic high school	Administrator	Transitions Director	8

Data Collection

To increase validity of my findings, several different data collection methods were employed. Throughout the data collection process, analytic memos and field notes were kept. Analytic memos were focused on capturing the thoughts, questions, and reflections I have during the data collection process. Field notes were focused on recording my observations. These analytic memos and field notes were kept on one ongoing document, however, to ensure that I collected both observable data as well as my thoughts and ideas, I used both labels (analytic memos and field notes) to refer to this portion of the data collection process.

Given the difficulty of obtaining access to administrators, teachers, parents, and students at the public high school, I interviewed staff members as they expressed interest in participating in the study. My first interview was with a teacher, then I interviewed the assistant principals, and finally two additional teachers at the school site. I was also able to observe one lesson in one of the classes led by the final teacher who consented to the interview. The data collection process for the public school took approximately four months to complete. For the non-public school, site administrators and teachers were interviewed and classroom observations were conducted within a span of four weeks. Consent forms were explained, signed, and collected for each participant prior to each interview being conducted.

The next step in my data collection process was semi-structured interviews with the students from the non-public school only. No students or families gave consent to participate in the project from the public school and no parents from the nonpublic school consented to an interview. None of the families preferred to communicate in Spanish even though the option was available to them.

Each interview took approximately 20-30 minutes. Consent and assent forms were reviewed and signed and any questions the participants had were answered prior to beginning the interviews. Families who completed the participation process received a $15 gift card to Target to thank them for their participation. Teachers and administrators who completed the participation process were offered a $10 Starbucks gift card.

The final step in the data collection process was to read the public documents for each school site. From the public high school, I obtained copies of the district's 2022-2023 Local Control Accountability Plan, the high school's 2022-2023 School Plan for Student Achievement, and the district's 2022-2023 Parent and Student Information Handbook from the district website. The public high school's 2020-2021 School Accountability Report Card was not updated and therefore was not used for this project. For the nonpublic school, I used the 2020-2021 School Accountability Report Card and the 2022-2023 Parent Student Handbook. The nonpublic school is not required to create a Local Control Accountability Plan or a School Plan for Student Achievement, so they were not available for this project. After reading the relevant portions of these documents, I recorded notes relating to academic and social emotional goals that were an area of focus for each school. To document these sources as references while still protecting the confidentiality of the two schools, I listed them in the references section as "Anonymous" with the publication date and title of the document (without the name of the school included).

Instruments Used

Interview questions were developed based on my research questions. For administrators, I wanted to find out their school's goals for SEL instruction, information regarding community partnerships and parent engagement, and how they viewed their role in the implementation of

SEL programs and instruction in their school. My interview questions for teachers were similar, however I also wanted to get their perspective on how the school implemented SEL and how they incorporated SEL during their instructional day. I also included questions about their sense of efficacy and burnout as those were cited in the literature as being factors that impacted successful implementation of SEL instruction. Student interview questions centered on how they perceived their own mastery of the five competencies in CASEL's SEL framework (self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making). I also included questions about how they were supported at home and at school and about their goals for the future. The complete interview protocol can be found in Appendix A.

For the classroom observations at both schools, I used portions of CASEL's Indicators of Schoolwide SEL Walkthrough Protocol (2020) as my data collection tool to record my observations. The portions I used for both sites included:

- Supportive Classroom Climate – to look for evidence of supportive, culturally responsive, relationship-based, and community building classrooms

- SEL Integrated with Academic Instruction – to identify to what extent SEL instruction is embedded within academic content

- Youth Voice and Engagement (both classroom and schoolwide) – to find evidence that students are engaged as leaders, problem solvers, and decision makers in the classroom and throughout the school

- Supportive School Climate – to look for evidence of support, culturally responsiveness, relationship-based interactions, and community building within the school

These observations gave me unique insights into the day-to-day interactions between the students and the teachers as well as the classroom environment and how it supported the academic and

SEL instruction provided for the students. It is important to note that CASEL's SEL Walkthrough Protocol uses a scoring range of 1 (weak or no evidence), 2 (inconsistent evidence), 3 (somewhat strong evidence), to 4 (strong evidence). A copy of the Walkthrough Protocol is included in Appendix I.

Analysis

The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and checked for accuracy. After the interviews were transcribed, I conducted three phases of coding. The first phase, In Vivo Coding, was used to identify words and phrases used by the participants that give information about how the participants felt and thought by preserving the actual words they used to describe their experiences. According to Saldaña (2016), In Vivo Coding gives priority to the participant's voice and allows culture and worldviews to be better understood. This allowed me to gain understanding of the participants' perspectives on what is in place to support the SEL development of Latinx high school students with SLD as well as their thoughts and ideas on the effectiveness of these strategies and structures.

The second round of coding was Process Coding. According to Saldaña (2016), Process Coding uses gerunds to draw attention to action in the data. These actions could be observable (ex: reading) or conceptual (ex: struggling) and can be used to indicate actions that take place over time to illustrate things that emerge or change (Saldaña, 2016). This approach to coding allowed me to tell the story of what was being done to support the SEL development of high school Latinx students with SLD, to identify how those strategies have morphed over time to better meet the needs of the students, and how the students respond to these strategies.

61

The third and final round of coding for the interviews was Pattern Coding. In this coding method, the researcher uses the coding process to use data gathered from multiple participants and combine, compare, and evaluate them to identify themes that converge and diverge between different participants (Saldaña, 2016). Pattern Coding is useful for multiple-case studies by identifying common themes between the cases (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). This coding structure allowed me to understand the intersection between how the participants perceive their unique roles and responsibilities and how they perceive the roles and responsibilities of the other participant groups in contributing to the development of SEL competencies for Latinx students with SLD.

To analyze my field notes, analytic memos, and notes from my document review, I used Process Coding to identify what I observe the participants doing and experiencing as well as Pattern Coding to categorize those actions. The goal of the observations was to understand the overall school climate, to experience the context of the instruction and support provided to the students to develop their SEL competencies, and to observe the students for evidence of SEL competencies in action. By coding these memos and notes using Pattern Coding, I was able to identify the big picture of how the participants' actions and the layers of support work together to help the students develop and demonstrate their SEL skills (Miles, Huberman, Saldaña, 2020).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe eight strategies to promote validity and reliability in qualitative research studies. The first, triangulation, was accomplished by gathering information from multiple sources in multiple ways and combining them to create themes and confirm findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this project, I collected data through interviews, observations, documents analysis, field notes, and analytic memos. My participants included administrators and teachers from both school sites and parents and students from the nonpublic

school all of whom play a different role in the process of teaching and supporting students through their high school years.

The second strategy described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) is that of member checks and respondent validation. To accomplish this, I asked the participants to review my descriptions and conclusions to see if they are accurate reflections of their experiences as well as to ensure that they are plausible conclusions. The third strategy outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) is spending an adequate amount of time collecting data and interacting with the participants so that negative examples can be identified and no new data is appearing. I was able to do this more at the nonpublic school due to the access I had to participants and to conduct classroom observations. The fourth strategy is to acknowledge my own positionality as part of the entire project to identify how my own experiences, background, worldview, and assumptions may influence or affect the data collection and analysis process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This process of identifying my own positionality has been an important part of my journey through this PhD program and will be addressed more thoroughly in the next section.

The next two strategies outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) call for qualitative researchers to discuss the process and conclusions of qualitative research with peers and to keep an accurate account of the "methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the study" (p. 259). I accomplished these two strategies by working closely with my dissertation chair as I take each step in the research process and by keeping field notes and analytic memos that record the steps and actions that I took as I completed the project.

Finally, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) call for qualitative research projects to contain "rich, thick descriptions" (p. 259) and variation in the sample selection to allow for greater generalizability of the findings. I wrote highly detailed descriptions of the participants, the

settings, and the findings to address that aspect of generalizability. I also used a multiple-site case study to select two schools for participation to increase the chances of applying my findings beyond one specific case.

Positionality

My positionality as related to this study is both professional and personal in nature. Personally, I am a white, neurotypical female. Due to my own privilege, drawing conclusions about the experiences of Latinx high school students identified with specific learning disabilities required me to conduct member checks and respondent validation at each step of the data analysis process to confirm my conclusions accurately represented the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the participants. Professionally, I have spent the last twenty-five years working with Latinx and special education students in both public and non-public schools. In these settings, I have seen first-hand the social and emotional challenges faced by students with specific learning disabilities and the emphasis that needs to be placed on helping students with disabilities build those essential SEL skills. These experiences have helped me develop a deep understanding of SEL, inclusion, and the unique needs of special education students which assisted me in conducting this research.

Additionally, I am currently in a leadership position at the nonpublic school included in this project. It was through the close ties and connections that I have with our school community that allowed me to have access to the staff, students, and families for interviews and classroom observations. The risk of these connections is that some of the participants may have felt they had to participate to gain my favor or that they had to answer in the affirmative and agree with me during the interview process. There is also a risk that those who agreed to participate are like-

minded and generally agree with my perspective on things. To reduce these risks, I sent out the original invitation to participate via email to everyone in the high school program who qualified for the project and only followed up with those who expressed an interest in participation. I did not have any follow-up conversations with those who did not express an interest to avoid the perception of trying to talk them into participating. Additionally, for those who agreed to participate, I sent them the consent forms prior to scheduling the interview and then at the scheduled interview time, I took extra time to explain the purpose of the project, answer any questions they may have about the project itself, and to express that there were no right or wrong answers for the interview questions. I also told each participant that there was no pressure to participate, that I was just trying to get their unique perspective, and they could skip any questions that they did not want to answer. Finally, I asked each participant to review the transcript of his/her interview and make any changes they wished to accurately reflect their thoughts and ideas on this topic.

While I carefully navigated the risks of being in a leadership position at this school, the benefit of being an insider was that I had a strong understanding of the school culture, thus making it easier to draw conclusions about the supports being offered to the Latinx students with SLD who attended the nonpublic school. This presented its own bias in that I needed to take steps to ensure I was not more positive, affirming, and insightful towards the nonpublic school than I was with the public school in my analysis and conclusions. To address this potential conflict, I paid extra attention to the strengths of each school so they were both commended for the ways in which they are having a positive impact on the SEL growth for Latinx students with SLD. I also made sure to address the areas needing growth for each school site. Although my depth of understanding for the public school is limited to the data I collected for this project

through my interviews, observations, and document review, I intentionally focused on both schools, their strengths, and their areas needing support or growth to provide a balanced analysis of the SEL supports being offered to their students.

Limitations

There are several limitations for this project. First, there are limitations within the data collection process due to Covid-19 and the return to in-person learning in the fall of 2021. Administrators and teachers expressed feelings of frustration and stress regarding the impact of the pandemic on the community, the challenges in trying to provide additional support for their staff and students, and the struggle to return to in-person learning during the 21-22 school year. These feelings of sadness and stress were expressed frequently during the interview process and clearly had a significant impact on the staff and students. These feelings of stress also limited my sample size as it was very difficult to recruit administrators, teachers, and families to participate in this project. Additionally, evaluating the overall school climate at the public school was challenging as an online observer. It was difficult to see the whole school community operating together as a group and the interactions of the staff and students taking place outside the view of the computer screen. Covid also presented a unique limitation in that gathering the data during this time period could decrease the generalizability of my findings to high schools immediately following a global pandemic.

There were also limitations created by the need to adjust my methods during the recruitment and data collection process. For example, the recruitment process was supposed to involve purposeful sampling for each school based on identified characteristics identifying that school as a mid-range school in Southern California. Due to the challenges in obtaining

permission from school districts to participate, I recruited one school through purposeful

sampling and the other through convenience sampling. This also changed the case study from

looking at two similar schools to looking at two contrasting high schools. Additionally, the order

of the data collection needed to be changed to adjust to the snowball method of recruitment

within the public school. The targeted number of participants was also adjusted to not include

any interviews with site principals at either school sites, and the elimination of students and

families at the public school. These changes limited the perspectives and contexts for this study

to public and nonpublic high schools who place an emphasis on SEL for all students following a

stressful experience such as a global pandemic.

Chapter 4: Findings

According to CASEL (2020), students receive SEL instruction and support from a variety of sources including their community, their families, their school, and their classrooms. The results from the interviews, classroom observations, and school documents used in the data collection for this project indicate that for the participating schools, these sources of instruction and support are integral parts of the overall instructional program provided for the students. In this chapter, I will review key themes that emerged from the data analysis process, including areas each school feels they are excelling in as well as areas in which they would like to see growth.

Research Questions

As mentioned previously, the research questions guiding this study are:

- What are some examples of schoolwide practices, policies, and culture in place in public and nonpublic high schools to support the SEL development of high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities?
- What are some examples of classroom instruction and climate aspects in public and nonpublic high school classrooms that are used to support the SEL development of high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities?
- In what ways do the partnerships between families, caregivers, and schools support the SEL development of high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities?

- How do the perceptions of the various school community members (administrators, teachers, parents, and students) about how well the school, classrooms, families, and community partnerships work together to promote the development of SEL competencies for Latinx high school students with SLD converge and diverge?

Schoolwide Policies, Practices, and Culture

When reviewing the transcribed interviews and school documents to find the schoolwide policies, practices, and culture that support the SEL development of high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities, several significant themes emerged. Since the sample size is small, I will present these themes by grouping participants by their roles at their respective schools.

Designated Staff to Provide Leadership for SEL Initiatives

The first theme that emerged was the need for designated staff members to provide leadership for SEL initiatives. For example, teachers, administrators, and documents from both schools talked about having a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework in place. In this framework, schools "organize evidence-based behavioral interventions into a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to maximize academic and social behavior outcomes for students." (Los Angeles County Office of Education, 2011). Administrators at both schools expressed satisfaction with the training and guidance they received for establishing the PBIS framework at their sites, specifically with establishing schoolwide behavior expectations and implementing a positive reinforcement system to honor students who meet those expectations.

69

However, the public school administrators expressed a need for a designated leader to keep PBIS at the front of everyone's minds. For example, Andrea (pseudonyms were used throughout this project), said that despite a strong beginning with PBIS training and implementation, this year *"It hasn't really been a centerpiece conversation."* and due to a lack of a designated leader to specifically oversee and consistently promote their PBIS implementation *"We haven't been able to devote as much attention to it as it deserves."* At the nonpublic school, the administrators felt the designation of a leader for PBIS has helped to develop the framework into a centerpiece of the school's SEL initiatives. For example, Bryan stated he believes the PBIS implementation led by the Social Learning Director at the school had been the biggest source of training for SEL for the staff, indicating *"...there's evidence everywhere you go. It's great. It has really permeated the way we look at discipline and the way we look at the school climate."*

From the teachers' perspectives, the implementation of PBIS has been a helpful tool when working with students on SEL skills, yet at the public school it is not used as consistently as it should. For example, from the public school, Amanda said she uses the school's positive reinforcement system called "Cowboy Cash" and rewards her students generously with the school's currency. She allows the students to trade their Cowboy Cash for snacks or homework passes and said that in the past the students can also use their Cowboy Cash to be entered into schoolwide raffles for gift cards. She indicated due to not having a point person in administration to take the lead on PBIS, not many students know about the gift card raffle anymore, so most of them use their Cowboy Cash for snacks. The other two teachers interviewed did not mention PBIS or Cowboy Cash, which supports Andrea's perspective as the public school administrator that the school needs a designated leader to ensure consistent implementation of their PBIS framework. This designated leader could provide additional coaching, training, and focus on the

70

implementation of PBIS and the use of Cowboy Cash as a reinforcer when the students meet the expectations of the school. On the other hand, at the nonpublic school, Jenna and Bethany stated they use the PBIS principles in their classes. As a visual arts teacher who sees a large number of students attend art class each week, Jenna said she knows the value of connecting with students both inside and outside the classroom:

> *I know that there are supports that can work best when like for example, check in check out, when there are adults who are not necessarily working closely with that student that can sort of be that low stakes person to go to and check in and check out everyday. Which is actually something I've thought about recently with issues we've been having with maybe offering to do that for some of our students.*

When asked how the school promotes SEL and PBIS, Salvador said, *"We hired someone just for that!"* This designated leader for PBIS at the nonpublic school provides monthly trainings for the staff, conducts classroom walk-throughs, gives feedback to the staff on their implementation of the PBIS principles, and meets monthly with the PBIS leadership team to review student behavior data and identify students who may need additional support to improve their behavior. Based on the teachers' responses, having a point person leading the PBIS implementation keeps it at the forefront of the staff's minds, challenges them to find ways to enhance the implementation, and creates greater consistency with the implementation of the framework.

From both the administrators' and teachers' perspectives, it appears having a designated leader to provide leadership for SEL initiatives such as PBIS is an important part of building consistency and effectiveness for the program.

Designated Staff to Provide Direct SEL Support to Students

In addition to having designated leadership to oversee their PBIS implementation, administrators at both schools cited the need for counselors to provide mental health services for the students. The nonpublic school administrators indicated an overall satisfaction with the number of counselors and the access the students had to mental health services. For example, Bryan, who provides counseling services for several students, stated he believes the students have adequate access to the counselors because the counselors are *"visible and very accessible"* and the overall environment allows the students to *"feel free to come see us."* Natalie also stated the flexibility of the Transition Department allows her to *"work with them as a group and then work individually"* which gives the students additional access to therapeutic support as needed. Data collected from the nonpublic school's School Accountability Report Card for the 2020-2021 school year indicate that there is the equivalent of 3.8 full time employees (FTEs) who are licensed mental health providers on staff. With an overall student enrollment of 124, this creates a ratio of 32:1 of students to licensed mental health providers for the nonpublic school which is well below the student to counselor ratio of 250:1 recommended by the American School Counselor Association (2023). However, given the increased risk for depression and anxiety among students with special needs, this lower ratio is to be expected at a nonpublic school.

Administrators at the public school indicated they have committed site funds to add an additional counselor to their team, bringing the total number of on-site counselors to eight. Maria indicated this additional counselor is *"strictly for students' social emotional health."* and will oversee the creation of a Wellness Center on their new campus which, according to Maria, is something the school has wanted for a long time. The Wellness Center will provide spaces for small group counseling sessions as well as a "cool down" place for students who need to take a

break and regulate their emotions during the school day. When asked what their students need the most since returning from the pandemic, Maria said, *"Kids do not have problem solving skills. Somehow we missed that. Depression and anxiety are the two words I hear all day long."* With approximately 1847 students enrolled, this creates a 231:1 ratio of students to counselors on campus which is well within the recommended ratio previously cited.

In addition to the on-site counseling department, the public school administrators Maria and Andrea indicated they currently have contracts with many outside mental health agencies, yet they are still seeking additional resources for students because those services quickly become impacted and have waiting lists each year. Andrea, who has a background in school counseling, explained their goal is to eliminate the need for waiting lists and to find ways to offer immediate and accessible support for struggling students. Maria supported the efforts to add to the available services for students stating, *"We're just trying to create whatever we can to get kids help."* The number of counselors the students have access to within community agencies is not known but that number could be factored into the overall ratio of counselors to students to complete the picture of the amount of mental health supports available to the students.

Teachers at both schools also discussed the students' need for mental health and counseling services. At the nonpublic school, special education teacher Salvador explained that if a student is struggling, the staff member who notices it is the first one in line to try and support the student. If that student needs additional support, Salvador stated, *"we seek out help and thankfully we have an abundance of help here."* Bethany also expressed knowing who to call if a student needs additional help while Matt explained that he feels the community building that the school has been doing post-Covid has created a *"very focused, social emotional space"* in which the students are *"more open and vulnerable in speaking about things that are going on"* with

73

each other and with their trusted adults on campus. At the public school, history teacher Sandra expressed the need for additional counselors stating *"This is the nuttiest I've seen kids be. They'll cry very easily, they allow small speed bumps to upset everything."* She went on to acknowledge the school is investing in additional mental health support for the students, stating. *"We hired an extra psychologist. It's definitely a priority."* The other two teachers from the public school gave credit to the counseling department with special education teacher Betty acknowledging that the school has been gradually adding counselors over the last six years to meet the increasing needs of the students.

From these comments, the data indicate the nonpublic school teachers and administrators feel like they have adequate support in place for the students, while the public school participants acknowledge they would benefit from having additional mental health services available to the students specifically to avoid waiting lists for students who need services. The public school teachers and administrators acknowledge and support the efforts that are being made to find that additional support and provide it for the students. Providing direct support to students in the area of SEL will no doubt be an ongoing priority for both schools in the upcoming years.

Identifying Schoolwide Areas of Focus – SEL or Academics?

With a limited number of minutes in the school day, each school needs to identify its main goals and prioritize the activities that will take place during the day to achieve those goals. Educational research has shown that both academics and SEL are important, yet in the data collection process for these two schools, it was clear that while the priorities are similar, the implementation of those priorities creates two different programs for the students. At the public school, there is evidence that academic achievement and success are the top priorities. This is not

surprising given the climate of today's education system is heavily focused on academic achievement and creating a college-going culture. For this school and district, both the district's Local Control Accountability Plan (Anonymous, 2022) and the school's School Plan for Student Achievement (Anonymous, 2022) show two out of the three main goals address college and career readiness and academic achievement. The goals at the high school level include action steps such as providing professional development for effective instructional strategies, ensuring A-G access for all students, and increasing the number of students passing AP exams.

Similarly, the nonpublic school's School Accountability Report Card (SARC) states the primary goal of the school is to implement each child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) which includes a *"course of action to help the child reach his or her highest potential"* (Anonymous, 2022, p. 4). Included in the SARC are academic data, including state testing results for English Language Arts, math, and science, as well as graduation rates indicating that academic achievement is desired, monitored, and celebrated. In this document however, there is also a clear emphasis on the expectation that everyone at the school *"works to establish a culture that promotes self-awareness, proactivity, goal setting, the use of support systems, and emotional coping strategies in the face of a variety of challenges, the very attributes that lead to success."* (Anonymous, 2022, p. 4). In written documents, it appears both schools emphasize academic instruction and the nonpublic school also expects all staff to support the social and emotional growth for each student.

From the administrator perspective, the only administrator who mentioned the challenge of prioritizing between SEL and academics was Bryan from the nonpublic school. He described the school's philosophy regarding SEL as an *"intrinsic part of the program"* that was *"not set aside from the academic learning."* He went on to describe how the school believes that to learn

academic skills, students must have a foundation in SEL skills as well and therefore the two cannot be separated from one another.

Teachers from both sites also indicated different levels of satisfaction for the priorities set for their instructional day and how they can meet those expectations within their classrooms. The teachers' perspectives will be elaborated on in more detail in when classroom instruction and climate is discussed in a later section of this document.

Establishing Positive Staff-Student Relationships

One aspect of school culture and practice that was a strong and consistent theme between both schools and all participants was their practice of building relationships with students to provide support for their SEL growth. At the nonpublic school, teachers shared their own strategies for building relationships with students. For example, Jenna explained that she identifies one or two struggling students and checks in with when she sees them in the hallway, even if she doesn't work with them in the classroom. In the library, Matt meets with each class weekly and opens their library time with a community circle. He stated the school's use of community circles has allowed him to *"get to know the students individually and show them that I actually do care about what's going on in their lives"*. Salvador shared the first thing he tries to do with the students is *"to make sure I let them know that I'm there for them."* Similar perspectives were shared from the public school teachers. For example, Amanda explained that from her first verbal interaction with her students each day, she knows what kind of mood they are in and that *"prompts me to go to have a quick conversation and if it's something that I feel needs to go to the counselor, I can send them to their counselor."* while Betty shared that she

76

enjoys *"talking with the students, getting them to understand, we talk about what they're going through and how they can cope with it, ways they can help themselves, and help their friends."*

These findings were supported by data collected using CASEL's SEL Walkthrough Protocol for classroom observations as well. Under the heading "Schoolwide Systems and Practices", one of the goals is called "Staff and Student Relationships". This goal addresses the extent to which staff greet students during the school day and know them on a personal level as evidenced through conversations and interactions. Table 8 shows the results from the six classrooms that were observed. It is important to note that CASEL's SEL Walkthrough Protocol uses a scoring range of 1 (weak or no evidence), 2 (inconsistent evidence), 3 (somewhat strong evidence), to 4 (strong evidence).

Table 8: Results from the classroom observations specifically related to the area of "Staff and student relationships".

Class	School/subject taught	Staff and student relationships
Ramon	Nonpublic/Science, Culinary Arts	4
Jenna	Nonpublic/Art	4
Bethany	Nonpublic/ELA, Math	4
Salvador	Nonpublic/ELA, Science	4
Matt	Nonpublic/Library, Applied Tech	4
Sandra	Public/History	2

The classroom observations revealed that five out of the six teachers engaged positively with the students and showed a clear knowledge of their personal lives. Any feedback given to the students was delivered in a manner that respected the dignity of each individual. As a public

school history teacher, Sandra's large class size and the format of her lesson for the day (lecture) did not present many opportunities to see interactions she had with the students that would indicate knowledge of their personal lives. Additionally, since I was only able to observe once, it limited the data I was able to collect for her interactions with the students.

The administrative staff also shared ways in which they build relationships with students. For example, at the nonpublic school, Bryan explained that *"all of the students know our doors are open. Today I saw three kids and none of them are on my caseload."*. With her background as a social worker, Natalie stated one of her goals is connecting the students with each other, with resources, and with experiences that will help them *"feel they're as typical as they can be with their different challenges that they face."* At the public school, Maria and Andrea share the role and responsibility for handling disciplinary issues for the school and see themselves building relationships with students who are sent to their offices either for disciplinary reasons or because they are seeking additional help. Beyond providing discipline support, Maria said she also sees her role as being a resource finder for the students to *"facilitate where they should go…. get them to the right people"* when they need help. With her counseling background, Andrea sees her role being more of a behavior counselor engaging students in conversations about their behavior choices and offering positive and acceptable alternatives for their behavior in the future. Clearly, getting to know the students and having a relationship with them beyond the classroom setting is a valued method for supporting their SEL growth at both schools and for all the participants in this project.

For this project, I chose to include the theme of establishing positive staff-student relationships as a schoolwide practice rather than a classroom practice even though many of the strategies were incorporated within individual classrooms. I made this decision for several

reasons. First, both schools have schoolwide implementation of PBIS as one of their sources for SEL supports for the students. PBIS emphasizes building relationships between students and staff, therefore I felt it was appropriate to comment on these relationships for both schools from a schoolwide perspective rather than an individual classroom perspective. Second, I know from first-hand experience that the nonpublic school heavily emphasizes establishing positive staff-student relationships with students and actively includes non-teaching staff such as the office personnel, the cleaning crew, and the Executive Director when looking for a staff member who can connect with a specific student. Given this emphasis on the schoolwide culture of establishing positive staff-student relationships, I felt it was appropriate to include it as a schoolwide practice for this project. Finally, I decided to include establishing positive staff-student relationships as a schoolwide practice because it was clear during my interviews that the administrators at both school sites have established relationships with specific students. This showed me that establishing positive staff-student relationships was truly a schoolwide effort for both schools and not just something assigned to the classroom staff to do. Even though many of the strategies mentioned take place in individual classrooms or office spaces, I decided to include establishing positive staff-student relationships as a schoolwide practice because I found it to truly be a schoolwide effort in SEL instruction and support for students.

Classroom Instruction and Climate

Aspects of classroom instruction and climate related to providing SEL support for high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities were also seen in the interviews and classroom observations with the teachers from both participating high schools. Two themes emerged and will be discussed below.

Incorporating SEL into the Instructional Day

With the school priorities set in the written documents for each school, teachers must decide how to implement those priorities and meet the school's expectations within their classrooms. At the nonpublic school, striking a balance between academics and SEL is something each teacher mentioned as an expectation of the school. For example, Ramon stated that the philosophy of the school is to meet the needs of the whole child, therefore in his classes, he "*rolls back the academic standards and pulls in more the social emotional side of it so we create a more well-balanced kid."* Salvador said he spends a lot of time reflecting on his lessons to make sure he is teaching the right skill in the right way while still *"giving them that big feeling of safety and trust."*

At the public school, two teachers expressed the challenges of finding that balance because they felt the academic rigor that was expected of them took priority. Amanda said, *"I think the social emotional learning should be a big part and I have to be honest, I haven't figured out a way to carve out that time."* Sandra wished for a different kind of schedule to allow for *"time built into the school day to deal with things"* such as counseling or other therapies so that students would not miss class time to receive those supports.

One of the strategies shared that helped the nonpublic school teachers meet the school's expectation to find balance between SEL and academics is to embed the two together into their daily lessons. For example, Ramon stated he encourages the students to ask critical questions in his science class to determine their own perspective on a topic while Matt appeals to their sense of curiosity in his applied technology class by engaging them in the end goal of a project and then leading them through the technical aspects to accomplish the end goal. Bethany encourages students to develop their self-awareness by tracking their own behaviors or progress towards a

goal. Jenna explained that her approach in the classroom is to make sure that she is *"looping everyone in and not doing anyone a disservice by making something too difficult or too basic."* One of the nonpublic school teachers expressed the need to set boundaries for how much individual SEL support students can receive from her during instructional time. Bethany cited while she works hard to build rapport with students, if a student needs more than about five minutes of support during instructional time, she will reach out for someone else to step in to help the student so she can continue with her lesson.

Teachers at the public school did not comment on embedding SEL supports into their academic lessons. None of the administrators from either school commented on this topic during their interviews either. In addition to the data collected from the interviews, the classroom observations provided evidence of teachers' strengths and areas for growth at both schools when it came to embedding SEL instruction in their classrooms. Under the heading "SEL Integrated with Academic Instruction" in CASEL's SEL Walkthrough Protocol, there are three goals for embedding SEL instruction at the classroom level:

- *Fostering academic mindsets* – actively engaging students in academic tasks and discussions
- *Aligning SEL and academic objectives* – engaging students in meaningful discussions that make connections between SEL and academic content
- *Interactive pedagogy* – providing opportunities for student talk time to exceed teacher talk time

Table 9 shows the results from each of the six classrooms that were observed, specifically focusing on the area of "SEL Integrated with Academic Instruction". As noted previously,

CASEL's SEL Walkthrough Protocol uses a scoring range that includes a score of 1 (weak or no

evidence), 2 (inconsistent evidence), 3 (somewhat strong evidence), and 4 (strong evidence).

Table 9 Results from classroom observations for "SEL Integrated with Academic Instruction"

Class observed	School/subject taught	Fostering academic mindsets	Aligning SEL and academic objectives	Interactive pedagogy
Ramon	Nonpublic/Science, Culinary Arts	2	1	3
Jenna	Nonpublic/Art	4	2	4
Bethany	Nonpublic/ELA, Math	4	1	1
Salvador	Nonpublic/ELA, Science	3	1	3
Matt	Nonpublic/Library, Applied Tech	3	2	3
Sandra	Public/History	3	1	2

In the first area of fostering academic mindsets, five out of six teachers were observed at

a level 3 or 4 of engaging students in class activities and discussions, expressing confidence in

students' ability to persevere through challenging tasks, and offering students opportunities to fix

mistakes. This is an area of strength for the participating teachers. In the second goal of

alignment of SEL and academic objectives, two out of six teachers were observed occasionally

engaging students in discussions that connected SEL to academic content, however embedding

SEL standards into academic content and encouraging students to self-assess their use of SEL

skills in the classroom setting were not observed in any of the classrooms for this project. In the

third goal of having interactive pedagogy, four out of the six teachers who were observed

strongly or somewhat strongly used student engagement strategies to ensure student talk time

was greater than or equal to teacher talk time and cooperative learning strategies to provide

students with opportunities to learn from each other and share their ideas with one another. These scores, combined with the interviews, show that the participants have strategies and skills for engaging students in the learning process, however they need more time for planning and integrating SEL standards into the academic program. They also need more strategies for teaching the SEL standards in such a way that does not cause them to feel like they are compromising academic instruction.

Creating a Classroom Climate that Supports SEL Growth

Amanda, one of the public high school teachers, shared many details about how she builds a positive classroom climate that supports SEL growth for her students. She explained that one way they have been encouraged to do this is through the idea of *"grading with grace"* by focusing on percentages rather than letter grades. She went on to explain that the discussion on this topic included identifying what an F really means *"because a 0% is an F and 50% is also an F".* Amanda also cited pulling resources from a variety of book such as Habits of Mind, Random Acts of Kindness, and Every Monday Matters to support students' academic and SEL growth through her instruction and leaning heavily on rewarding students through their PBIS reinforcement system when students are on task and working on their assignments. Finally, the public school uses a collaborative model in which a special education teacher co-teaches an academic classes with a general education partner teacher. In these "collab" classes, Amanda explained how she and her partner teacher monitor the students' social wellness each day through a daily check in using QR codes. She explained, *"The kids can check in with the QR code if there's something going on that's bothering them that they would like to share privately."*

These check ins are monitored daily and allow the partner teachers to support the students' social emotional needs while still moving forward with academic instruction.

One of the public school teachers expressed negative experiences with trying to create a classroom climate that supports SEL growth. Sandra shared her classes were designed to be a blend between lecture and class discussions and that in previous years, she could address SEL skills such as self-awareness and social awareness through their class discussions. She felt coming back from Covid had been very difficult because wearing masks stunted the students' ability to engage in quality discussions as a class. Sandra said, *"One thing is I wish that we could have better conversations in the class. Like we could open up a little bit. And see this is because the whole mask thing and Covid…that we've been though."* At the time of her interview, the mask mandate had just been lifted and Sandra expressed cautious optimism that removing their masks might help restore their ability to have class discussions and her ability to provide SEL support through her lessons stating, *"I feel like the tension has gone down a little bit in the class. I feel like the kids are happier because they're able to see smiles again."*

None of the administrators from the public school discussed classroom climate in their interviews. In addition, none of the nonpublic school teachers or administrators discussed classroom climate specifically, however during classroom observations, CASEL's SEL Walkthrough Protocol provided additional data regarding the classroom climate for both the public and nonpublic schools. Under the heading of "Supportive Classroom Climate", there are five goals identified by CASEL for creating a supportive and responsive classroom:

- *Teacher-student relationships* – students share their perspectives and concerns; teacher responds with warmth and positivity

84

- *Cultural responsiveness* – students share about their lives and backgrounds and work to understand each other's perspectives

- *Classroom routines and procedures* – students understand and follow classroom routines and procedures

- *Student-centered discipline* – students monitor and regulate their own behavior; teachers redirect misbehavior discreetly and respectfully

- *Community building* – student are active participants in class discussions and activities; physical environment encourages interaction among students

Table 10 shows the results from the classroom observations focusing specifically on the area of "Supportive classroom climate" As noted previously, CASEL's SEL Walkthrough Protocol uses a scoring range that includes a score of 1 (weak or no evidence), 2 (inconsistent evidence), 3 (somewhat strong evidence), and 4 (strong evidence).

Table 10: Results from classroom observations for "Supportive classroom climate"

	School/subject taught	Teacher-student relationships	Cultural responsiveness	Classroom routines and procedures	Student-centered discipline	Community building
Ramon	Nonpublic/Science, Culinary Arts	2	1	2	3	3
Jenna	Nonpublic/Art	4	1	4	3	3
Bethany	Nonpublic/ELA, Math	4	1	4	3	3
Salvador	Nonpublic/ELA, Science	4	1	2	2	2
Matt	Nonpublic/Library, Applied Tech	4	3	4	3	4
Sandra	Public/History	1	1	3	Not observed	3

Consistent with data gathered from interviews with the teaching staff, there was strong evidence of effective teacher-student relationship observed in four out of the six classrooms. Specifically, teachers were observed greeting students by name, affirming student interests and efforts in the classroom, and understanding student's individual needs while the students were observed freely sharing their ideas and perspectives during class discussions. Classroom routines and procedures was also an area of strength with three out of six teachers showing strong evidence and an additional teacher showing somewhat strong evidence of successful implementation. In these classrooms, the routines and procedures were followed by the students with minimal prompting or redirection from the teacher. An area for growth for five out of the six teachers observed was in cultural responsiveness. According to this walkthrough protocol, classrooms that are strong in this area include students sharing about their lives and backgrounds, being actively engaged in trying to understand each other's perspectives, and taking pride in their history through telling stories about their linguistic and cultural identities. In the classroom that did show some strength in this area, all students were observed sharing personal stories with each other, including anecdotes about their cultural identities. In addition, the materials displayed around the classroom and posted on the walls reflected positive images of a variety of different identities, including gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Family and Caregiver Partnerships with Schools

In the area of establishing and maintaining partnerships between families/caregivers and schools, the one theme that emerged from this study that supports the SEL development for high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities was need for two-way communication. I

will expand on this theme from the teacher, administrator, and parent perspective in the next section.

Classroom Communication

From the classroom perspective, maintaining two-way communication with families about concerns that come up both at home and at school was cited by every teacher as an important way to support the students with their SEL development. At the public school, Amanda said she typically has good relationships with her student's parents and will often reach out to them before IEP (Individualized Education Program) meetings to discuss any concerns they may have for their child. She also said she stays in contact with them via email so open lines of communication can be maintained. Betty explained that she also keeps in touch with her students' families because she cannot be with the student all the time so the ultimate responsibility for the welfare of that student falls on the parents. Sandra expressed negative experiences when communicating with her students' families, stating she feels they are not supportive and *"don't know what to do"* when it comes to dealing with struggles their child may be having. She also expressed frustration over being expected to have all the answers for solving a child's problems just because she was the teacher. Additional training for parents was suggested by Sandra during her interview as a solution to this problem and she explained that at their site, this additional family support is offered through programs such as the Twelve Family Powers and CABE, which are both provided by their Community Liaison and Family Engagement Center. Sandra expressed that while these trainings are helpful, they are not enough because parents don't know how to help their children with the complex issues of today's society.

At the nonpublic school, the need and desire for two-way communication between home and school was also very clearly identified by every teacher. During their interviews, each teacher cited times when parents asked questions, shared a challenge their child was having, or gave feedback in preparation for an IEP and how that communication supported the students' growth. Jenna stated:

> *I think the most helpful thing that parents can do is if there is an issue that we don't know about just to let us know so that we're not starting from scratch when we start to try and figure those things out. Also support like if there's something that's going on at school that we are trying to navigate just that support at home is helpful for there not to be two different systems or two different sides of messaging.*

Bethany shared that she communicates with parents because *"there could be something going on that I'm not aware of so I let parents know."* She also said she uses email to communicate what they are working on in class on a weekly basis and to keep the lines of communication open between home and school. Salvador and Ramon both noted at times parents can try too hard to protect their children from the real world and having good communication with the classroom teacher can help mitigate that.

Schoolwide Communication

Administrators at both sites also addressed the communication issue, however they approached it from the perspective of schoolwide communication with families rather than classroom communication. For example, at the public school, Andrea emphasized the importance of letting families know what the school taught during the school day because:

We see the students for just a fraction of their life. Most of their time is spent at home

with their family and friends. Unless it's being reinforced in all aspects, I feel like it may

not have the lasting effect of the impact we want it to have.

She went on to explain that consistent messaging from home and school is very helpful in providing clear messaging to students because *"we're not on this mission by ourselves."* Maria also expressed an appreciation for the families who reach out asking for help because it makes her feel like her work to provide resources is being put to good use by those families. She stated, *"We're just really trying to work as a team with the parents, teachers, administration, counselor, and really try to get these kids back on track and get them motivated."*

At the nonpublic school, several communication concerns were brought up by the administrators during their interviews. Bryan, who is bilingual and biliterate in Spanish, cited the need for as much support as possible in two key areas. The first area was communicating information in Spanish either face-to-face or by phone rather than in written form. He shared that even when communication is sent in Spanish in a letter or by email, *"at least 3 parents call me to tell me, tell me what is this, can I sign it, what does it mean, what are you asking me to do."* The second area Bryan felt needs additional support was in helping parents navigate the American school system and concepts such as SEL. Bryan explained:

I know our parents have a hard time navigating the school system because of the

language or because they either didn't have a school experience or the experience they

had was completely and totally different. So it's hard to understand the system.

Natalie also expressed challenges with schoolwide communication with parents. She uses schoolwide communication to encourage parents to continue being active participants in supporting their child's SEL growth and development, yet she finds that parents have the

"perception that their child is going to be here and we're going to manage all the things."
Finding practical and easy ways for parents to remain involved is one of the areas she focuses on
as an administrator at this school.

Perceptions of Effectiveness of Current SEL Support

My fourth and final research question was to find out how the various school community
members (administrators, teachers, parents, and students) perceive the effectiveness of the ways
in which the school, classrooms, families, and community partnerships promote the development
of SEL competencies for Latinx high school students with SLD. In analyzing the interviews,
documents, and classroom observation data I collected, several themes emerged which will be
discussed in the next section.

Providing Access to Mental Health Support

The first theme was the success of each school with providing mental health supports for
the students. The Covid pandemic and subsequent societal issues facing our world has taken its
toll on high school students, resulting in a decline in overall mental and physical health among
teenagers (Center for Disease Control, 2022). At both school sites, administrators noted an
increase in negative behaviors such as substance abuse, truancy, lack of motivation, and failing
classes. Behavior issues have become a significant concern with public school administrator
Maria noting that *"...this year I feel like it's just been about putting out fires."* To cope with this,
the public school has successfully established new partnerships with outside mental health
agencies and hired an additional counselor and a third assistant principal to support the students'
needs. Maria stated that they continue to look for new, creative ways to support the students'

mental health because there always seems to be a waiting list for counseling services for the students. In addition, Maria expressed satisfaction in successfully supporting parents who are asking for help:

> *Lots of parents have reached out and so probably they are struggling just like the school. But I am pleased with the amount of parents who are open to getting help for their children and who have gotten help for their children and who will come in and have these meetings with us.*

At the nonpublic school, administrator Natalie noted success with working with teachers to intervene when students need additional mental health support. She noted this year she is seeing an increased number of students not able to manage being in a classroom for more than five to ten minutes. Natalie credits the teachers for being a strong first line of defense for successfully providing support for their students. Natalie said:

> *The teachers are with them day in and day out and they will have an understanding of their emotional needs, what's going on with them, they can see if the student comes in happy one day and not so great the next. They'll be able to build those relationships where they'll be able to express themselves. So I feel like the teachers are even more of the experts when it comes to that because I think they're that first line because the students even develop a stronger level of comfort with those teachers.*

Additionally, Bryan credits the students for successfully supporting each other and seeking help for their friends when it is needed. He noted they are learning to be kind, supportive, and inclusive with their peers which he counts as a successful demonstration of the SEL instruction they are receiving.

The teachers also noted the successes each respective school has experienced in providing mental health supports for the students. At the public school, Amanda and Sandra both approved of the school's decision to hire an additional counselor and assistant principal to provide support for the staff and students. Amanda also commented on the positive impact of the *"co-effort"* between the school and the city to provide mental health services for the students. The trade-off for having more services is that students are pulled out of class more, which has a negative impact on their academic achievement and needs to be addressed, according to Sandra.

At the nonpublic school, three teachers commented on successful strategies being used to provide additional mental health supports for the students. Salvador said he relies on the collaboration between himself and other staff members to help ensure the students are getting the help they need:

> *Sometimes it feels like we don't have the answers and so we look for the answers together, watch each other get frustrated. Not that that's a good thing, but it's good to share and to know that we're not the only ones who are struggling.*

Community building was a strategy that Matt and Jenna felt has made a big impact on the overall school climate, creating more opportunities for open conversations in classes and encouraging students to support each other while the staff identifies students who may need more support. Jenna noted that because students have bonds with other students, she can see them supporting each other by *"talking about their work or they've opened up about something and someone else has jumped in and been able to relate."*

Even the students who participated in this project acknowledged that support from a variety of sources including their peers, teachers, counselors, parents, and school administrators had helped them with problems or concerns during their time at the nonpublic school. Eleventh

grader Daniel identified a specific staff member he goes to for help, stated his favorite thing

about his school is *"the help"* and that he mainly gets help *"with the work".* Twelfth grader

Julian also identified a specific staff member he goes to for help with academics and one who he

goes to for help with *"other things"* such as social or emotional challenges. From my analytic

memos, I noted that it felt as though the students were trying to minimize their need for social

and emotional support during the interview process. On campus, I observed them interacting

with a variety of staff members, sometimes for academic support but also receiving

encouragement, building connections, and asking for advice from staff members. It was clear

that mental health supports and services are an important form of support and that those services

are viewed as being helpful by the various school community members at each school site, even

if the students did not wish to acknowledge it verbally.

Implementation of SEL Initiatives

The second theme that emerged was that there were different approaches between the two

schools for the implementation of SEL initiatives. Striking a balance between SEL and

academics was the method used at the nonpublic school with teachers and one administrator

acknowledging the success of that approach. One area of success mentioned was the balance

between academic and SEL instruction that the nonpublic school maintains. Bryan said:

> *I think that we really believe in having social emotional learning as an intrinsic part of*
>
> *the program. It's not set aside from the academic learning and from the social learning,*
>
> *we really believe that to be able to learn, we need to also consider academic functioning*
>
> *but also social emotional.*

The teachers at the nonpublic school also acknowledged their intentional efforts to integrate SEL instruction into their academic classes with only one teacher finding a need to set limits on how much individual SEL support she could give without sacrificing her academic instruction.

At the public school, none of the administrators mentioned the topic of balancing academic instruction with SEL support. However, while reviewing the public school's School Plan for Student Achievement for 2022-2023 (Anonymous, 2022) and the district's Local Control Accountability Plan (Anonymous, 2022), I noted there were more goals aligned to academic growth and achievement than to SEL growth. The stronger emphasis on academic achievement in the school and district plans coupled with their financial commitment to providing mental health supports for the students show they acknowledge that SEL is important for student achievement, however academic achievement is a stronger, more publicized area of focus for the school and the district.

The students at the nonpublic school cited divided opinions when asked this question. For example, Julian stated that social emotional learning was more heavily emphasized even in the core academic classes such as math and English. This was a source of frustration to him as he acknowledged that he sometimes felt unchallenged in his academic classes (especially math) because the teachers *"have to go slow in class to make sure kids aren't stressed out"* rather than pushing them academically. In contrast, Daniel expressed that he felt the academics were more emphasized than social emotional learning at the nonpublic school. When asked why he felt that way, he said *"If emotions and all that stuff is going to bother you, that's how you're going to fail."* Rather than focusing on his emotions, he said he likes to work on math, especially Geometry.

When discussing PBIS, the nonpublic school staff expressed satisfaction with the implementation process to date. As mentioned earlier, Bryan felt it was a very strong area of professional development for the staff, stating:

> *The big one that we've had for the last two to three years has been PBIS. Definitely you can see it now, there's evidence everywhere you go. It's great. It has really permeated the way we look at discipline and the way we look at the school climate. I think that has really determined in many ways what we were trying to accomplish before but without having a coherent program.*

At the public school, Andrea expressed satisfaction in the focus on PBIS they had in the past and had concerns about how to regain that focus moving forward. She specifically referred to the implementation of PBIS, stating the basics are in place however they need *"someone to steer the ship"* and keep them moving forward with making PBIS a commonly understood framework among the staff and students. Andrea said, *"...this year, we've noticed that it* (PBIS) *hasn't really been a centerpiece conversation and many kids don't even really know what to do with that because it hasn't really been talked about."* Fortunately, at the time of this study, an additional assistant principal and a new counselor had been hired specifically to "steer the ship" of PBIS for this high school which should help address some of the concerns expressed by Andrea.

The teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of SEL implementation at their respective school sites were similar to the administrators'. When it comes to the balance between SEL and academics at the nonpublic school, science teacher Ramon agreed with administrator Bryan citing, *"We have a great balance of educational, social, emotional learning all across the board."* At the public school, the teachers who participated mentioned several SEL initiatives

such as ROX, Every Monday Matters, Random Acts of Kindness, and Habits of Mind that have been effective in supporting SEL development for students. Amanda shared that she wished for a more developed and consistent curriculum that could be done school wide. She shared the biggest challenge is *"How do you fit it in exactly? Standards, standards, standards, you gotta get through all of them and it's like, no down time."* Sandra concurred, indicating her main concern was how to fit it in to an already busy school day *"…because of the speed of which the curriculum has to go."* She stated several times that the emphasis on academic achievement and teaching the standards superseded her ability to incorporate SEL into her lessons.

In the area of PBIS implementation, only one teacher at the public school mentioned using the PBIS framework in her classroom, however she said she was a very strong supporter of the framework and wished other teachers would use it more so that it was a consistent message being given to the students. At the nonpublic school three out of the five teachers mentioned PBIS as an effective framework they use in their classrooms and that benefits the students. Jenna expressed an interest in expanding her implementation of PBIS strategies by supporting students with check ins outside the classroom setting:

> *Well, I know that we offer PBIS supports and I know that there are supports that can work best when like for example, check in check out, when there are adults who are not necessarily working closely with that student that can sort of be that low stakes person to go to and check in and check out every day. Which is actually something I've thought about recently with issues we've been having with maybe offering to do that for some of our students.*

Connections with Outside Agencies

A third theme that emerged from these interviews was the effectiveness of the new connections each school was building with agencies that are not related to mental health services. For example, special education teacher Amanda explained new connections they have with the Transition Partnership Program (TPP) through the Department of Rehabilitation and with Workability. These organizations will provide special education students at their school with additional resources for post-secondary job training, coaching, and support. Amanda expressed excitement over these connections and stated these new opportunities are especially important to her this year:

> *This is one of the first years where all of my students are not applying for community college. In the past, I've always had all of my special education students apply and at least attempt to go to community college, and that is huge.*

At the nonpublic school, teacher Jenna described her new connection with Muralism, a company created to support the artistic skills of students with learning disabilities through mural design and creation:

> *As it relates to art, I think that it's validating in a different way for students to get opportunities to do things that maybe aren't "us driven". I know we have something coming up with them later on in the year and specific students in mind that we want to empower to be leaders in that project. I'm excited and I haven't talked to any students about it, but I'm excited for them to learn about that and see that happening.*

Although these community organizations are not designed specifically to address SEL skills, both Amanda and Jenna acknowledged that the confidence, knowledge, and experiences

provided by community organizations such as these will contribute towards the overall SEL

growth for all the students who are involved.

Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural responsiveness was not specifically addressed in my interview questions,

however given that this project focuses on Latinx high school students with specific learning

disabilities, it did come up naturally in several of the interviews I conducted with the nonpublic

school staff and it is also an area of growth according to the classroom observations using

CASEL's SEL Walkthrough Protocol. During my interviews, each participant who mentioned it

framed it as a concern and something that the school needs to pay closer attention to in the

future. For example, in my interview with Bryan, he expressed concerns that our Spanish

speaking families needed additional support to understand the written material that the school

sent home:

> *Parents are, when we send paperwork home, at least three parents call me to tell me*
>
> *what is this, can I sign it, what does it mean, what are you asking me to do. They*
>
> *don't know what to sign and what they're signing.*

He stated that the families do better with verbal communication, regardless of whether that is

face-to-face or by phone. Yet with that knowledge, the nonpublic school continues to use written

communication as the primary method for providing information to all families, including the

Spanish speaking parents. While written communication in Spanish is better than nothing, if that

is going to continue to be the school's main communication method, Bryan feels they need to

hire more bilingual staff members to provide that verbal communication, reassurance, and

support for their Spanish speaking families.

98

Another area of concern that was noted by the nonpublic school staff was in building relationships with students. Bethany stated that she knows building rapport with all students is important, but she felt it was *"the biggest piece"* for her Latinx students' success and also *"a lot more difficult"* with her Latinx students than any other population of students in her classes. When asked why she thought that was the case, she said, *"I don't know why. It's almost like they have their guard up and it takes longer. Even when I tap into their interests."* It is important to note that Bethany identifies as Asian American and is one of the younger, more energetic teachers on the nonpublic school staff who historically has been able to connect with any student placed in her classes. She shared that with one of her current Latinx students, it took over a year to gain his trust.

A third concern that is interesting to note in the area of cultural responsiveness was shared by Matt. He discussed the need to understand the generation gap between our Latinx students and their parents. He shared that the parent support system that many of our Latinx students have contains varying degrees of understanding of the importance of SEL. Matt shared that he is a first-generation immigrant and can understand the struggle our students face when their parents tell them, *"you just have to tough it out, you just have to keep going, you just have to do it over and over"* while the school staff tells the students to use strategies such as taking a break, only doing half of the assignment, or talking to a therapist for support. He said this generation gap is critical for educators to understand to support Latinx students in the classroom setting.

These three concerns were not themes that were in common with other participants and did not come up in my interviews at all with the public school participants, but they were interesting comments specifically related to areas needing to be addressed by the nonpublic

school in order to make their SEL supports more effective for the Latinx students. These concerns also highlight the need for the nonpublic school to ensure they are hiring staff who reflect the ethnic and racial background of its students, specifically to ensure they are hiring bilingual Latinx staff members within each employee group on campus (teachers, aides, and administrators).

Examples of Students Showing SEL Skills

Finally, the most energizing theme that emerged from these interviews was that each participant, from the administrators to the teachers to the students, was able to identify a time when they saw a student using SEL skills effectively. Some of the stories that were shared were stories in which the observer was caught off-guard, not realizing that the student had it in them to demonstrate such strong and effective SEL skills. For example, Natalie shared a story in which a nonpublic school student typically known for being very critical of his peers gently reminded a classmate about needing to raise his hand rather than blurting out answers. Betty told a story about a student in her special education class at the public school who really struggled with his own mental health and how one day she observed him comforting another student who was having a rough time, telling that student it was going to be ok. Salvador also shared a story in which a nonpublic school student was facing a class schedule change which normally would have triggered an emotional meltdown, but with some coaching and support from a trusted adult, he was able to accept the change and is now thriving in his new class.

Other stories were more subtle with the student gradually growing and building confidence and then one day, the observer realizing how far he/she had come and being able to look back and see the progression of skills over time. Ramon shared a story of a nonpublic

100

school student whose self-awareness allows him to now vocalize that he uses certain strategies in his math classes because they help him to be successful. It has taken many, many years to get him to this point, but now he advocates for himself on a daily basis. Maria talked about a student at the public high school who needed a lot of breaks during the day but also struggled to trust the adults at school. She worked and worked with him and now he finally understands that her office is a safe space and that he can take a break with her whenever he needs it. Bryan shared that at the nonpublic school, he has observed a number of students developing an understanding for different disabilities and becoming more and more inclusive with their peers during unstructured time and in the classroom.

These stories were validating and encouraging to me personally and professionally because I find it is often so easy to focus on the negative examples of the challenges that weren't overcome, the students who didn't succeed, and the struggles that were not realized. I was also pleased to hear these stories because they are a testament to the hard work and dedication of the staff at both schools in supporting students as they develop their SEL skills. As both an educator and a researcher, I was pleased to hear so many positive stories about students who had developed these essential SEL skills and demonstrated them in their everyday lives.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions

While the original intent of this project was to compare two similar public high schools, the opportunity to use one public high school and one nonpublic high school allowed me a unique view into two different high schools and how each one used their setting, staff, community, and families to support the SEL growth of their students. Each school addressed the challenges of the Covid pandemic, distance learning, and the return to in-person learning in the fall of 2021 differently, yet the commitment to supporting students' SEL growth in both schools was evident throughout the data collected during this project. There was evidence that both schools were heavily focused on addressing the mental health and SEL needs of the students and had their own individualized systems in place to provide that support. Additionally, staff members at each school played different roles in their respective jobs to support the SEL growth of their students and their perspectives were so valuable in seeing the wide variety of ways SEL skills can be supported in high school settings. In this chapter, I will address each research question, summarize the findings, and provide conclusions and recommendations for further research on this important topic.

Research Question #1: What are some examples of schoolwide practices, policies, and culture in place in public and nonpublic high schools to support the SEL development of high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities?

Conchas (2011) showed that the support systems, structure, and culture of a school have an impact on the successes as well as the challenges faced by Latinx high school students. In these two high schools, three main themes emerged as examples of schoolwide practices,

policies, and culture that are in place to support the SEL development of all students, including Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities. These themes included identifying staff members who can lead and support the integration of SEL at the school site, incorporating SEL into the school day, and a schoolwide culture of building relationships between staff and students.

Staff Members to Lead and Support the Integration of SEL Theory into Practice

Maintaining adequate staffing to meet the needs of the students at the large, comprehensive public high school campus is an ongoing challenge that remains top-of-mind for the school administrators. During the time of this study, the staff at the public high school were eagerly awaiting their most recent hires including an additional assistant principal and an additional counselor. Both new staff members were specifically hired to lead their PBIS implementation and to provide much-needed on-site support for staff and students. This aligns with the findings from Ransford et al. (2009) which showed the strongest implementation of SEL initiatives came from staff who had positive experiences in training and coaching as well as strong administrative support. In addition, the search for outside agencies to partner with to provide mental health services was also an ongoing area of focus. In spite of contracting with at least four outside agencies, the school administration stated some of their students were on waiting lists to receive services. It was their desire to not have any students waiting for support therefore they were consistently seeking new connections with outside sources of support for those students.

At the much smaller nonpublic school, there was a sense from the participants that there was an adequate number of staff members to provide support, but sometimes the issues the

students were facing required a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach (including private therapists and specialists) to determine the best strategies for meeting the needs of the student. In addition, the staff at this school were seeking ways to partner with outside agencies to build students' SEL skills indirectly such as through art and leadership opportunities. The nonpublic school also indicated that the PBIS implementation was going very well with staff members seeking ways to provide support for students outside the classroom setting through regular check ins. This specific finding supports the theme of building relationships which will be discussed in more detail a little later in this chapter.

Incorporating SEL Instruction into the School Day

The two participating schools serve a very different population of students which is likely the main reason for the differences in how time is allocated during the school day. The nonpublic school serves students identified with special needs including Autism, emotional disturbance, ADHD, other health impairments, anxiety disorders, and specific learning disabilities. With this population, the school has a long history of commitment to serving the "Whole Child" which by their definition includes the academic, physical, and social emotional needs of each student (2020-2021 SARC report). This explains why the staff expressed they feel they have the freedom to incorporate SEL instruction without concerns about losing time for academic instruction with the students. It is an expectation of the administration that the instructional day provides a balanced approach between academic and SEL instruction for the students.

The public school, on the other hand, serves a large, diverse population covering a wide range of skills, talents, and abilities. In the School Plan for Student Achievement for 2022-2023, two of the three goals outlined specific strategies for maintaining their high academic

achievement levels (Anonymous, 2022). It is therefore understandable that the teaching staff would not feel they could take time away from academic instruction and instead expressed an interest in having an administrative decision made that would allow them to dedicate time for SEL instruction to take place as a schoolwide adjustment to their instructional day. Additionally, it is understandable that with students needing pull-out support during the school day, the teaching staff would be interested in re-evaluating the way the school day is structured to reduce the amount of class time and instruction students are missing.

This need and interest in having dedicated time during the school day for implementation of SEL instruction was demonstrated to be important in the literature as well. Civic Enterprises' (2013) survey of teachers across the United States concluded that teachers needed specific time allocated for teaching SEL lessons, embedding SEL competencies into other academic areas, and adopting a schoolwide approach that ensured a common language and program for SEL instruction. Additionally, teachers surveyed by Buchanan et al. (2009) indicated that designating one class period per week for SEL instruction would remove the time factor as a barrier to SEL implementation in the classroom setting. These research projects did not specify what populations of students were being served by the teachers surveyed, so I assume the results were not specifically focused on Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities.

The literature was also clear, however, in showing that it is not just a matter of designating instructional time or adopting a curriculum that makes SEL instruction valuable for the students. Civic Enterprise's (2013) teacher surveys also revealed that providing professional development for SEL is an integral part of supporting SEL instruction within the school day. Work done by Buchanan et al. (2009) supported that finding with nearly all of the teachers surveyed expressing SEL instruction was important for students' success at school yet they had

little to no satisfaction with the training or preparation they received to teach SEL in their classrooms. Ransford et al., (2009) concurred, finding the strongest implementation of the SEL curriculum occurred by teachers who reported the highest levels of training and coaching, as well as strong administrative support for the implementation process. Other factors that influenced the effectiveness of SEL instruction according to the literature included teacher burnout levels (Ransford et al., 2009), overall job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2012), a teacher's personal level of emotional intelligence (Collie et al., 2012; Zinsser et al., 2015), and a teacher's willingness to accept students' emotions and model coping strategies for them (Zinnser et al., 2015). For either of these high schools to grow in the area of SEL instruction, more factors will need to be addressed besides just designating time and adopting curriculum.

Regardless of the size of the school or targeted student population, the participants equally expressed their belief in the importance of SEL instruction and their desire to provide it for the students through the school day. They would benefit from administrative direction and professional development to determine what to teach and how to incorporate it into the school day so they do not feel like they are neglecting the academic instruction the students, families, and community members value and expect.

Building Relationships

In the literature, the benefits of establishing positive relationships between students and teachers is strongly supported. Polou (2017) concluded that teachers with stronger emotional intelligence and who were more comfortable teaching SEL competencies in their classrooms were also more likely to have positive relationships with students and were better able to assist students with navigating emotional and behavioral struggles. Balagna et al. (2013) showed that

when Latinx students felt understood, trusted, and encouraged, they were "more willing to meet the teacher's expectations and confide in the teacher about difficulties at home and school" (p. 112). Additionally, Perez et al. (2009) identified positive relationships with adults as being a protective factor for undocumented Latinx high school students. Lewis et al. (2012) showed that students' perceptions of whether their teacher cared about them had an impact on their confidence in math and their willingness to try to solve difficult math problems. Clearly, teacher-student relationships have been shown in the literature to be an important component of having a positive school climate and culture.

At both schools, relationship building was discussed frequently by multiple participants as a positive aspect of the school's climate and culture. Actions such as greeting students at the door or in common areas such as the lunch area, helping them problem solve difficult situations, offering breaks when students become overwhelmed, keeping an open-door policy so students can drop by as needed, and talking to them about their interests, likes, and dislikes, were all mentioned by teachers and administrators at both school sites as ways they build relationships with students. Both student participants indicated that they appreciated that the nonpublic school staff knew them as individuals and that they each had their "go to" staff members (not necessarily their teachers) they could talk to when they had problems. When asked what their favorite part about teaching was, all the teachers who participated talked about getting to know and work with the students was their favorite part. The relationships between school staff and students appear to be a critical part of the school culture specifically designed to meet the SEL needs of the students.

Research Question #2: What are some examples of classroom instruction and climate aspects in public and nonpublic high school classrooms that are used to support the SEL development of high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities?

The elements of classroom instruction and climate that support the SEL development of the students were not only expressed verbally through the interview process but were also seen in the classroom observations. The main theme that emerged was that school staff worked hard to meet both the academic and the SEL needs of all of the students, including the Latinx students with SLD, through their classroom instruction and the climate the students and teachers created together.

Classroom Instruction

In their interviews, classroom teachers from both school sites expressed using instructional strategies such as whole and small group instruction, project-based learning, cooperative learning, and differentiation to engage students in the learning process. Through my classroom observations, I saw evidence of those instructional strategies listed above as well as one classroom at the public school that was more lecture-based with a greater emphasis on the teacher imparting academic content to the students. I was not able to observe if those students from the lecture-based class received other SEL support during their day, however my observations allowed me to understand the teachers' request for dedicated SEL time during the school day.

Additionally, at the public high school, an inclusive approach to special education was in place which involved one special education and one general education teacher co-teaching an

academic class. This model (called a "collab class") allowed special education students to be included in general education classes with the additional academic support they needed to be successful provided by the partner teachers. This approach is supported by the research which concludes that inclusive practices such as this "collab class" increase a special education student's sense of belonging and academic achievement (Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019), improve their quality of friendships, decrease their feelings of loneliness, and decrease the frequency of negative behaviors at school (Wiener & Tardiff, 2004). The research cited here focused on special education students without looking at how inclusive practices impact students who are Latinx with special needs.

Finally, the public school teachers shared that their administrators recently led a discussion about "grading with grace" to encourage teachers to carefully define what constitutes a passing or failing grade. Conversations were also held among teachers at both sites regarding how to support students who missed many days of school due to Covid. These important instructional conversations, strategies, and the subsequent actions taken by the staff have the potential to work together to support the students' SEL growth through their classroom instruction.

Classroom Climate

During classroom observations the climate of the classroom really stood out to me in the way the teachers embedded SEL support into the lessons, discussions, and activities of the day. For example, in several classes at the nonpublic school, I observed teachers encouraging students to persevere when a task was challenging, using their relationships with students to engage them in discussions, providing opportunities for students to fix their mistakes, and making sure the

students were contributing to the class discussion more than the teacher was contributing. While I only observed one class at the public high school, through my interviews with administrators and teachers I gathered information about their clever check in system using QR codes to determine if students need additional support on that day. This was a great example of creating a class climate that is focused on both academics and SEL for students. Additionally, their ongoing conversations about "grading with grace" and how to support students who miss class due to Covid are other examples of the efforts to provide a classroom climate that is supportive of all students. These strategies aligned with the findings from Lewis et al. (2012) who showed that when students felt cared for by their teachers, their academic achievement and self-efficacy increased. This impact was "more pronounced" among English Learners according to this study (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 22).

Research Question #3: In what ways do the partnerships between families, caregivers, and schools support the SEL development of high school Latinx students with specific learning disabilities?

The main component to the partnership between families, caregivers, and these two schools is that of communication. A key theme that emerged from the interviews and my review of the Parent-Student Handbooks from both school sites was the desire for two-way communication between the families and the school. This included communication from the school regarding events and activities, communication from the classroom teacher regarding student progress, and communication from the families and caregivers regarding any challenges the student may be facing. This communication was considered critical for creating a partnership

that supported the SEL needs of all the students at the high school, including Latinx students with SLD.

School Perspective

From the school perspective, when parents share information about the challenges their student or their family are facing at home, the school staff feels better prepared to respond and support that student at school. Teachers at both sites shared how problems from home inevitably come out at school either with a lack of motivation, a lack of engagement, or with behavior issues. They felt that if parents could share information more freely with them, they would be better equipped to help students use those struggles to build their resilience, problem solving, and other SEL skills. The nonpublic school also indicated that if parents would share their thoughts and ideas about IEP goals, services, and progress, that would be helpful to the school staff to ensure that the IEPs were being properly implemented and updated. The public school staff indicated a commitment to providing parent education classes through their Family Engagement Center and Community Liaison. The nonpublic school administrative team indicated this was an area of need for their school as there were no current parent education programs in place nor were there plans for parent education programs in the near future.

In the document review, it was clear that both school sites value the parent-school partnership enough to put their goals, policies, and requests into writing. The nonpublic school's Parent-Student Handbook contains four full pages that cover the parent-school relationship, stating "An important component of (the school) is the cooperative relationship between parents, teachers, staff, and administrators." (Anonymous, 2022, p. 8). The public school's Parent Handbook begins with two pages outlining ways parents and guardians can partner with the

school, including items such as supporting the school rules, understanding the behavior expectations, and the importance of keeping emergency contact information up-to-date (Anonymous, 2022). In addition, the public school's School Plan for Student Achievement 2022-2023 contains an action step specifically focused on increasing parent involvement (Anonymous, 2022).

Parent Perspective

The parent's perspective was limited however from feedback received by the nonpublic school administrators and teachers, several key themes emerged. One theme was that within the nonpublic school, the Spanish speaking community prefers to have information shared in Spanish either face-to-face or through phone calls. Nonpublic school administrator Bryan is a Spanish speaker and said he consistently receives phone calls from the Spanish speaking families for clarification of the content and reassurance that they understand the material being sent home. The nonpublic school acknowledged they have been working on being more consistent with sending information home in Spanish in written form, however they may need to re-evaluate their communication strategy with Spanish speaking families and provide more verbal communication than written communication. The literature also showed the need to communicate with families in their home language. Smith et al. (2008) cited the frustration experienced by Latinx families in the Midwest when school information was not sent home in Spanish which limited the families' opportunities to support their children or participate in school events. Torrez (2004) found similar results with Latinx high school families who felt not included and uninformed about what high school classes were required for college admission because that information was not available in Spanish.

Additionally, the complexity of being a first- or second-generation family in the United States was understood and explained by one of the nonpublic school teachers during the interview process. Growing up with parents who immigrated here as adults, Matt expressed a need for the school to communicate more clearly about SEL to help Latinx families better understand the approach since many of the parents who attended school outside the U.S. did not grow up with that same approach in place. Both school's parent handbooks go to great lengths to describe their behavior policies and school disciplinary practices, including the PBIS framework and how it is implemented at the schools (Anonymous, 2022; Anonymous, 2022). The nonpublic school's School Accountability Report Card also has a description of their PBIS framework and explains the concept of the "Whole Child" (Anonymous, 2021, p.3). Unfortunately, it seems that this written communication may not be sufficient to help Latinx families understand the SEL initiatives at either of the schools. Exploring ways to better engage parents in their child's education beyond just informing them of what is happening at the school is an area to consider for future growth for both schools. For example, providing engagement opportunities that are flexible (varying days/times for events with virtual opportunities included as well), reflective (asking for parent feedback on what is helpful for them), equitable (serving the needs of all families, regardless of home language, culture, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc), and informative (providing resources that can be used at home) were strategies suggested by Panorama Education (2023) as ways to increase authentic family engagement in schools. Urtubey (2019) specifically cited strategies to engage Latinx families with children with special needs, including the importance of building relationships with the families, seeking to understand their perspectives on the role they play in their child's education, confronting inequities and

unfair practices in the school system, and adopting an asset-minded approach that shifts the stigma of having a disability.

Research Question #4: How do the perceptions of the various school community members (administrators, teachers, parents, and students) about how well the school, classrooms, families, and community partnerships work together to promote the development of SEL competencies for Latinx high school students with SLD converge and diverge?

There were many areas in which the participants felt the school, classrooms, families, and community partnerships effectively worked together to promote the growth of SEL skills for all students, including Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities. The two themes that emerged included the great need for mental health support and the strengths of the current SEL initiatives on each campus. Additionally, examples of times when the students showed their ability to apply SEL skills in their educational experience are included as evidence of the effectiveness of the combined effort put in by the schools, the families, and the communities to support the SEL needs of all students, including Latinx students with SLD.

Great Need for Mental Health Support

The administrators and teachers at each school site expressed a great need for mental health support as well as an appreciation for the efforts to find new resources who can provide that support. At the public high school, staff appreciated the commitment of financial resources in hiring a new assistant principal and counselor. They consistently expressed an eagerness to have those new staff members on board and the leadership they would provide to the school

specifically in the area of SEL and PBIS. The teaching staff also expressed appreciation to the

site and district level administrators who were consistently on the lookout for additional outside

resources to provide services for the students. At the nonpublic school, the effectiveness of the

collaborative model used to problem solve complex situations and to provide front line support

for the students was acknowledged and recognized as an effective approach. The students from

the nonpublic school even chimed in with their appreciation for the support they received from a

wide variety of school staff members and acknowledged that they knew who was on their team

of support people at the school. Based on these responses, it seems as though the school staff at

both school sites perceives the efforts to find and implement resources and strategies to meet the

mental health needs of the students as being effective. For the nonpublic school, students

concurred.

Strengths of the Current SEL Initiatives

The perception of the effectiveness of SEL initiatives was wide and varied depending on

who was being interviewed. For example, at the nonpublic school, administrators and teachers

expressed that SEL initiatives were balanced with academics for the high school program, but

one of the student participants felt that SEL initiatives were more heavily emphasized,

sometimes to the detriment of academics. The student felt this was due to the staff trying to meet

the wide variety of SEL and academic needs of the student body. When asked about PBIS, staff

and students all agreed that the implementation had been effective so far with one teacher

looking for ways she could contribute more to the implementation by providing check ins with

students outside the classroom setting.

At the public school, both administrators and teachers expressed a sense of urgency to increase the effectiveness of the SEL initiatives provided to the students. For example, the school's PBIS implementation was characterized as needing someone to "steer the ship" because the students didn't really know or understand the framework or the initiative. They were all eagerly awaiting the arrival of their two new staff members in the hopes that they would take the lead with PBIS and bring it back to life for the school. Additionally, the teachers specifically appreciated the freedom they had to implement a variety of SEL programs in their classrooms (including Every Monday Matters, Random Acts of Kindness, Habits or Mind, ROX, etc.) however there was a clear interest in having a more focused and developed curriculum that could be delivered to all students with a dedicated time each day allocated for SEL instruction.

At both school sites, the creative and innovative side of the teaching community was evidenced by their success at finding outside resources to contribute indirectly to the students' SEL growth and development. These resources include the Transition Partnership Program, Department of Rehabilitation, and Workability for students who are graduating and need specific job training support and Muralism which provides leadership opportunities for students to use their artistic talents to design and paint a mural for the school. I did not hear administrators, students, or teachers not directly involved with these agencies mention these outside resources in the interview process because the outcomes will be seen more in the upcoming spring, however the indirect impact these programs will have on the development of SEL skills for the students involved is very exciting to consider. If these programs are successful, I'm sure they will open the door to new and innovative ways to bring in community organizations to further support the development of SEL skills for students at both high schools.

Evidence of Student Success

The most exciting theme that emerged from these findings, however, was seen as each student, teacher, and administrator shared their story of a time when they observed a student demonstrating strong SEL skills during the school day. The participants did not attribute these success stories solely to the work done by the schools to develop the students' SEL skills, however they did take pride in being the adult who noticed the behavior and each expressed joy at being able to celebrate the moment with the student. Some of the stories included:

- A special education student at the public school (race/ethnicity and disability were not disclosed) who came back from the pandemic with significant mental health concerns but one day was observed comforting another student who was having a rough time, telling that student everything was going to be ok.

- A Caucasian student with cochlear implants and specific learning disabilities at the nonpublic school who has struggled for years with impulsivity but was observed in class using self-management strategies to keep his impulses under control and allow his classmates to participate in the class discussion without dominating it himself.

- A Latinx student with SLD and other health issues at the nonpublic school who consistently uses empathy to connect with new students and make them feel welcomed at the school. He is known for inviting new students to sit with his group at lunch and inviting them to join his lunch club.

- A Latinx student with SLD and Autism at the nonpublic school who had very little self-confidence at first but is now able to advocate for himself and the accommodations he needs to be successful at school. He was observed explaining to his peers that he needs to use calculator because that's the tool he needs to be successful in his math class.

- A public school student (race/ethnicity and disability were not disclosed) who struggled to trust the adults at school but also needed a lot of breaks during the day finally learned to trust the assistant principal and now understands that her office is a safe place for his breaks.
- A multi-ethnic student with SLD who used social-awareness to recognize that another student's needs were more urgent than his and with that knowledge was able to postpone his own gratification for his peer.

Hearing these stories of successful students who demonstrated the SEL skills that are so essential to their lives made me very proud to be a part of the education community. These stories also illustrate that in spite of the challenges of providing effective SEL instruction to students at both of these school sites, the efforts they have put into SEL initiatives have paid off for these particular students. I'm sure there are many more stories like these that will continue to encourage school staff and to demonstrate that these skills can and should be taught to all students, including our Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities.

Recommendations

My first recommendation is for schools to provide adequate leadership, training, and support for both direct SEL instruction as well as strategies to embed SEL instruction into academic content areas. This commitment to training would give teachers the needed strategies to ensure that even without a dedicated instructional time for SEL, they can still infuse these valuable skills into their respective content areas. In addition, a framework should be adopted by school districts to give teachers guidance on what skills and vocabulary they should infuse into their instructional time. The CASEL framework is an excellent starting point and provides the

information teachers need to get started with identifying specific traits and skills they want their students to develop as well as a common vocabulary that can be used across school sites so that there is consistency between classrooms. These decisions and recommendations need to come from the leadership team within the school or district to ensure there are adequate resources and time dedicated to this important training and work.

My second recommendation is for schools to provide designated leadership and support for any and all SEL initiatives they wish to implement within their school. Initiatives such as PBIS are an excellent way to support the SEL growth, however the framework requires a designated leader to provide direction, guidance, support, and coaching to ensure it is implemented with fidelity for all students. In addition to designated leadership for frameworks such as PBIS, designated staff for providing much-needed mental health support for students is an important part of the SEL initiative for any school. The two schools in this project showed two very different ratios of counselors to students (29:1 vs.231:1). While these ratios are both well within the American School Counselor Association's recommended ratio of 250:1, additional research on the most effective counselor to student ratio for providing mental health support specifically following a pandemic must be done to ensure adequate access to supports for all students.

My third recommendation is to determine the best methods for authentically engaging parents in their child's school beyond just informing them of what is going on at the school site. For example, providing engagement opportunities that are flexible (varying days/times for events with virtual opportunities included as well), reflective (asking for parent feedback on what is helpful for them), equitable (serving the needs of all families, regardless of home language, culture, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc), and informative (providing resources that can be

119

used at home) were strategies suggested by Panorama Education (2023) as ways to increase authentic family engagement in schools. As a foundation, schools also need to invest time evaluating the methods, frequency, and type of communication that is perceived by parents as being the most helpful. Ensuring all communication is provided in the family's home language is an important and foundational commitment for a school to make. If the school staff and families can embrace the challenge of improving the programs and supports being provided to families as well as the amount and quality of communication between the home and school, the idea that it "takes a village" will become reality and both the students and the school will ultimately benefit from the partnership.

The fourth recommendation is for researchers to tackle two key gaps in the literature. The first gap involves determining the effectiveness of SEL curriculum, programs, and models specifically for Latinx students with specific learning disabilities. So little information is available for a population of students who, by definition, need specific, direct instruction and support for SEL skills. Schools and districts need to work in partnerships with researchers to identify what is effective so that they can be confident they are using evidence-based practices in their classrooms when supporting Latinx students with specific learning disabilities. The second gap involves defining, describing, and implementing SEL frameworks that promote educational equity and excellence for students of color and students who are neurodivergent. This project attempts to address the unique SEL needs for Latinx high school students with SLD using the traditional SEL framework, however much more work needs to be done to identify a relevant and appropriate framework for SEL. Researchers have suggested alternative frameworks such as humanization, Transformative SEL, and Transformative Abolitionist SEL as better ways to address the "social and emotional health and well-being of historically oppressed and multiply-

marginalized people." (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022, p. 905). This is certainly a gap in the literature and one that needs to be explored in the future to ensure we are providing our students of color and students with disabilities with the education and respect they deserve.

The final recommendation is that nonpublic and public schools find ways to collaborate more frequently with each other, specifically in the area of implementing SEL instruction and support. In this project, it was clear that each school had strengths that could be shared and implemented within the other school to benefit the students and support the teaching staff. For example, the public school offered additional supports to their families through programs such as CABE and the Twelve Family Powers. They also maintained designated staff to focus specifically on family engagement such as the Community Liaison and the Family Engagement Center. The nonpublic school did not offer any of that, however they did maintain a commitment to the whole child and actively seek ways to meet the needs of the whole child through academic and SEL support. Through collaboration, each school sites could bring its own strengths, perspectives, and areas of expertise for the benefit of the other school. This type of collaboration is certain to benefit staff, students, and families and could also serve as a resource sharing opportunity for both schools to find out what creative and innovative agencies are available to provide essential support for students as they develop their SEL skills.

Conclusion

My goal for this project was to discover examples of SEL practices, supports, and instruction two specific high schools, their classrooms, their families, students, and the community that supports them are providing to assist in the development of SEL skills for Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities. Some of the examples occurring at the

121

school sites included implementing the PBIS framework, providing mental health supports, embedding SEL instruction into the school day, building relationships with students, and finding ways to balance SEL with academic instruction. Community support also came out as an added layer of support through additional mental health supports and outside agencies that allow students to shine in different ways, thus building their confidence and broadening their experiences.

Additionally, students', teachers', and administrators' perspectives on the effectiveness of the SEL instruction and support within the school community were discovered through interviews and observations. While the original goal was to gather examples from two similar schools, the contrasting environments of the public high school and the nonpublic high school allowed me to see a wider variety of approaches such as the whole child approach at the nonpublic school compared with the more compartmentalized approach at the public school in which classroom teachers focus on academics while counselors provide SEL support. Providing additional family involvement opportunities such as CABE and the Twelve Family Powers at the public school was another contrast to the nonpublic school which focused more on communicating with parents but not actively involving them. These contrasting schools and the information gathered from them lends valuable information that should be used to guide policy makers and practitioners striving to improve the quality of the SEL instruction and support being offered to high school students regardless of what type of school those students attend.

This study also contributes towards a growing body of research regarding the importance of understanding the impact, successes, and challenges experienced when social emotional learning instruction and support for Latinx students with specific learning disabilities is implemented at the high school level. Previous research has shown that implementing SEL

programs reduces special education referrals in the early elementary grades (McCormick et al., 2019), increases graduation rates (Johnson, Simon, & Mun, 2014), promotes academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011), and decreases feelings of isolation and hopelessness (Wiener & Tardiff, 2004), yet the research does not specifically address the impact of SEL for high school Latinx students with SLD. Additionally, the appropriateness of the current SEL frameworks for students of color and students with disabilities has been questioned with traditional SEL models criticized as promoting white, Eurocentric views of emotions and how to manage them. While we all can agree that Latinx high school students with SLD need specific support to help them overcome their challenges and be successful in life, more research needs to be done to determine the best ways to provide that support and the best framework to use when designing the supportive programs and curriculum. It is my hope that this project adds to this important conversation and contributes towards filling a gap in the literature for the impact of SEL instruction and supports as well as the importance of appropriate SEL frameworks for Latinx high school students with specific learning disabilities.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Interview Protocols

District Administrator and Executive Director Interview:
1. What are the district's/school's goals for social emotional learning?
2. How does the district/school promote social emotional learning for students?
3. What community partnerships does your district/school have in place that give the students opportunities to learn and practice SEL skills outside the classroom?
4. What do you expect from schools in the area of SEL instruction and support?

Public and non-public principal and assistant principal Interview:
1. What are your school's goals in the area of Social Emotional Learning?
2. What training does the teaching staff receive for social emotional learning?
3. As an administrator, how do you promote social emotional learning for students?
4. What role do the teachers play in supporting the SEL development for students at your school?
5. What does your staff do if a student is struggling behaviorally, academically, or emotionally?
6. What are some of the behavior trends you are seeing among your students?
7. Tell me about a time when you saw your students demonstrating SEL skills.
8. How does your school address situations when the students don't use SEL skills effectively?
9. What community partnerships does your school have in place? How do those partnerships give the students opportunities to learn and practice SEL skills outside the classroom?
10. What role do the parents play in supporting the SEL development for students at your school?

Public and non-public school teacher interviews:
1. How long have you been in education and what subjects do you teach?
2. What is your favorite part about teaching?
3. What are some of the challenges that make teaching hard?
4. How did you first learn about social emotional learning?
5. How would you define social emotional learning?
6. How does your school promote social emotional learning for students?
7. What kind of support does your administrator provide for social emotional learning for your students? How about for you as an adult?
8. How do you promote social emotional learning in your classroom?
9. Do you monitor your students' social and emotional growth? If so, how?

10. Tell me about a time when your school successfully promoted social emotional learning for students.
11. What are the challenges with teaching social emotional learning skills to your students?
12. Tell me about a time when you saw students successfully using SEL skills in your classroom.
13. Tell me about a time when your students did not use SEL skills effectively in your classroom. What did you do?
14. What SEL skills are you emphasizing in your classroom this year?
15. What SEL skills are being emphasized by your school this year?
16. What role do community partnerships play in supporting the SEL development for students at your school?
17. What role do parents play in supporting the SEL development for students at your school?

Public and non-public school family interviews:
1. Tell me about your family. What kinds of things do you like to do together?
2. What does your child really like to do a lot?
3. What things do you really like about your child's high school?
4. How do your child's teachers help him/her?
5. How does the school principal or assistant principal help your child?
6. Does your child have any connections with outside organizations? If so, how do they help your child?
7. Tell me about a time when your child was really successful at school.
8. How do you help your child with the things he/she wants to learn how to do?
9. What is the one thing you are the most proud of when it comes to your child's growth and development so far?

Public and non-public school individual student interviews:
1. Background questions
    1. What grade are you in?
    2. How long have you attended this high school?
    3. What kind of job would you like to have as an adult?
    4. Do you have a best friend? What do you like about him/her?

2. School experiences
    1. What do you like about coming to this school?
    2. Are you involved in any clubs or groups outside of class?
    3. How does the school principal or assistant principal help you?
    4. Who else helps you at school? What do they do?
    5. How does the school support the students with academics?
    6. How does the school support the students emotionally?
    7. Which do you think is more important for your school – academic achievement or emotional support? What makes you think that?

8. Is there anything you wish you could change about your school?

3. Classroom experiences
    1. What classes are you taking?
    2. Do you have a favorite class? Why do you like it?
    3. What types of things do your teachers do to help you?
    4. How do your teachers support the students with academics?
    5. How do your teachers support the students emotionally?
    6. Which do you think is more important for your teachers – academic achievement or emotional support? What makes you think that?

4. Family experiences
    1. What goals do your parents have for you?
    2. What are your goals for yourself?
    3. How do you know what your parents expect from you?
    4. If you need help with something at home, who do you usually ask?

5. Community experiences
    1. Are you involved in any activities outside of school? If so which ones?
    2. Do you have a job? What kinds of skills have you learned from your job?
    3. How have your job or your outside activities helped you?

6. SEL
    1. Tell me about a time when something was easy for you.
    2. Tell me about a time when you accomplished something that was really hard for you.
    3. Tell me about a time when you really had to work to manage your stress level.
    4. How do you know when you need to ask for help?
    5. Tell me about something you still want to learn how to do well.
    6. Tell me about something you already know how to do really well.

Appendix B – District Administrator/Executive Director Consent Form

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN *SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR LATINX HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES*

You are invited to be interviewed for a research project. Volunteering may not benefit you directly, but you will be helping schools improve services and support for other students with similar needs in the future. If you volunteer, you will be interviewed which will take about 15 minutes of your time. 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 Jenny Janetzke, a doctoral student of education at Claremont Graduate University and supervised by Dr. Thomas Luschei, a professor of education at Claremont Graduate University.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to interview Executive Directors, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students to learn about how communities, schools, families, and classrooms support social and emotional development for Latino/a high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities.

ELIGIBILITY: To be in this study, you must be a full-time non-public school administrator with knowledge and understanding of the school's goals for social emotional learning.

PARTICIPATION: During the study, I will interview you and ask questions about what your non-public school's goals are for social emotional learning. For example, I will ask you, "How does the school promote social emotional learning for students?" and "What do you expect from the school in the area of social emotional instruction?". Interviews will take place on the phone or online to keep us all safe.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION: The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal and are similar to other discussions you have regarding your profession and school's performance. These risks may include anxiety or stress from discussing your perceptions of the role you and others play in supporting the students' social emotional development. I will not ask you to evaluate the role you and others play, but rather to note your observations and experiences in that role. If you experience any anxiety or stress from your participation, I will refer you to an outside counseling agency such as Foothill Family Clinics or Pacific Clinics.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION: I **do not** expect the study to benefit you personally. This study will benefit me as the researcher by helping me complete my graduate education. This study is also intended to benefit future students with similar needs by improving services and support provided by schools and community organizations.

COMPENSATION: You will be directly compensated with a $5 Starbucks gift card and be entered into a raffle to win an electronic drawing tablet that can be used for online learning to thank you for your participation in this research project.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any particular question for any reason without it being held against you. Your decision whether to participate will have no effect on your current or future connection with anyone your school or at Claremont Graduate University.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. I may share the data I collect with other researchers, but I will not reveal your

identity with it. In order to protect the confidentiality of your responses, I will use only pseudonyms when referring to this study and will delete all electronic recordings of the interviews with you. All written notes and transcription of the interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office after the study is completed. Additionally, any written notes connecting your identification with your pseudonym will be kept in a separate, locked cabinet away from the audio files and transcriptions. Your personal information will not be shared with any other researcher conducting a project on a similar topic.

FURTHER INFORMATION: If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact me:
Email: Jennifer.janetzke@cgu.edu
Phone: 626-791-1255
Address: 971 N. Altadena Dr., Pasadena, CA 91107

You may also contact Dr. Thomas Luschei:
Email: thomas.luschei@cgu.edu
Phone: 909-621-8000

The CGU Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved this project. 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 or sent 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 _____

Appendix C – Site Administrator Consent Form

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN *SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR LATINX HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES*

You are invited to be interviewed for a research project. Volunteering may not benefit you directly, but you will be helping schools improve services and support for other students with similar needs in the future. If you volunteer, you will be interviewed which will take about 30 minutes of your time. 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 Jenny Janetzke, a doctoral student of education at Claremont Graduate University and supervised by Dr. Thomas Luschei, a professor of education at Claremont Graduate University.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to interview public and non-public school administrators, teachers, parents, and students to learn about how communities, schools, families, and classrooms support social and emotional development for Latino/a high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities.

ELIGIBILITY: To be in this study, you must be a full-time administrator at your school playing a role in student discipline and/or professional development for the staff.

PARTICIPATION: During the study, I will interview you and ask questions about how you support the staff and students' social emotional needs through professional development and positive discipline practices. I will also ask questions about how you perceive the role the school, the community, and the students' families play on the development of social emotional skills for the students. For example, I will ask you, "What types of training have the teaching staff received for social emotional learning?", "What are some of the behavior trends you are seeing among your students?", and "What role do parents play in supporting the SEL development for students at your school?". This interview can take place on the phone or online to keep us all safe.

Additionally, I will conduct two class observations during which I will be identifying how students are using their social emotional learning skills during instructional time. I will not interrupt or interject during the teachers' lessons, rather I will only be an observer. These observations are not meant to evaluate the teachers' lessons or instructional strategies. I simply want to observe the actions of the students to see how they are using their social emotional learning skills at school. These observations can take place in person or online in order to keep us all safe.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION: The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal and are similar to other discussions you have regarding your profession and school's performance. These risks may include anxiety or stress from discussing your perceptions of the role you and others play in supporting the students' social emotional development. I will not ask you to evaluate the role you and others play, but rather to note your observations and experiences in that role. If you experience any anxiety or stress from your participation, I will refer you to an outside counseling agency such as Foothill Family Clinics or Pacific Clinics.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION: I **do not** expect the study to benefit you personally. This study will benefit me as the researcher by helping me complete my graduate education. This study is also intended to benefit future students with similar needs by improving services and support provided by schools and community organizations.

COMPENSATION: You will be directly compensated with a $5 Starbucks gift card and be entered into a raffle to win an electronic drawing tablet that can be used for online learning to thank you for your participation in this research project.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any particular question for any reason without it being held against you. Your decision whether to participate will have no effect on your current or future connection with anyone at any public or non-public school, or at Claremont Graduate University.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. I may share the data I collect with other researchers, but I will not reveal your identity with it. In order to protect the confidentiality of your responses, I will use only pseudonyms when referring to this study and will delete all electronic recordings of the interviews with you. All written notes and transcription of the interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office after the study is completed. Additionally, any written notes connecting your identification with your pseudonym will be kept in a separate, locked cabinet away from the audio files and transcriptions. Your personal information will not be shared with any other researcher conducting a project on a similar topic.

FURTHER INFORMATION: If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact me:
Email: Jennifer.janetzke@cgu.edu
Phone: 626-791-1255
Address: 971 N. Altadena Dr., Pasadena, CA 91107

You may also contact Dr. Thomas Luschei:
Email: thomas.luschei@cgu.edu
Phone: 909-621-8000

The CGU Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved this project. 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 or sent 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 _____

Appendix D – Teacher Consent Form

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN *SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR LATINX HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES*

You are invited to be interviewed for a research project. Volunteering may not benefit you directly, but you will be helping schools improve services and support for other students with similar needs in the future. If you volunteer, you will be interviewed which will take about 30-45 minutes of your time. 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 Jenny Janetzke, a doctoral student of education at Claremont Graduate University and supervised by Dr. Thomas Luschei, a professor of education at Claremont Graduate University.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to interview public and non-public school administrators, teachers, parents, and students to learn about how communities, schools, families, and classrooms support social and emotional development for Latino/a high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities.

ELIGIBILITY: To be in this study, you must be a full-time teacher at your school with at least one Latino/a student with a Specific Learning Disability in at least one of your classes.

PARTICIPATION: During the study, I will interview you and ask questions about how you support your students' social emotional needs and how you perceive the role the school, the community, and your students' families play on the development of social emotional skills for your students. For example, I will ask you, "How do you promote social emotional learning in your classroom?" and "How does your school promote social emotional learning for the students?". This interview can be conducted on the phone or online to keep us both safe.

Additionally, I will conduct two class observations during which I will be looking for evidence that the students have mastered and are using social emotional learning skills in the classroom setting. I will not interrupt or interject during your lessons, rather I will only be an observer. These observations are not meant to evaluate your lessons or instructional strategies. I simply want to observe the interactions between the students to see how they are using their social emotional learning skills at school. These observations can be conducted in person or online to keep us all safe.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION: The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal and are similar to other discussions you have regarding your profession and school's performance. These risks may include anxiety or stress from discussing your perceptions of the role you and others play in supporting the students' social emotional development. I will not ask you to evaluate the role you and others play, but rather to note your observations and experiences in that role. If you experience any anxiety or stress from your participation, I will refer you to an outside counseling agency such as Foothill Family Clinics or Pacific Clinics.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION: I **do not** expect the study to benefit you personally. This study will benefit me as the researcher by helping me complete my graduate education. This study is also intended to benefit future students with similar needs by improving services and support provided by schools and community organizations.

COMPENSATION: You will be directly compensated with a $5 Starbucks gift card and be entered into a raffle to win an electronic drawing tablet that can be used for online learning to thank you for your participation in this research project.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any particular question for any reason without it being held against you. Your decision whether to participate will have no effect on your current or future connection with anyone in public or non-public schools or at Claremont Graduate University.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. I may share the data I collect with other researchers, but I will not reveal your identity with it. In order to protect the confidentiality of your responses, I will use only pseudonyms when referring to this study and will delete all electronic recordings of the interviews with you. All written notes and transcription of the interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office after the study is completed. Additionally, any written notes connecting your identification with your pseudonym will be kept in a separate, locked cabinet away from the audio files and transcriptions. Your personal information will not be shared with any other researcher conducting a project on a similar topic.

FURTHER INFORMATION: If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact me:
Email: Jennifer.janetzke@cgu.edu
Phone: 626-791-1255
Address: 971 N. Altadena Dr., Pasadena, CA 91107

You may also contact Dr. Thomas Luschei:
Email: thomas.luschei@cgu.edu
Phone: 909-621-8000

The CGU Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved this project. 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 or sent 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 _____

Appendix E – Parent Consent Form for Minor to Participate

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN *SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR LATINX HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES*

You child is invited to be interviewed and observed for a research project. Volunteering will not benefit your child directly, but your child will be helping schools improve services and support for other students with similar needs in the future. If you allow your child to volunteer, s/he will be interviewed which will take about 30-45 minutes of his/her time. Additionally, I will observe in his/her classes for approximately two days. Volunteering for this study involves no more risk than what a typical person experiences on a regular day. Your child 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 Jenny Janetzke, a doctoral student of education at Claremont Graduate University and supervised by Dr. Thomas Luschei, a professor of education at Claremont Graduate University.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to learn about how communities, schools, families, and classrooms support social and emotional development for Latino/a high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities

ELIGIBILITY: To be in this study, your child must be a 10th, 11th, or 12th grade high school student who identifies as Latino or Latina and has an IEP for Specific Learning Disabilities. Additionally, your child must have attended his/her current high school for at least one year.

PARTICIPATION: During the study, your child will be asked questions about what he/she is learning at school, how he/she likes their school, and what his/her goals are for the future. For example, I will ask your child, "What types of things do your teachers do to help you?", "What do you like about coming to this school?", and "What are your goals for yourself?" I will also ask your child to tell me about the things he/she is good at and some things your child is still learning how to do. Each interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes and can be done on the phone or online to keep us all safe.

Additionally, I will observe in some of his/her classes for two days this semester. During these observations, I will be looking for how the students interact with each other and with their teacher. I will also be looking for how the students' social and emotional needs are met during class time. I will not speak with any of the students, including your child, during these observations unless I am asked to introduce myself. These observations can take place in person or online to keep everyone safe.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION: The risks to your child by taking part in this study are minimal and are similar to what he/she experiences during normal school activities. Your child may experience anxiety or stress from talking to me about his/her experiences and opinions. If you or your child experiences anxiety or stress, we can take breaks, stop the interview or observation, skip questions, and I can connect your child with the school counselor or a classroom teacher he/she trusts for support.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION: I **do not** expect the study to benefit your child personally. This study will benefit me as the researcher by helping me complete my graduate education. This study is also intended to benefit future students with similar needs by improving services and support provided by schools and community organizations.

COMPENSATION: Your child will not receive anything individually for helping me, however I will give your family a $10 Target gift card when you are finished.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you give permission, he/she does not have to participate. In addition, your child may decide to stop participating in this project at any time or can skip any particular question for any reason without it being held against him/her. You and your child's decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on your, or your child's, current or future connection with anyone at your child's high school, your school district, or at Claremont Graduate University.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your child's individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. I may share the data I collect with other researchers, but I will not reveal your child's identity with it. In order to protect the confidentiality of your child's responses, I will use only pseudonyms when referring to this study and will delete all electronic recordings of the interviews with your child. All written notes and transcription of the interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office after the study is completed. The papers showing your child's real name and his/her pseudonym will be kept locked in a separate cabinet away from the other papers. Your family and your child's personal information will not be shared with any other researcher conducting a project on a similar topic.

FURTHER INFORMATION: If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact me:
Email: Jennifer.janetzke@cgu.edu
Phone: 626-791-1255
Address: 971 N. Altadena Dr., Pasadena, CA 91107

You may also contact Dr. Thomas Luschei:
Email: thomas.luschei@cgu.edu
Phone: 909-621-8000

The CGU Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved this project. 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 or sent 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 that your child may volunteer for the study.

Name of Participating Child   _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian   _____   Date _____

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian _____

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 _____

Appendix F – Informed Assent Form for Minors

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR LATINX HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH
SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

Would you like to help me with my project by answering some questions and allowing me to observe in some of your classes? Helping with my project probably won't help you, but it will help me learn about what Latino/a high school students are learning and experiencing at school, at home, and in the community. If you decide to help, I will interview you and observe in some of your classes. My interview questions will take about 30-45 minutes of your time to answer. Answering these questions won't be hard or scary. You should feel about the same as you do when you do normal activities. When I visit your classes, you don't have to do anything. I'll just be there to observe what the students are doing in class. Remember, you don't have to help me. If you don't feel comfortable, you can stop whenever you want.

STUDY LEADERSHIP: My name is Jenny Janetzke and this is my project. I am a graduate student at Claremont Graduate University. Professor Thomas Luschei is one of my teachers and will be helping me with the project.

PURPOSE: The goal of this project is to learn about how communities, schools, families, and classrooms support social and emotional development for Latino/a high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities.

ELIGIBILITY: To be in this project, you must be in the 10th, 11th, or 12th grade, identify as Latino or Latina, and have an IEP the shows you have a Specific Learning Disability.

PARTICIPATION: During the study, you will be asked to answer questions about what you are learning at school, what you like about your school, and what your goals are for the future. For example, I will ask you, "What types of things do your teachers do to help you?", "What do you like about coming to this school?" and "What are your goals for yourself?". I will also ask you to identify the things you are good at and some things you are still learning how to do. This interview can be done on the phone or online to keep us all safe.

During the class observations, I will be looking to see how you and your classmates are interacting with each other and with your teacher. I will also be looking for how you and your classmates' needs are being used during class time. I will not speak with any of the students during these observations unless I am asked to introduce myself. These observations can take place in person or online to keep us all safe.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION: The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal and are similar to what you experience during your normal activities at school. You might feel anxiety or stress from talking to me about your experiences and opinions. If you do experience anxiety or stress, we can take breaks, stop the interview or observation, you can skip questions, and I can connect you with the school counselor or a classroom teacher you trust for support.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION: We **do not** expect this project to help you. This project will help me complete my graduate education. This project will also benefit future students who are similar to you by improving services and support provided by schools and community organizations.

COMPENSATION: To thank you for helping me, I will give your family a $10 Target gift card when you are finished.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Your mother/father/parents said it's okay for you to help me, but you don't have to. It's your choice. It's okay if you want to stop because you are uncomfortable. You can stop for any other reason, too. I want your help, but no one will be upset if you don't want to help or if you decide to stop.

CONFIDENTIALITY: When I finish the project, I want to tell others about it. I will tell them how you helped me, but I won't tell them your name or what answers are yours. I may let people working on other projects see your answers, but I won't tell them that the answers are yours. Also, to make sure no one finds out what answers are yours, I will keep them somewhere safe and private. Only I will be able to see your answers. I will also ask you to choose a fake name for me to use instead of your real name and keep all of the written work that we use in locked cabinets. The paper that shows your fake name and your real name will be kept locked in a separate cabinet away from the other papers.

FURTHER INFORMATION: If you have any questions about this project, or if you want to know more about it, you can ask your parent(s) or us. If you can't, or don't want to ask us in person, you can call us or send us a message.

Email: Jennifer.janetzke@cgu.edu
Phone: 626-791-1255
Address: 971 N. Altadena Dr., Pasadena, CA 91107

You may also contact Dr. Thomas Luschei:
Email: thomas.luschei@cgu.edu
Phone: 909-621-8000

A team of people makes sure our project is as safe as can be for the people helping us. They said this project is okay. You or your parent(s) can also ask them questions. You can call them at 607-9406. Or you can send a message to irb@cgu.edu.

ASSENT: If you sign this paper, it means that you have read this and that you want to help with the project. If you don't want to help with the project, don't sign this paper. Helping with the project is your choice, and no one will be upset if you don't sign this paper or if you change your mind later.

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 _____

Appendix G – Recruiting Scripts

<u>**Script for calling public school district offices:**</u>
Hello, my name is Jenny Janetzke, and I am a graduate student interested conducting a research project on Social Emotional Learning for Latinx high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities. I was wondering if you could tell me what your district's procedures are for obtaining permission to do a research project like that with your district.

<u>**Script for calling non-public schools:**</u>
Hello, my name is Jenny Janetzke, and I am a graduate student interested conducting a research project on Social Emotional Learning for Latinx high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities. I was wondering if you could tell me what your school's procedures are for obtaining permission to do a research project like that with your school.

<u>**Email to gain consent from public school district level administrator:**</u>
Hello, my name is Jenny Janetzke, and I am a graduate student interested conducting a research project on Social Emotional Learning in public high schools. Specifically, my project aims to interview school site administrators, teachers, parents, and students and to observe classroom instruction to explore **how communities, families, schools, and classrooms support the social emotional development of Latinx high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities and the varied perceptions of the effectiveness of those strategies being used.** I am hoping to conduct my project in your district and was wondering if I could schedule some time with you to discuss my project and ask you a few questions about the social emotional learning initiatives and goals the district is targeting.

Email to gain consent from Executive Director at a non-public school:
Hello, my name is Jenny Janetzke, and I am a graduate student interested conducting a research project on Social Emotional Learning in non-public schools. Specifically, my project aims to interview school administrators, teachers, parents, and students, and to observe classroom instruction to explore **how communities, families, schools, and classrooms support the social emotional development of Latinx high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities and the varied perceptions of the effectiveness of those strategies being used.** I am hoping to conduct my project in your district and was wondering if I could schedule some time with you to discuss my project and ask you a few questions about the social emotional learning initiatives and goals your school is targeting.

<u>**Script for calling public school site principals:**</u>
Hello, my name is Jenny Janetzke, and I am a graduate student interested conducting a research project on Social Emotional Learning. Specifically, my project aims to interview school site administrators, teachers, parents, and interviews and to observe classroom instruction to explore **how communities, families, schools, and classrooms support the social emotional development of Latinx high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities and the varied perceptions of the effectiveness of those strategies being used.** I have spoken with _____ (district level administrator name) and have permission from the district to conduct my

project in your district. I was wondering if it would be okay to email you some additional information about my project to see if you might be interested in having your high school participate in it.

Script for calling non-public school principals:
Hello, my name is Jenny Janetzke, and I am a graduate student interested conducting a research project on Social Emotional Learning. Specifically, my project aims to interview school site administrators, teachers, parents, and interviews and to observe classroom instruction to explore **how communities, families, schools, and classrooms support the social emotional development of Latinx high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities and the varied perceptions of the effectiveness of those strategies being used.** I have spoken with _____ (Executive Director name) and have permission from him/her to conduct my project at your school. I was wondering if it would be okay to email you some additional information about my project to see if you might be interested in having your school participate in it.

Email to gain consent from public and non-public school principals:
Thank you so much for talking to me on the phone today. As I mentioned, I am interested in **exploring how communities, families, schools, and classrooms support the social emotional development of Latinx high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities and your perceptions of the effectiveness of those strategies being used.** The attached consent form explains more about the project, what I will ask you to do during the project, and how I will use the information I learn to benefit Latino and Latina high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities.

If this is something you are interested in, please take a moment to read the consent form. I will follow up with you in a few days to answer any questions you may have and hopefully schedule time to virtually meet with you and discuss this further.

Thank you for your consideration and I am looking forward to meeting with you soon!

Script for calling public and non-public school assistant principals:
Hello, my name is Jenny Janetzke, and I am a graduate student interested conducting a research project on Social Emotional Learning. Specifically, my project aims to interview school site administrators, teachers, parents, and students and to observe classroom instruction to explore **how communities, families, schools, and classrooms support the social emotional development of Latinx high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities and the varied perceptions of the effectiveness of those strategies being used.** You were recommended by _____ (principal's name) as someone who has good insight and information on how SEL is being implemented within the school and how the students are developing those skills. I was wondering if it would be okay to email you some additional information about my project to see if you might be interested in participating in it.

Email to gain consent from public and non-public school assistant principals:
Thank you so much for talking to me on the phone the other day. As I mentioned, I am interested in **exploring how communities, families, schools, and classrooms support the social**

emotional development of Latinx high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities and your perceptions of the effectiveness of those strategies being used. The attached consent form explains more about the project, what I will ask you to do during the project, and how I will use the information I learn to benefit Latino and Latina high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities.

If this is something you are interested in, please take a moment to read the consent form. I will follow up with you in a few days to answer any questions you may have and hopefully schedule time to virtually meet with you and discuss this further.

Thank you for your consideration and I am looking forward to meeting with you soon!

Script for calling public and non-public school teachers:
Hello, my name is Jenny Janetzke, and I am a graduate student interested conducting a research project on Social Emotional Learning. Specifically, my project aims to interview school site administrators, teachers, parents, and interviews and to observe classroom instruction to explore **how communities, families, schools, and classrooms support the social emotional development of Latinx high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities and the varied perceptions of the effectiveness of those strategies being used.** You were recommended by _____ (principal's and/or assistant principal's name) as someone who has a direct influence on SEL instruction with students at your school and also good insight into how the students are doing in their SEL development. I was wondering if it would be okay to email you some additional information about my project to see if you might be interested in participating in it.

Email to gain consent from public and non-public school teachers:
Thank you so much for talking to me on the phone the other day. As I mentioned, I am interested in **exploring how communities, families, schools, and classrooms support the social emotional development of Latinx high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities and your perceptions of the effectiveness of those strategies being used.** The attached consent form explains more about the project, what I will ask you to do during the project, and how I will use the information I learn to benefit Latino and Latina high school students with Specific Learning Disabilities.

If this is something you are interested in, please take a moment to read the consent form. I will follow up with you in a few days to answer any questions you may have and hopefully schedule time to virtually meet with you and discuss this further.

Thank you for your consideration and I am looking forward to meeting with you soon!

Script for calling public and non-public school families:
Hello, my name is Jenny Janetzke, and I am a graduate student interested in how Latino and Latina students with IEPs at your child's school are developing social emotional skills. You were recommended by _____ (principal's, assistant principal's, or teacher's name) as someone who has a student at _____ High School who fits this description. I am hoping to interview you and your high school student to find out what you think about how your child is maturing

151

and developing their social and emotional skills. I was wondering if it would be okay to send you some additional information about my project to see if you might be interested in participating in it. I can either email it or send it through the regular mail, whichever is easier for you.

Email/letter to gain consent from public and non-public school families:
Thank you so much for talking to me on the phone the other day. As I mentioned, I am graduate student interested in how Latino and Latina students with IEPs at your child's school are developing social emotional skills**.** The attached consent form explains more about the project, what I will ask you and your child to do during the project, and how I will use the information I learn to benefit high school students who are like your child.

If this is something you are interested in, please take a moment to read the consent form for you and also for your child. I will follow up with you in a few days to answer any questions you may have and to get your permission to talk to your child and explain the project as well. Hopefully, we can schedule time to meet either online or by phone very soon to discuss this further.

Thank you for your consideration and I am looking forward to meeting with you soon!

Script for calling public and non-public school students:
Hello, my name is Jenny and I am a graduate student doing research on how Latino and Latina students with IEPs at your high school are developing their social and emotional skills. You were recommended by _____ (principal's, assistant principal's, or teacher's name) and your parents said it would be ok for me to ask you if you'd like to participate. My goal is to interview you and your parents to find out what you are learning and experiencing at school, at home, and in your community. I was wondering if it would be ok to send you more information about my project to see if you might be interested in participating in it. I can either send it by email or through the regular mail, whichever is easier for you.

Email/letter to gain assent from public and non-public school students:
Thank you so much for talking to me on the phone the other day. As I mentioned, I am a graduate student trying to find out how Latino and Latina students with IEPs are developing their social and emotional skills. I am sending you a form that explains more about my project, what I will ask you during the project, and how I will use the information you share with me to help high school students like you in the future.

If this is something you might be interested in, please read the attached form. I will call you in a few days to answer any questions you may have. Hopefully, we can schedule time to meet online or by phone to talk more about this.

Thank you very much and I am looking forward to meeting with you soon!

Appendix H – Debriefing Scripts

<u>Public school district level administrator debriefing script</u>
Thank you for participating in the interview process for this study. Your input is valuable, and I want to make sure I recorded your ideas and thoughts accurately. Attached you will find the transcription of your individual interview. Please review it for accuracy and let me know immediately if something does not represent your ideas and thoughts so that I can make corrections.

<u>Non-public school Executive Director debriefing script</u>
Thank you for participating in the interview process for this study. Your input is valuable, and I want to make sure I recorded your ideas and thoughts accurately. Attached you will find the transcription of your individual interview. Please review it for accuracy and let me know immediately if something does not represent your ideas and thoughts so that I can make corrections.

<u>Public and non-public school principal debriefing script</u>
Thank you for participating in the interview process for this study. Your input is valuable, and I want to make sure I recorded your ideas and thoughts accurately. Attached you will find the transcription of your individual interview. Please review it for accuracy and let me know immediately if something does not represent your ideas and thoughts so that I can make corrections.

<u>Public and non-public school assistant principal debriefing script</u>
Thank you for participating in the interview process for this study. Your input is valuable, and I want to make sure I recorded your ideas and thoughts accurately. Attached you will find the transcription of your individual interview. Please review it for accuracy and let me know immediately if something does not represent your ideas and thoughts so that I can make corrections.

<u>Public and non-public school teacher debriefing script</u>
Thank you for participating in the interview process for this study. Your input is valuable, and I want to make sure I recorded your ideas and thoughts accurately. Attached you will find the transcription of your individual interview. Please review it for accuracy and let me know immediately if something does not represent your ideas and thoughts so that I can make corrections.

<u>Public and non-public school family debriefing script</u>
Thank you for helping me with gathering information for my project. Your interview is valuable, and I want to make sure I recorded your ideas and thoughts accurately. I am sending you a copy of your individual interview so you can read it and make sure I recorded your words correctly. Please review it and let me know immediately if something is not correct so I can make those changes.

Public and non-public school student debriefing script
Thank you for helping me with gathering information for my project. Your interview is valuable, and I want to make sure I recorded your ideas and thoughts accurately. I am sending you a copy of your individual interview so you can read it and make sure I recorded your words correctly. Please review it and let me know immediately if something is not correct so I can make those changes.

Appendix I – CASEL's SEL Walkthrough Protocol

CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL

TOOL: Indicators of Schoolwide SEL Walkthrough Protocol
Collaborating closely with out-of-school time partners? See the OST-enhanced version of this tool

School _____ Observer Name(s) _____ Date _____

Definitions

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Schoolwide SEL is a systemic approach to integrating academic, social, and emotional learning across classrooms, the school building, and in collaboration with families and community partners. This approach provides a learning environment that infuses SEL into all aspects of instruction and promotes equitable outcomes for all students.

Purpose

This protocol is designed to help school-based SEL teams and/or observers look for indicators of schoolwide SEL. The protocol is designed to support the continuous improvement of schoolwide SEL implementation. School-based SEL teams can use data from this protocol to set schoolwide implementation goals, reflect on and track progress, and develop or adjust action plans. By rating the indicators of schoolwide SEL, the walkthrough protocol allows observers and teachers to focus on feedback and development. It is not a comprehensive evaluation system, but should be one of multiple measures for coaching and feedback. Schools are encouraged to be inclusive by involving a broad range of stakeholders in use of this walkthrough protocol, which could also include students and family members.

Design

This protocol is divided into two sections that allow observers to look for evidence of schoolwide SEL across multiple contexts:

- **Section 1: Classroom climate and practices.** This section provides guidance on observing classroom climates and practices. It is not intended to provide data on individual teacher or classrooms. Rather, it should be used to support teams tracking the progress of schoolwide SEL implementation *across* classrooms. Before beginning observations, it is helpful to explain to teacher the purpose of the visit and to observe multiple classrooms during different times of the day.
- **Section 2: Schoolwide systems and practices.** This section provides guidance on observing schoolwide SEL implementation across the school's climate, family and community partnerships, and continuous improvement systems. In addition to observations in school common areas, it is necessary to have conversations with school staff, leadership, the SEL team, community partners, and students and/or their families to better understand how SEL is being implemented across contexts. When having conversations with these stakeholders, request relevant artifacts to help score the protocol accurately.

Scoring

- When using the rubric, score each item on a scale from 4 (strong evidence) to 1 (weak or no evidence).
  Section 1
    - "4" indicates strong evidence that SEL is internalized and owned by teachers and students.
    - "3" indicates that classrooms are effectively promoting SEL but efforts are mostly teacher-led.
    - "2" indicates that classroom practices attempt to promote SEL but are inconsistent.
    - "1" indicates that there is not yet evidence that classroom practices are attempting to promote SEL through this item. If there was an opportunity to see something and it was not done, that should be a "1"

1

- o Score "not observed" if you do not have enough information to provide an accurate score. This should be used sparingly. Scoring "not observed" may be due to time constraints and not being in a classroom long enough to see a particular strategy or behavior.
- o Each component in this section includes "look-fors" that are intended to serve as guidance only. These look-fors are not an exhaustive list and should not be the only practices and strategies to look for.

Section 2

- o "4" indicates strong evidence that SEL is seamlessly integrated into schoolwide systems and practices.
- o "3" indicates that schoolwide systems and practices are effectively promoting SEL but not yet fully integrated into all aspects of the school.
- o "2" indicates that schoolwide systems and practices attempt to promote SEL but are inconsistent.
- o "1" indicates that there is not yet evidence that schoolwide systems and practices are attempting to promote SEL through this item.
- o Score "not observed" if you do not have enough information to provide an accurate score. This should be used sparingly. Scoring "not observed" may be due to time constraints, not being in common areas long enough to see a particular strategy or behavior, or not being able to observe SEL practices and strategies that occur outside of the regular school day.
- o Each component in this section includes "look-fors" that are intended to serve as guidance only. These look-fors are not an exhaustive list and should not be the only practices and strategies to look for.

Procedure

- Classroom
  - o Identify which classrooms you will visit before getting started, and let each teacher know the purpose of the walkthrough and how many observers to expect. It is important for them to know that you are not evaluating their classroom, and instead are observing SEL implementation in multiple classrooms and throughout the school building. It is good practice to share the results of the walkthrough once it is completed, since it is a learning opportunity for all educators in the building.
  - o Be systematic and consistent with how long you spend in each observed classroom. This protocol was designed to be used with 15-minute visits to each classroom. This short of an interval allows observers to visit more classrooms and common areas. However, such a short interval can result in data that are less reliable. For example, only being in a classroom for 15 minutes means you will miss a lot of the instruction that will happen during rest of the day. Results of the walkthrough will be impacted by when you are and are not in each classroom. More accurate data can be collected if classrooms are visited for longer amounts of time of time. The most important factor is consistency in observations. If you observe one classroom for 30 minutes, be sure the rest of your classroom observations are also 30 minutes long.
  - o Be mindful of how note taking can be perceived by educators. In some instances, it may make them feel uncomfortable, so consider not taking notes when you're in the classroom. If you don't take notes in the classroom you can write them down afterwards once leaving the room.

- Schoolwide
  - o Before getting started, identify stakeholders who are available and willing to have a conversation about schoolwide SEL with observers. It is helpful when building leaders, educators, support staff, students, and families can provide their perspectives on schoolwide SEL and how it is being implemented.
  - o Request artifacts that relate to schoolwide SEL to help with scoring this walkthrough protocol. Asking about artifacts before starting the walkthrough can identify SEL practices and strategies to look for. Asking about artifacts after the walk allows observers to follow upon SEL practices and strategies they observed in practice.
  - o Identify which common areas you will observe before getting started. You will want to visit areas where students and adults are interacting, such as the main office, cafeteria, library, gymnasium, and outdoor spaces.
  - o Make sure to time the walkthrough so you are in hallways during transitions.
  - o Score this section of the protocol Score this section of the protocol after all common areas have been visited, and after having conversations with stakeholders and reviewing any artifacts they offered. Each of these will be important to draw upon when scoring this section.

2

Section 1: Classroom Climate and Practices

This section guides observers in looking for evidence of schoolwide SEL across classroom climate and practices. It is not intended to evaluate or assess individual teacher or classrooms. Before beginning the walkthrough, it is helpful to explain to teacher the purpose of the visit and to observe multiple classrooms during different times of the day.

	4	3	2	1	Not Observed
1. Supportive classroom climate					
Classroom learning environments are supportive, culturally responsive, and focused on building relationships and community.					
1a. Teacher-student relationships Look for/Learn about: -Addresses each student by name - Response to student needs - Positive teacher language - Affirming student efforts -Students sharing ideas, perspectives, concerns	Nearly all students share their ideas, perspectives and concerns with their teacher and their peers. Teacher joins in students' activities, positively communicates and demonstrates warmth and enjoyment with students. Teacher acknowledges students by name and affirms student interests, efforts and accomplishments in the classroom. Teacher demonstrates awareness to and responds to students' needs and demonstrates that they appreciate each student as an individual.	Over half of students share their ideas, perspectives and concerns with their teacher and their peers. Teacher acknowledges students by name and affirms student interests, efforts and accomplishments in the classroom. Teacher demonstrates awareness to and responds to student needs and demonstrates that they appreciate each student as an individual.	Less than half of students share their ideas, perspectives and concerns with their teacher and their peers. Teacher attempts to build a positive relationship with students. Teacher does not seem aware that some students are not participating fully in classroom activities	Students are not yet sharing their ideas, perspectives and concerns with their teacher. Teacher is primarily concerned with conveying content There is not yet evidence that the teacher has established positive relationships with all students.	
1b. Cultural responsiveness Look for/Learn about: - Teacher learns about students' cultures, backgrounds, talents, and interests. - Student experiences and identities reflected in classroom materials, curriculum, and/or instruction - Posted student work that reflects their identities, cultures, and/or life experiences -Students of all subgroups actively engaged in classroom activities	Nearly all students share about their lives and backgrounds. Students of all subgroups (e.g. race, gender) are actively engaged and collaborate with one another and try to understand each other's perspectives. Teacher encourages students to share their stories with one another and to have pride in their history and linguistic and cultural identities.	More than half of students of all subgroups share about their lives and backgrounds. Teacher encourages students to share their stories with one another and to have pride in their history and linguistic and cultural identities Affirming materials, messages and images about students' racial and ethnic identities are present throughout the classroom	Less than half of students share about their lives and backgrounds. The teacher is somewhat using instructional practices that draw upon students' lived experiences. Teacher uses classroom materials and curriculum that are representative of diverse groups.	Students are not yet sharing about their lives and backgrounds. The teacher is not yet using instructional practices that draw upon students' lived experiences. There is no classroom library or other available materials that contain multicultural content that reflect the perspectives of and show appreciation for diverse groups yet.	

3

	Teacher affirms students' languages and cultural knowledge by integrating it into classroom conversations and using materials incorporating students' racial and ethnic identities.				
1c. Classroom routines and procedures Look for/Learn about: - Classroom activities introduced - Predictable routines and procedures -Routines and procedures promote expression of social and emotional competencies.	Students assume responsibility for routines and procedures and execute them in an orderly, efficient and self-directed manner, requiring little or no direction or narration. Teacher creates predictability in daily classroom routines, cues students for upcoming activities, and provides reminders when needed of classroom procedures. Classroom routines and procedures are not overly restrictive and promote autonomy.	A subset of students assume responsibility for routines and procedures and execute them in an orderly, efficient and self-directed manner, requiring little or no direction or narration. Teacher provides students with clear guidance when introducing classroom activities, such as what is expected, learning objectives, and whether and how they should collaborate with peers. At times, classroom routines and procedures were observed to restrict expression of student social and emotional competencies.	Students engage in familiar routines and procedures with comfort and ease. Teacher is beginning to provide students with guidance when introducing classroom activities, such as what is expected, learning objectives, and whether and how they should collaborate with peers. Classroom routines and procedures tend to be restrictive and limit autonomy.	Students do not appear to be familiar with classroom routines and procedures, requiring teacher direction or narration. Clear routines and procedures are not yet developed.	
1d. Student-centered discipline Look for/Learn about: - Strategies/tools available for students to problem-solve and self-manage (e.g., reflection posters, reflection sheets, etc.). - Use of verbal and non-verbal cues to communicate and promote expected behaviors. - Reinforce desired behaviors. - Discreet redirection of problem behaviors.	Students monitor and regulate their behavior and emotions in the classroom. Students use problem-solving strategies and tools to resolve conflicts. Teacher redirects any behavior challenges respectfully and discreetly by encouraging student reflection and use of SEL strategies and does so consistently across all students. Teacher models, teaches and offers specific tools and problem-solving strategies that students can use to resolve conflicts, monitor their own behavior and emotions, repair relationships, and seek help when needed in the classroom.	Students attempt to use problem-solving strategies and tools to resolve conflict. Teacher redirects any behavior challenges respectfully and discreetly and does so consistently across all students. Teacher is beginning to teach and offer tools and problem-solving strategies that students can use to resolve conflicts and monitor their own behaviors and emotions.	Few students attempt to use problem-solving strategies and tools to resolve conflict. Teacher's responds to behavior challenges respectfully but takes time away from lessons and/or does not effectively resolve the problem. The approach to student discipline in this classroom relies on punitive consequences, such as removing privileges.	Students are not regulating their behavior and emotions in the classroom. Teacher does not yet respond to behavior challenges respectfully or responds to student misbehavior in a way that is not consistent across all students.	

4

1e. Community-building	Nearly all students contribute to class discussions, take an active role in supporting their peers, and there is a strong sense of inclusivity.	More than half of students contribute to class discussions and participate in activities.	Less than half of students contribute to class discussions and participate in activities.	Student are not yet contributing to class discussions and participating in activities.	
Look for/Learn about: - Opportunities for students to connect with each other (e.g., team talk, circles, morning meetings). - Physical space is set up to foster community (e.g., whole-group meeting spot, desks arranged for collaboration). - Classroom shared agreements posted.	Teacher models warm and respectful classroom interaction and provides frequent opportunities for students to dialogue, get to know one another, and discuss their social and emotional competencies. Teacher uses shared agreements and classroom routines to help students collaborate and reflect on how they want to treat one another and learn together in the classroom. The classroom is set up in a way that promotes student interaction.	Teacher models respectful classroom interaction and provides frequent opportunities for students to dialogue and get to know one another. Shared agreements are present in the classroom but may not be referenced directly. The classroom is set up in a way that promotes student interaction.	Teacher provides some opportunities for students to get to know one another. The classroom is set up in a way that promotes student interaction.	Teacher does not yet use strategies to help students get to know one. The classroom is not yet set up in a way that promotes student interaction.	

2. Explicit SEL instruction

Students have consistent opportunities to cultivate, practice, and reflect on social and emotional competencies in ways that are developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive.

2a. Explicit SEL instruction	Students lead routines or learning activities and regularly connect their perspectives and experiences to instruction.	More than half of students are actively engaged in explicit SEL instruction, reflecting on their own social and emotional competencies, and practicing the skills they are learning with peers.	Less than half of students are actively engaged in explicit SEL instruction, reflecting on their own social and emotional competencies, and practicing the skills they are learning with peers.	Students are not yet participating in explicit SEL instruction.	
Look for/Learn about: - Evidence of a SEL program (e.g., posters, circles, related student work, student-of-the-day stickers). - Structured SEL lessons.	Nearly all students are actively engaged in explicit SEL instruction, reflecting on their own social and emotional competencies, and practicing the skills they are learning with peers Teacher provides developmentally appropriate direct instruction on social and emotional skills. Instruction consistently employs active forms of learning, containing activities that clearly emphasize developing personal and social skills, and targets	Teacher provides developmentally appropriate direct instruction on social and emotional skills. Instruction mostly employs active forms of learning, containing activities that emphasize developing personal and social skills, and targets specific social and emotional skills.	Teacher provides some opportunities for students to practice social and emotional skills in ways that are mostly developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive. Instruction targets specific social and emotional skills, but learning is somewhat passive.	Teacher does not yet provide direct instruction on explicit on social and emotional skills. There are little to no opportunities for students to practice social and emotional skills.	

	specific social and emotional skills. Teacher provides time for students to practice what they are learning.				

3. SEL integrated with academic instruction

SEL content and objectives are integrated into rigorous instruction through interactive and collaborative pedagogies. This enables ongoing practice of SEL skills and strengthens teaching and learning of academic content.

| 3a. Fostering academic mindsets

Look for/Learn about:

- Visible materials or discussion about mindsets (e.g., growth vs. fixed)
- Positive verbal and/or non-verbal expectations communicated.
-Evidence that students are able to redo work when they make mistakes.
- Challenges normalized and mistakes framed as opportunities | Nearly all students are actively engaged in academic tasks and discussions.

Students provide constructive feedback to their classmates, share their thinking and discuss different approaches or answers to questions.

Teacher sets high expectations and expresses confidence that all students can persevere through challenging material.

Teacher facilitates discussions that honor more than one right answer and expresses interest in students' thinking.

Teacher provides specific and frequent feedback for improvement and offers students opportunities to fix mistakes. | More than half of students are engaged in academic tasks and discussions.

Students share their thinking and discuss different approaches or answers to questions.

Teacher sets high expectations for all students and expresses confidence that all students can persevere through challenging material.

Teacher expresses interest in student thinking and offers students opportunities to fix mistakes.

The teacher provides additional support to guide students through challenges when needed. | Less than half of students are engaged in academic tasks or discussions.

Teacher sets high expectations for all students and offers students opportunities to fix mistakes.

The teacher provides additional support to guide students but may jump in with the answers rather than allow for productive struggle | Students are not yet engaged in academic tasks or discussions.

The teacher does not yet communicate high expectations for all students. | |

3b. Aligning SEL and academic objectives Look for/Learn about: - SEL standards and/or SEL learning objectives embedded into academic learning. - Connecting SEL competencies to academic content. - Students self-assess and/or reflect on use of SEL competencies.	Nearly all students regularly share their perspectives on how social and emotional competencies connect to what they're learning and initiate reflection on their own social and emotional development. Teacher engages students in meaningful discussions that make connections between SEL and academic content. Teacher provides time and guidance for student reflection on social and emotional competencies. SEL standards and/or learning objectives are specified by the teacher and are embedded into instruction.	Most students share their perspectives on how social and emotional competencies connect to what they're learning and initiate reflection on their own social and emotional development. Teacher engages students in meaningful discussions that connect SEL to academic content. Teacher is starting to facilitate student reflection on social and emotional competencies. SEL standards and/or learning objectives are not yet specified by the teacher.	Some students share their perspectives on how social and emotional competencies connect to what they're learning and initiate reflection on their own social and emotional development. Teacher is beginning to engage students in discussions that connect SEL to academic content. SEL standards and /or learning objectives are not yet specified by the teacher.	Students do not yet reflect on social and emotional competencies and make connections to what they're learning. Teacher does not attempt to engage students in discussion that connects SEL to academic content and does not yet facilitate student reflection on social emotional competencies. There is not yet evidence that SEL standards, goals, or learning objectives /guidelines inform instruction.	
3c. Interactive pedagogy Look for/Learn about: - Extent to which teacher facilitates discussions and activities with high levels of student engagement - Student self-assessment and/or reflection that occurs during lessons. - Teacher's use of cooperative structures (e.g., turn to your partner). - Students' collaboration with each other - Ratio of student to teacher speech	Student talk time exceeds teacher talk time during instructional time with more than half of students provide input during group discussions. Nearly all students collaborate effectively with one another to complete learning tasks and monitor their own interactions to ensure input from all group members. Teacher uses cooperative learning activities that encourage all students to apply social and emotional skills to engage with academic content. Teacher provides opportunities for students to discuss and reflect on how they are working together as a group and how they can ensure all ideas are heard.	Student talk is equal to teacher talk during instructional time with half of students providing input during group discussions. Teacher uses lesson activities that engage students in meaningful discussion and collaboration around their learning. Classroom discussions and cooperative learning opportunities are structured to help ensure most students' ideas are heard.	Students do less than half the talking during instructional time with less than half of students provide input during group discussions. Teacher tries to use instructional practices that engage students in discussion and collaboration. Teacher talk, or the voices of a small group of students, may dominate the lesson.	Student talk and interaction is minimal. There is not yet evidence that the teacher uses instructional lessons that engage students in discussion and collaboration. Instruction is largely teacher-driven.	
4. Youth voice and engagement (classroom level) Staff honor and elevate a broad range of student perspectives and experiences by engaging students as leaders, problem-solvers, and decision-makers.					

7

161

| 4a. Youth voice and engagement

Look for/Learn about:

- Students' contributions to/leadership in the classroom.
- Student voice and/or choice in learning activities
- Opportunities for students to share their opinions and devise strategies for classroom improvement.
- Displays of student work
- Displays of class survey results | Students co-design and lead their own approaches to learning, and regularly drive classroom discussions as developmentally appropriate.

Nearly all students give input when making choices about classroom projects, operations, and/or routines.

Teacher provides students with developmentally appropriate opportunities to contribute to decision-making around classroom projects, operations, or routines.

Teacher designs instruction around students' interest/motivation and provides frequent opportunities for students to express their point of view, co-construct knowledge, and make choices about their learning. | More than half of students give input on classroom projects, operations, and/or routines.

More than half of students take on developmentally appropriate leadership roles in the classroom.

Teacher offers meaningful choices for students to select from and designs instruction around students' interest/motivation.

Teacher provides opportunities for many students to take developmentally appropriate leadership roles in the classroom. | Less than half of students have leadership opportunities in the classroom.

Teacher offers meaningful choices for students to select from.

Teacher provides opportunities for a few students to take developmentally appropriate leadership roles in the classroom. | Students have minimal input into classroom activities.

Learning is predominantly teacher-driven. | |

Section 2: Schoolwide Systems and Practices

This section provides guidance on observing schoolwide SEL implementation across the school's climate, family and community partnerships, and continuous improvement systems. For this section, it may be beneficial to include conversations with school staff, leadership, the SEL team, community partners, and students and/or their families to better understand the ways strategies occur within their respective contexts and to review relevant artifacts, along with observations of school common areas.

School					
	4	3	2	1	Not Observed
1. Youth voice and engagement (school level) Staff honor and elevate a broad range of student perspectives and experiences by engaging students as leaders, problem-solvers, and decision-makers.					
1a. Youth voice and engagement Look for/Learn about: - There is evidence of student participation (via surveys, journal writing, or other products).	There are meaningful, developmentally appropriate opportunities for all students to share their opinions, take on leadership roles, devise strategies for school improvement, and inform	Most students have developmentally appropriate opportunities to elevate their voice and leadership skills. Students are invited to share their opinions and inform decision-making.	Student leadership opportunities are limited to structures like student government, where few students have opportunities to participate. At times, students are invited to share their opinions and inform decision-making.	The school does not yet invite students to share opinions or take on leadership roles.	

162

	decision-making around issues that they prioritize.				
- Students serve on decision-making and/or advisory teams. - **There is evidence of service-learning projects or student-led awareness campaigns.**					

2. Supportive school climate					
The schoolwide learning environment is supportive, culturally responsive, and focused on building relationships and community.					

2a. Sense of community and safety **Look for/Learn about:** - SEL-focused schoolwide norms are displayed in common areas. - Students and staff model social and emotional competencies. - There are inviting, well-maintained common areas. - A variety of meaningful, creative, and recent student work is prominently displayed.	Culturally responsive and collaboratively developed schoolwide norms clearly convey how all staff and students agree to interact with each other. Clear routines and procedures are evident and contribute to the safety of students and staff in common areas. Students and staff consistently model schoolwide norms and social and emotional competencies.	Clear schoolwide norms for interactions are evident throughout the school. Routines and procedures are mostly followed. Students and staff can navigate common areas safely. Most students and staff model schoolwide norms and social and emotional competencies.	Norms are present in some areas but not consistently followed or reinforced. Routines and procedures are unclear in some areas, but students and staff can navigate most common areas safely. Some students and staff model norms and social and emotional competencies.	There is no evidence that schoolwide norms have been developed yet. Safety may be a concern for students and staff.	
2b. Staff and student relationships **Look for/Learn about:** - Staff greet students as they arrive at school and at class, and in the halls as appropriate. - Staff demonstrate knowledge of students on a personal level.	Staff engage regularly in positive and encouraging interactions with students in common areas. At times, students initiate these interactions. Staff demonstrate knowledge of students on a personal level. Feedback around norms for common spaces is shared in a way that respects students' dignity.	Staff have mostly positive interactions with students in common areas. Feedback around norms for common spaces is shared in a way that respects students' dignity.	Staff have mostly neutral interactions with students in common areas. At times, feedback around norms in common spaces is negatively framed.	Staff have limited or frequently negative interactions with students in common areas.	
2c. Staff relationships **Look for/Learn about:** - Staff greet one another in the halls as appropriate. - Staff demonstrate knowledge of one another on a personal level.	School staff are highly supportive of one another. Interactions are friendly and respectful. Staff seek out collaborative relationships.	School staff are supportive of one another. Interactions are friendly and respectful.	Staff mostly interact professionally with one another but do not show active support for one another.	Staff do not regularly interact with each other or have negative staff relationships.	
2d. Student relationships **Look for/Learn about:** - Student interactions that are respectful, friendly, and inclusive.	Students seem to genuinely care for one another and hold one another accountable for respectful interactions. There is a sense of inclusivity among all students.	Student interactions are respectful and friendly.	Students are somewhat respectful to peers, but they may have a few conflicts.	Students are routinely disrespectful to one another and/or have frequent conflicts with peers.	

9

163

3. Focus on adult SEL					
Staff have regular opportunities to cultivate their own social, emotional, and cultural competence; collaborate with one another; build trusting relationships; and maintain a strong community.					
3a. Focus on adult SEL **Look for/Learn about:** - There are documented staff shared agreements. - SEL is integrated into staff meetings. - Staff model social and emotional competencies through their interactions.	Staff have regular professional learning opportunities to cultivate adult SEL and SEL strategies. Most staff are regularly engaged in collaborative learning or planning, and SEL practices are embedded in all staff meetings. Staff consistently model social, emotional, and cultural competencies through their interactions.	Staff have many opportunities to cultivate adult SEL and SEL strategies. Some staff are engaged in collaborative learning or planning, and SEL practices are embedded in some meetings. Many staff model social, emotional, and cultural competencies through their interactions.	SEL topics or practices are occasionally included in staff professional learning or meetings. Few structures exist for staff to collaboratively learn or plan. Some staff model social, emotional, and cultural competencies through their interactions.	SEL is infrequently or not yet part of staff practices, meetings, or professional learning. Few staff model social, emotional, and cultural competencies through their interactions.	
4. Schoolwide supportive discipline					
Schoolwide discipline policies and practices are instructive, restorative, developmentally appropriate, and equitably enforced.					
4a. Supportive discipline **Look for/Learn about:** - A student code of conduct promotes instructive, restorative, and developmentally appropriate discipline policies and practices. - There is evidence of circles/other restorative practices.	Schoolwide discipline policies and procedures are well-documented and avoid exclusionary discipline. Staff examine discipline data to ensure equitable outcomes for students. Staff follow documented policies and procedures and are highly-effective at using restorative, instructive, and developmentally appropriate behavioral responses.	Schoolwide discipline policies and procedures are well-documented and avoid exclusionary discipline. Staff examine discipline data a few times a year to ensure equitable outcomes for students. Staff mostly follow documented policies and procedures, and most staff use restorative, instructive, and developmentally appropriate behavioral responses.	Schoolwide discipline policies and procedures are documented and mostly avoid exclusionary discipline. Staff examine discipline data a few times a year, but do not effectively use data to ensure equitable outcomes. Staff are inconsistent at following documented policies and procedures. Staff inconsistently use restorative, instructive, and developmentally appropriate behavioral responses.	Schoolwide discipline policies and procedures are punitive, subjective, or not well documented. Staff responses to student behaviors are ineffective, punitive and/or inequitable.	
5. A continuum of integrated supports					
SEL is seamlessly integrated into a continuum of academic and behavioral supports, which are available to ensure that all student needs are met.					
5a. A continuum of integrated supports **Look for/Learn about:** - The SEL team meets regularly with the team or staff responsible for reviewing student referrals and assignments to interventions to ensure coordination and alignment of social and emotional support.	Academic and behavior supports offered at all tiers meet the needs of all students. SEL language, practices, and priorities are embedded in planning, implementation, and progress monitoring of academic and behavioral supports at all tiers.	Academic and behavior supports offered at all tiers meet the needs of most students. SEL language, practices, and priorities are included in planning, implementation, and progress monitoring of most academic and behavioral supports.	Academic and behavior supports offered at all tiers meet the needs of some students. SEL language, practices, and priorities are included in planning, implementation, and progress monitoring of some academic and behavioral supports.	The school has not developed a continuum of supports; OR SEL is not yet included in planning, implementation, and progress monitoring of academic and behavioral supports.	

10

164

Family and Community

	4	3	2	1	Not Observed
6. Authentic family partnerships					
Families and school staff have many and meaningful opportunities to build relationships and collaborate to support students' social, emotional, and academic development.					
6a. Authentic family partnerships **Look for/Learn about:** - There are family-facing newsletters and evidence of two-way communication between families and teachers. - There is evidence of family participation in family nights, school events, surveys, etc. - Families are represented on the SEL team.	The school offers regular, meaningful opportunities for families to share ideas and feedback on strategies for supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development. These opportunities are offered in families' home languages and at hours convenient for families to attend. School decision-making teams, including the SEL team, have representation from family members.	The school offers several meaningful opportunities for families to share ideas and feedback on strategies for supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development. These opportunities are offered in families' home languages and at hours convenient for families to attend.	The school offers some opportunity for families to share feedback on strategies for supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development.	Families do not yet have opportunities to share feedback on strategies to support students' social, emotional, and academic development.	
6b. Family-school relationships **Look for/Learn about:** - Staff greet and welcome families. - Family-staff interactions are warm and collaborative. - Family responses to school surveys.	Most families report respectful, collaborative, and trusting relationships with staff. School regularly collects and reviews data on how families feel about their relationships with staff and the families themselves.	Most families report respectful, collaborative, and trusting relationships with staff. School has collected some data on how families feel about their relationships with staff.	Staff interactions with family appear mostly respectful, but the school has not collected data on how families feel about their relationships with staff.	Staff interactions with family are limited or not consistently respectful.	
7. Aligned community partnerships					
School staff and community partners align on common language, strategies, and communication around all SEL-related efforts and initiatives, including out-of-school time.					
7a. Aligned community partnerships **Look for/Learn about:** - Community partners and/or out-of-school time staff are represented on the SEL team. - There is designated space within the school for community partners to store supplies, conduct work, etc. - Leadership and staff regularly discuss the supports or programs community partners.	School staff and community partners have established, and consistently use, **common language** around SEL. School leaders and other staff meet **regularly** with community partners to plan and execute **aligned strategies and communication** around all SEL-related efforts and initiatives that occur during the school day and out-of-school time.	School staff and community partners have established some common language around SEL. School staff meet occasionally with community partners to discuss aligning strategies and communication around SEL-related efforts and initiatives that occur during the school day and out-of-school time.	School staff and some community partners have established some common language to discuss SEL. School staff and community partners are becoming familiar with each others' strategies and communication around SEL-related efforts.	Staff and community partners still work primarily independently, without intentional alignment.	

For more information, tools, and resources, visit schoolguide.casel.org.

11

165

Continuous Improvement

	4	3	2	1	Not Observed
8. Systems for continuous improvement Implementation and outcome data are consistently collected, used, and communicated to continuously improve all SEL-related systems, practices, and policies with a focus on equity.					
8a. Systems for continuous improvement **Look for/Learn about:** - Staff meet regularly to discuss data and engage in continuous improvement cycles. - There are newsletters, emails, and posted communications about SEL. - School-level data is communicated with stakeholders in a easy to understand way. - Data elevates youth voice by addressing student perceptions of their learning environment, as well as their strengths and needs.	Roles, responsibilities, and timelines are established and followed for collecting and reflecting on data to improve SEL-related systems, practices and policies. Data includes **student perceptions** of their learning environment and provides opportunities to **examine equity** in students' experiences and outcomes. Data on schoolwide SEL is regularly shared and discussed with administrators, teachers, school-site support staff, students, families, and community partners. The SEL team uses a structured process to **engage** these stakeholders in determining next steps and creating action plans.	Roles, responsibilities, and timelines are established and followed for collecting and reflecting on data to improve SEL-related systems, practices and policies. Data provides opportunities to examine equity in students' experiences and outcomes. Data on schoolwide SEL is regularly shared and discussed with administrators, teachers, school-site support staff, students, families, and community partners.	Roles, responsibilities, and timelines may be inconsistent for collecting and reflecting on data to improve SEL-related systems, practices, and policies. Data on schoolwide SEL is occasionally shared with some stakeholders.	Roles, responsibilities, and timelines are not yet established for collecting and reflecting on data to improve SEL-related systems, practices, and policies.	