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A Phenomenological Study of Educator Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning Following the COVID-19 Pandemic

Allison Haulton

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A Phenomenological Study of Educator Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning Following the
COVID-19 Pandemic

by

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Presented to the Faculty of the
Doctor of Educational Leadership Department
George Fox University
in partial fulfillment for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

April 13, 2023



GEORGE FOX
UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION | EdD

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOLLOWING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, a Doctoral research project prepared by ALLISON HAULTON in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.

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ABSTRACT
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**A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL-
EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOLLOWING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

This qualitative phenomenological study serves the purpose of identifying teacher perceptions of social-emotional learning (SEL) through a global pandemic, including implementation, professional learning, student outcomes, and additional challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to add to the body of existing literature, specifically, in veteran teachers (those with ten or more years of experience in an elementary education setting) and their experiences teaching SEL following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: social-emotional learning, social-emotional competencies, veteran teacher, COVID-19 pandemic

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you so much to everyone who helped in this process from staff, colleagues, friends, and family. Finally, as Walter Cronkite once said, “I hope that somewhere, Mom and Dad are proud” (Xplore, n.d.).

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Topic

Public K-12 schools spotlight social-emotional learning (SEL), the ability to manage emotions, achieve goals, and experience empathy, to promote healthier relationships among students and prevent behavioral difficulties in the classroom (Cavioni, Grazzani, & Ornaghi, 2020). This idea is an increasingly urgent issue following the COVID-19 pandemic (Absher, Maze, and Brymer, 2021). Literature is rich with SEL programs and their positive impact on students, both academically and emotionally. Despite this, there needs to be more research on the result of SEL for educators. Jennings & Greenberg (2009) applied the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competency model to find higher student achievement and outcomes in classes where the teacher possessed higher SEL competencies. Cavioni et al. (2020) find that teachers with higher social and emotional skills, such as understanding and managing emotions, display more robust capacities for relationship-building, and have higher self-efficacy in their jobs (Cavioni, Grazzani, & Ornaghi, 2020; Durlak et al., 2015). One way to develop self-efficacy with educators is to provide them with professional learning opportunities.

There needs to be more continued professional learning for educators about SEL. Schools with ongoing professional learning opportunities and additional resources, such as in-house experts, show increased SEL in students and educators (Durlak, 2016). Elias (2019) describes a social and emotional learning model where cohort-based teachers have access to "ongoing professional development experiences that provide continuous support" (p. 243). This type of all-

encompassing support is key for successful SEL in schools with populations that include lower achieving students, students with trauma, and students and staff with limited support for mental health (Brackett et al., 2011; Capella et al., 2008; Jacobson, 2019; Hoglund et al., 2015). While there is a plethora of research about supporting new teachers and student teachers teaching social and emotional learning, the research is sparser when looking from the perspective of a veteran teacher.

This study aims to add to the body of existing literature, specifically on veteran teachers (those with ten or more years of experience in an elementary education setting) and their experiences during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Their stories bring their insights and experiences to the discussion about how to serve best students who lived through a shared trauma (Absher, Maze, and Brymer, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed public K-12 education in the past two years (Gicheva, 2022). Xiong et al. (2020) reported that students are more susceptible to the stressors of the COVID-19 pandemic due to changes in schools, such as closures, online learning, and decreased school engagement. Veteran teachers have insight into their school communities' social and emotional needs pre-, during, and post-pandemic. Their experiences offer rich views into what content is taught, what students need, and what type of support and learning needs for successful SEL.

Problem Statement

This study addresses the new and evolving needs of students and teachers in SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It examined teachers' perceptions of SEL through the COVID-19 pandemic, with the goal that the researcher could examine trends in successful strategies and common needs of support. The purpose of this was to make research-based

recommendations for professional learning opportunities to support positive staff and student outcomes.

Research shows that teachers who incorporate SEL into their curriculum produce students who can develop their Social Emotional Capacities (SEC). The development of SEC in children promotes many positive outcomes, including increased self-regulation, improved empathy, increased prosocial behavior, and improved academic performance (Kusumaningrum, 2019; McCabe & Altamura, 2011; Pakaslahti, Karjalainen, & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2002).

To achieve these outcomes, teachers need support and training incorporating social and emotional learning strategies into their teaching practice; however, many teachers are not adequately prepared in pre-service teacher education programs, or employer provided training to integrate SEL into their teaching practice (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013; Ferreira et al., 2020). During and post COVID-19 pandemic, teachers in all stages of their careers are finding themselves feeling ill-equipped to handle the new situations they are facing (DeKlerk, Palmer, & Modise, 2021). During the 2020-2021 school year, veteran teachers reported fatigue, increased hours worked, and increased stress because of the pressures placed on them in the workplace (Gicheva, 2022). Students, teachers, and school communities feel the impact of the SEL taking place in classrooms. It is crucial to hear the voices of veteran teachers to understand what is working, what supports students and staff need, and where to go from here.

Purpose Statement

Problem Statement

This study addresses students' and teachers' new and evolving needs in SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It examined teachers' perceptions of SEL through the COVID-19 pandemic, with the goal that the researcher could examine trends in successful strategies and everyday support needs. This was to make research-based recommendations for professional learning opportunities to support positive staff and student outcomes.

Research shows that teachers who incorporate SEL into their curriculum produce students who can develop their Social Emotional Capacities (SEC). The development of SEC in children promotes many positive outcomes, including increased self-regulation, empathy, prosocial behavior, and academic performance (Kusumaningrum, 2019; McCabe & Altamura, 2011; Pakaslahti, Karjalainen & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2002).

To achieve these outcomes, teachers need support and Training incorporating social and emotional learning strategies into their teaching practice; however, many teachers are not adequately prepared in pre-service teacher education programs or employer-provided Training to integrate SEL into their teaching practice (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013; Ferreira et al., 2020). During and post-COVID-19 pandemic, teachers in all career stages must be equipped to handle the new situations they face (DeKlerk, Palmer, & Modise, 2021). During the 2020-2021 school year, veteran teachers reported fatigue, increased hours worked, and increased stress because of the pressures placed on them in the workplace (Gicheva, 2022). Students, teachers, and school communities feel the SEL's impact in classrooms. It is crucial to hear the voices of veteran teachers to understand what is working, what supports students and staff need, and where to go from here.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to use qualitative measures to identify teacher perceptions of SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Research shows that when teachers use social-emotional learning to build social-emotional capacities (SEC), students show increased academic performance (Pakaslahti, Karjalainen, & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2002). Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, school districts have prioritized Social-emotional learning (Zieher et al., 2021). Teachers, even veterans, report feeling unsupported in implementing SEL during the COVID-19 pandemic (Strambler et al., 2020). This study shows teacher perspectives on Social-emotional learning post-pandemic, identifies areas of need, and informs professional learning in those areas.

For this study, the focus of the population sample was veteran teachers from the general education classroom. The study's sample size was four participants who volunteered from an elementary school in a large district in a suburb of Portland, Oregon. The school is diverse in its population, and all classrooms contain students with special needs and students for whom English is their second or other languages. The school is part of a pilot program practicing full inclusion in a K-6 neighborhood school. In their National Study of Inclusive Education, the National Center in Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI) defined inclusion as "providing to all students, including those with severe disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with supplementary aids and support services as needed, in age-appropriate general education classes in their neighborhood schools" (National Center in Educational Restructuring and Inclusion, 1995).

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Constructivists believe humans build understanding through experience. In this model, our interactions with the world and the understanding that comes from our interactions are interpretations based on the perspective of the person constructing that understanding (Crotty, 1998). Constructivism aligns closely with the interpretive work and hermeneutic tradition of the life stories the researcher will explore (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

Building on the constructivist theory, this study grounds itself in the conceptual framework of the CASEL model for SEL and SEC. The CASEL Model is constructed from five competencies that correlate to increased SEL. The competencies are self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020; Ross & Tolan, 2018).

Research Methodology and Design Overview

This qualitative phenomenological study focused on the perceptions of experienced classroom teachers describing their experiences teaching SEL through the COVID-19 pandemic. A phenomenological research study format best fits the parameters of this study. To study teachers' lived experiences as they use reflection to understand their perceptions of teaching SEL throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher used a qualitative research design pursued through a hermeneutic phenomenological methodological approach (Creswell, 2013).

According to Van Manen (2023), "phenomenology attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld" (p. 11). The researcher used Seidman's (2019) protocol for in-depth, phenomenologically based interviewing. The process included interviewing participants in three separate semi-structured interviews lasting 60-90 minutes.

Each of the three interviews had a particular focus and will build systematically on the previous interviews. The first interview focused on life history. For the second interview, the researcher focused on the details of the participant's experience. The final interview focused on reflections on the meaning. Each of the interviews was professionally transcribed. The participant interview's verbatim transcripts served as this study's primary data source.

Research Questions

RQ1

How do veteran elementary general education teachers describe their experiences incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons into their classrooms during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2

What professional learning opportunities are needed to support veteran elementary school teachers in teaching SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Significance of the Study

With the increased focus on SEL during and after COVID-19, the use of SEL support systems in the classroom to increase student achievement and decrease problematic behaviors is gaining momentum (Ramirez, et al., 2021). This study is significant because it adds to the current body of knowledge by capturing the perception of teachers teaching SEL and focuses on veteran teacher experiences as they relate to teaching SEL through a global pandemic. The findings of this study provide insight into what veteran teachers are doing that is working and areas they could use support. Given this information, the researcher constructed targeted recommendations for professional learning opportunities.

Delimitation

Delimitation in this study is that the study and analysis are restricted to a single school and a set of four educators. This decision to only include perceptions from educators at a single location serves to tailor the analysis specifically for that school community in hopes of recommendations for specific targeted professional learning opportunities based on the data. This sample size allows for a deeper dive into the phenomenon.

Limitations

This study's limitations include population sampling, location, sample size, and participant and researcher bias. The researcher will collect data from one suburban public elementary school in the Greater Portland Metropolitan area. The lack of diversity in the sampling population is a limitation. Further, the researcher is choosing only four volunteers to participate out of the pool of veteran teachers (having ten or more years of experience in an elementary classroom). Lastly, there may be participant bias. Participants were asked to share experiences and perceptions about teaching SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It is possible they might not have had an accurate self-assessment of their knowledge or support needed. Participants may have experienced social desirability bias. Social desirability bias refers to the concern participants may feel related to stigma, confidentiality concerns, and privacy (Marcus & Schütz, 2005). In addition to the participants, the researcher is a classroom teacher in the building where the participants were chosen, the researcher might have a bias in relation to the staff, school community, and administration.

Definition of Key Terms

PAX: PAX is a behavior support program adopted in the school district the participants are teaching in. The program targets primary (K-2) classrooms. According to paxgoodbehaviorgame.promoteprevent.org, “PAX is a set of strategies to help students learn important self-management skills while collaborating to make their classroom a peaceful and productive learning environment” (n.d.). PAX is a product of Pax Institute’s school-based programming.

PBIS: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) The Center on PBIS describes PBIS as a multitiered system of behavior supports and data tracking that includes interventions.

SEC: Social Emotional Competencies- These are five interrelated competencies that make up social and emotional competence: self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision making, relationship skills, and social awareness (CASEL, 2019)

SEL: Social Emotional Learning- “The process by which children and adults learn to understand and manage emotions, maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions”

(O’Connor, Feyter, Carr, Luo, & Romm, 2017, p. 1).

Veteran teacher: For the purposes of this study, veteran teachers will be those with ten or more years in the elementary classroom setting (Lowe et al., 2019).

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters, followed by references, and appendices in the following manner. In chapter two, the researcher will share an in-depth literature review connecting the importance of SEL, teacher perceptions, and what they mean for students. The third chapter will focus on the methodology used, identifying the research approach, participants,

data collection, and analysis processes. The researcher will share the stories and perspectives shared by the veteran teachers during their interviews during chapter four. To begin, the fifth chapter will discuss the implications for both practical application and future research. In closing, the researcher will discuss recommendations for practical application as well as future research.

Summary

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause interruptions in educational settings, teachers face new challenges when delivering SEL content to their students. One of these challenges is preparedness given their current level of training. Another challenge lies in that while the research promoting increased SEL has shown increased student success and diminished problematic and disruptive classroom behaviors, it is not systematically offered in schools (Durlak, 2016).

Phenomenological research studies such as this seek to explore the experiences of teachers and bring their voice to the forefront of the discussion around social and emotional learning. Through these stories, this research contributes to the knowledge about experienced teachers' perceptions of teaching SEL through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Learning is a social activity - it is something we do together, in interaction with each other, rather than an abstract concept (Dewey, 1938).

Introduction

This qualitative phenomenological study serves the purpose of identifying teacher perceptions of social-emotional learning (SEL) through a global pandemic, including implementation, professional learning, student outcomes, and additional challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. After a review of the conceptual and constructivist theoretical framework and the conceptual framework for SEL, the literature review is then organized into four parts. The first part is a review of SEL competencies and how they relate to student outcomes. In the second part, the researcher reviews social and instructional teaching practices as they relate to student development of social-emotional competencies (SEC). The third part focuses on challenges faced by educators teaching SEL through a global pandemic. The fourth part of the literature review examined the best practice for implementation of curriculum as well as professional learning for educators.

For the purposes of this literature review, the researcher used the George Fox University Library online to access references. In addition, the researcher used the EBSCO host database as well as Google search engine. For this study, the range of years was 2016-2022 for current research, with no date range limitation for theoretical and conceptual framework references. The exception is Yoder (2014). The type of literature was not limited other than with the filter of “peer-reviewed” as it relates to articles. Search terms used were as follows: SEL, social-

emotional learning, SEC, social-emotional capacities, veteran teacher, COVID-19, professional learning, professional development, curriculum, and implementation. While this list is not comprehensive, it embodies a good deal of focus for this study. For this study, materials were chosen that focused on the k-12 population of students.

Constructivist Theory

Born from a mix of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner, constructivism focuses on humans constructing meaning through their experiences (Chen et al., 2022). Piaget's theory of cognitive development focuses on interactions between knowledge (prior and future) and human experience (1971). In addition to developing stages of child development, Piaget's research focused on how a child develops in relation to what is happening in their environment. The relationship between experiences and ideas are at the focus of the theory of cognitive development. Piaget's ideas on learning bring to attention how a person's development is influenced by others; this highlights the social aspect of the theory. While Piaget focused on cognitive constructivism, others focused on the social aspect of learning. Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development goes on to highlight the role of sociocultural learning (Piaget, 1971; Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky differed from Piaget in that he believed cognitive development varies across cultures because they are learning from their environment, whereas Piaget believed cognitive development to occur universally through stages (Piaget, 1971; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky continued his attention on the social-cultural aspect of learning identifying, "the most significant moment in the course of intellectual development, which gives birth to the purely human forms of practical and abstract intelligence, occurs when speech and practical activity, two previously

completely independent lines of development, converge” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 24). Vygotsky argued learning needed to take place with support of adults and capable peers at a level just beyond the learner’s grasp; changing the focus from where the learner is now, to where they are heading. The gap between what a learner can do independently, and what they can do with support of an adult or capable peer is known as the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). For optimal learning to occur in the ZPD, the learner needs to feel supported and have learning scaffolded by someone more knowledgeable on the topic; this can be a peer or an adult. Scaffolding refers to the practice of supporting a learner temporarily to perform a task until they have achieved independence. Vygotsky argues that the ZPD is where learners make the greatest connections and learning growth (Vygotsky, 1978). The idea of scaffolding came about from fellow constructivist, Jerome Bruner.

Bruner used Vygotsky’s ZPD, and the idea that we can learn more with help from someone more knowledgeable to create a learning theory with a heavy focus on educational practice. Bruner (1966) proposed a spiral curriculum with an emphasis on instructional scaffolds to guide a learner through the ZPD. To begin with, learners need support from adults or more capable peers, but as the learner acquires new skills and knowledge, their need for support lessens. Bruner (1966) suggests, over time, the learner can do the task independently without any scaffolds. Together, the work of Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner are the foundations for constructivism.

Constructivism is a learner oriented theoretical framework where knowledge is a construct of experiences, facts, ideas, emotions, and values and how they connect. There are four critical pieces to the constructivist theory; the first is eliciting prior knowledge. Constructivism

builds on the assumption that all new knowledge gained is in some way tied to prior knowledge (Naylor & Keogh, 1999; Windschitl, 2002; Yager, 1991). It is, therefore, the educator's job to find ways to activate the prior knowledge of their students. If they are unable to do this, the learner will not be able to incorporate the new knowledge (Baviskar, et al., 2009). There are a number of ways to activate prior knowledge; from formal pre-tests, interviews, asking informal questions, and preparing concept mapping activities that require students to apply basic knowledge (Sewell, 2002; Wheatley, 1991). The key element of eliciting prior knowledge is for new learning to take hold, it needs to anchor to prior learning.

The second piece critical to constructivism is creating cognitive dissonance. This event occurs when the student recognizes there is a difference between their new learning and their prior knowledge (Baviskar, et al., 2009). Baviskar, et al. (2009) goes on to argue that for learning to be constructivist in its approach, students cannot be expected to acquire new knowledge independent of their prior knowledge. Wheatley (1991) suggests educators set their students up to be in situations with a high probability of this dissonance occurring.

Yager (1991) describes the third piece of constructivism as the application of knowledge with feedback. As the learner faces new learning that does not match up with their prior knowledge, they need a way to interpret their cognitive dissonance. Often, new knowledge is misinterpreted or rejected if the learner doesn't change or modify their prior knowledge in light of their new learning. Baviskar, et al. (2009) suggests the application of the new constructs be through "presentations, group discussions, or other activities where the students compare their individual constructs with their cohorts' or with novel situations" (p. 544). Allowing learners application opportunities where they can interact with others helps to further the idea of

interconnectedness between prior and new knowledge. In doing so, it allows the application of the new knowledge the opportunity in a greater variety of contexts in the future; helping to further integrate the knowledge permanently.

The fourth and final piece of constructivist learning is reflection. After students acquire new learning, experience cognitive dissonance, and apply their new knowledge through feedback, learners are ready to acknowledge and reflect on their learning (Windschitl, 2002; Yager, 1991). Learner reflections are structured in a variety of ways; formal and informal. Formal reflections are fostered through traditional assessments, presentations, papers, or exams. More metacognitive options for reflection are reflective essays, having the learner explain the concept to other learners, or go back to the original activity that led to the dissonance (Baviskar, et al., 2009). The work of Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, and others, serve as building blocks for social constructivism and paved the way for SEL to take place.

Stream 1: Social-Emotional Learning

In recent decades, SEL framework has been increasingly used to address mental health, classroom behavior, and build resilience in learners (Feuerborn & Gueldner, 2019). Jones et al. (2017) argue students with higher social-emotional competencies (SEC) get along with peers, experience increased academic success, and go on to be more successful adults. SEL learning and increased SECs are an effective way to decrease at-risk behaviors at school, home, and in the community (Larrier & Lewis, 2017).

History and definition of SEL. CASEL (2015) states, “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

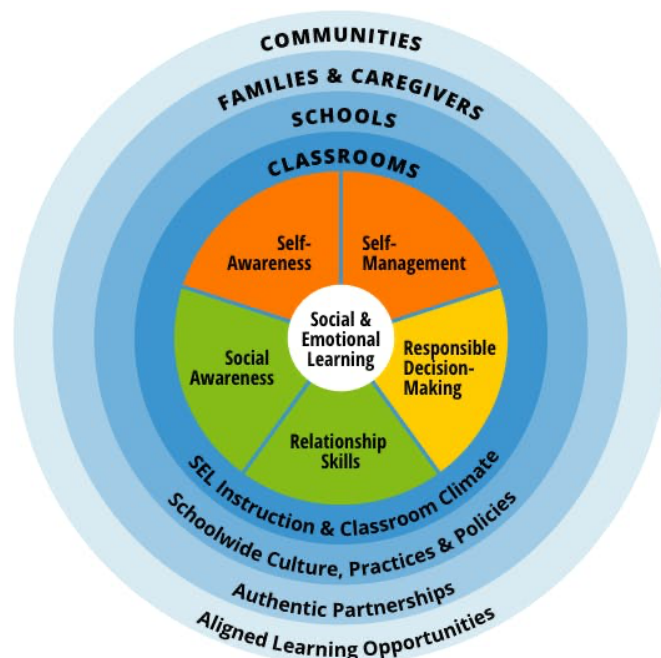
empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (p.1). The term SEL used in conjunction with the framework comes because of a Fetzer Institute meeting held in 1994 (CASEL, 2019). The meeting was a place for researchers, educators, and child advocates alike to meet and discuss social-emotional learning. The meeting resulted in the founding of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, or CASEL (Dunham, 2019). To this day, CASEL’s mission remains the same; “to help make evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) an integral part of education from preschool through high school” (CASEL, 2019, para. 1).

The current push for SEL comes on the heels of emergent research showing the importance of building SEC in pre-K-12 education. Both The Wallace Foundation, and The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (NCSEAD) published reports providing communities, educators, and families with evidence-based, research-based, ways to foster social-emotional as well as academic development in students (Jones et al., 2021, NCSEAD, 2019). Understanding the competencies is paramount in understanding the transfer of skills into classroom applications.

SEL competencies. In efforts to advance SEL, CASEL (2018) identifies five areas of social and emotional competency (SEC) as most critical for student development. The five areas of competency include: self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness.

Figure 1

CASEL Framework for Social-Emotional Learning



Note: This was adapted from (CASEL, 2020). Figure one focuses on the five social-emotional competencies (SEC) and how they fit in relation to setting and opportunities.

Figure 1 illustrates the five competencies that serve as broad domains. Within those domains, there are many sub-skills ranging from impulse control to identifying others' perspectives (CASEL, 2015; Weissberg et al. 2015). Around the outside of the SEC's there are rings of setting and opportunity to show the full framework of the CASEL model. Not all the five competencies are built the same; relationship management and responsible decision making require higher order skills that cannot be accomplished without first having success with other capacities such as self-management, self-awareness, and social awareness (Smith, Killgore & Lane, 2017). For instance, successful relationship management requires social awareness; the ability to correctly interpret others' feelings and behavior to respond appropriately (Lyashevsky,

2018). Given this relationship, self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness are focused on first and are part of much deeper structures of SEL (Lyashevsky, 2018). All five of the competencies are formable and teachable (Jones & Kahn, 2017; Cantor & Osher, 2021). Berg et al. (2017) stresses the importance of using frameworks, such as CASEL's, to identify areas of intervention and measurable milestones toward change.

Self-awareness. Weissberg et al. (2015) defined self-awareness as understanding one's emotions, values, and personal goals. Self-awareness also develops into understanding how one's thoughts and feelings influence their behaviors (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017). Deutsch (2021) identifies self-awareness' tie to past experiences. He argues emotion needs to be not only identified, but there is also a need to be aware of why we are experiencing that emotion (2021). CASEL (2020) stresses the importance of being able to understand how your behavior changes across contexts. They explain identifying differences in emotions across contexts leads to increased feelings of confidence and purpose. Students with a developed self-awareness often are observed seeking advice or answers when they are unsure, often volunteering to help, and raising their hand to give answers in class (Sprenger, 2020). To develop self-awareness, CASEL (2017) pinpoints the following needed skills: be able to identify emotions, have an accurate self-perception, recognize strengths, possess self-confidence, and demonstrate self-efficacy. There are a number of practices to help people build these skills such as expanding one's emotional vocabulary to describe how they feel, build relationships through appropriate greetings, practice emotional check-ins, journaling, and drawing (Sprenger, 2020).

Self-management. Grounding itself in regulation, self-management encompasses how we regulate ourselves through our relationships. Deutsch (2021) describes self-management as

“emotional self-control, where we can manage the unnecessary emotions that we all experience” (p. 111). CASEL (2017) identifies six sub-skills under the umbrella of self-management. These sub-skills include impulse control, stress management, self-discipline, self-motivation, goal setting, and organizational skills. CASEL (2020) defines self-management as “The ability to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations” (p. 2). Shuanghong et al. (2022) explains self-management in the context of a 21st century skill; necessary for sustained personal and career growth. Storey and Miner (2017) argue that the ability to manage emotions, regulate oneself, and impulse control are functional skills that can and should be explicitly taught to students.

Students who can effectively use self-management skills are able to make healthier behavioral decisions than those who cannot (Shuanghong et al., 2022; Weissberg et al., 2015). Students who have positive self-management skills show the characteristics of ability to empathize with self and others, ability to look to others if needed for assistance, recognize emotions and adjust accordingly, and be able to work to solve their own problems (CASEL, 2017).

Social awareness. Differing from self-awareness, social awareness is the ability to take the perspective of others, feeling empathy, and recognize and understand the emotions of others (Lyashevsky, 2018). Drawing on the social aspect, this area involves listening and understanding others and roots in the ability to show empathy (Deutsch, 2021). Identifying similarities and differences between oneself and other individuals and groups is a centerpiece of self-awareness (Weissberg, 2015). Continuing to look outside of yourself, another aspect of social awareness is looking outside of yourself to recognize support from family, schools, and one’s community

(Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017). Being able to ask for help hinges on the ability to recognize strengths in others merged with understanding social norms for behavior in various settings (CASEL, 2020). Sprenger (2020) reiterates the importance of building an emotional vocabulary as one is developing empathy. As individuals, it is easier to recognize and understand emotions when we can accurately name them (Sprenger, 2020).

Relationship skills. Being a higher order skill, relationship skills require people to put together the skills of self-management, self-awareness, and social awareness to achieve success. In other words, to have developed relationship skills, you need to be able to recognize and regulate your own emotions, in addition to identifying others' emotions and responding appropriately. This capacity deals with the ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships with others, doing so in diverse settings of individuals (CASEL, 2020). Diversity, of individuals and groups, is a key aspect of successful relationship skills (Deutsch, 2021). In the classroom, students who demonstrate relationship skills are able to communicate effectively with peers and both receive and ask for help from others (CASEL, 2019). Aside from the in-class benefits of active listening, cooperation, and clear communication, relationship skills show benefits outside of the class as well, such as resisting inappropriate social pressure (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017).

Responsible decision making. According to CASEL (2017), responsible decision making is the ability to create choices for personal behavior and social interactions based on safety, ethics, and social norms. The sub-skills needed are clear communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, relationship building, and helping and or seeking help (CASEL, 2019). For responsible decision making, people need to be able to recognize possible consequences of their

actions and decisions, including how they will affect others (Sprenger, 2020). Likewise, people need to be tuned in to how others affect their actions and be resistant to social pressure (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017).

Summary. Although listed separately here, these five socioemotional competencies are interrelated and often interdependent. These five competencies are seen as a part of a whole and have been shown to positively impact students' social-emotional skills, behaviors, and achievement (Durlak et al., 2011; Yoder, 2014). For this reason, the remainder of the study will refer to these skills simply as SEC; acquired skills will be referred to as SEL. Another aspect of SEL are social-emotional teaching practices; which are targeted, purposeful, and research based (Denton, 2013; O'Connor et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2017; Yoder, 2014).

Stream 2: Social-Emotional Teaching Practices

There is strong support in the literature on the relationship between the social-emotional teaching practices utilized and the development, and or lack thereof of students' SEC (Denton, 2013; O'Connor et al., 2017; Yoder, 2014). At the center of SEL teaching are practices, which include cooperative learning where students can form positive relationships (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017). Jones et al. (2017) explains the importance of adults scaffolding to provide elementary students with opportunities for engagement with peers to practice “increasingly complex social interactions” (p. 26).

Student-centered discipline. Using student-centered discipline, teachers use developmentally appropriate strategies to motivate students to want to behave (The Source, n.d.; Yoder, 2014). To achieve success, students have opportunities to give input and develop shared norms and rules in the classroom. CASEL (2019) suggests giving students increased

opportunities for problem solving and decision making in the classroom. The teacher's role in student-centered discipline is to have clear, logical consequences, delivered in a consistent fashion (Hawkins et al., 2004; Johnson & Johnson, 2004; Yoder, 2014).

Teacher language. Another important SEC practice is teacher language; the way in which teachers talk to students (CASEL, 2016). Teachers should encourage students' effort, and the work they have done, specifically focusing on accomplishment, and needs for improvement (McCombs, 2004; Yoder, 2014). The Source (n.d.) outlines language teachers use to praise students, and points to the need for increased focus on the effort exhibited, as well as reminding students of strategies they have learned that may be helpful. When teachers give specific affirmations, it lets students know their efforts lead to positive results (Yoder, 2018). Teachers can strengthen and cultivate positive relationships with their students through dialogue using positive language (McAlister, 2018; Savekar, 2021).

Responsibility and choice. Yoder (2014) points out the importance of students making responsible choices for themselves, as well as understanding their choices affect their school and community. Giving students choices empowers them to make responsible choices (CASEL, 2015). When engaged in creating classroom norms, consequences, and rewards, it allows students to be reflective and proactive about the choices they make in relation to the classroom environment (Johnson & Johnson, 2004; Yoder, 2014). The Source (n.d.) stresses teachers need to give students meaningful and controlled choices to help students to feel responsible.

Warmth and support. A warm, and supportive classroom environment filled with positive teacher-student relationships helps build SEC's and promote academic learning (Ferreira et al., 2020). A positive relationship between a student and educator has higher rates of access to

“interactions that support SEL” (Jones et al., 2017, p. 22). Cantor and Osher (2021) supports these findings; additionally, asserting that students who feel safe and secure at school form positive relationships that act as a buffer to trauma and stress. Some ways teachers can demonstrate care and support for students are by asking questions, following up, encouraging risk-taking, and creating structures in the classroom where students feel appreciated by peers (The Source, n.d.). Yoder (2018) explains it is the teacher’s role to show warmth and support by demonstrating to students their appreciation of each student as an individual.

Cooperative learning. At the heart of SEL practices is cooperative learning; students working together toward a collective goal (Elias et al., 1997; Hawkins et al., 2004; Johnson and Johnson, 2004; Yoder, 2014; Zins et al., 2004). In the classroom, cooperative learning requires five elements: positive interdependence, personal responsibility, promoting the success of others, applying interpersonal and social skills, and working in groups (Dyson & Shen, 2021). In cooperative learning, students are encouraged to develop interpersonal skills in a small group setting (Dyson & Shen, 2021). Yoder (2014) emphasizes the role of individual accountability to ensure participation in the task, as well as accountability as a group. Just as it is important during cooperative learning for students to have opportunities to receive feedback, and “collaboratively process how they work together” (Yoder, 2018, p. 4).

Balanced instruction. Although cooperative learning is necessary to promote SEL, and facilitate the acquisition of SEC, the learning environment needs to be balanced (Yoder, 2014). Yoder (2014) describes balanced instruction as a mix of direct instruction and active instruction balancing with individual and collaborative learning. This balance allows students to directly learn about and engage with the material (The Source, n.d.). Yoder (2014) states that while it is

important for students to work cooperatively, it is important to have a balance where students also use skills, resources, and complete work independently.

Classroom discussion. Another component of SEL are classroom discussions (CASEL, 2016; Yoder, 2014). Classroom discussion refers to the facilitated conversations between teachers and students (CASEL, 2016). The teacher asks the group open-ended questions, and then provides prompts to promote elaboration and thinking (The Source, n.d.). Classroom discussion allows students the opportunity to participate in structured discussion with peers, while practicing skills such as listening, responding, learning from others, and paraphrasing (Yoder, 2018). Yoder (2018) goes on to explain the importance of a safe environment for classroom discussions to take place; students need to feel free to make mistakes and experiment.

Academic press expectations. One-way teachers can promote SEL, and positive academic outcomes is through academic press and high academic expectations (Yoder, 2018). Academic press is the pressure experienced by students while attending to specific academic demands. Students should feel the press of importance of academics as well as feel responsible for their success or failure (Yoder, 2014; Zins et al., 2004). What's more, teachers should be aware of what their students are capable of academically, and how they will respond to challenging work (McCombs, 2004; Yoder, 2014). Teachers want their students to succeed and guide them through challenging work with emotional support (The Source, n.d.).

Competence building. Competence building occurs as teachers assist in developing social-emotional competencies in a systematic way throughout the instruction cycle (Yoder, 2014). The typical instruction cycle includes goals and objectives, introduction, both group and individual practice, conclusion, and finally reflection (Yoder, 2018). Sufficient time needs to be

set aside for the implementation of SEL programs (Jones et al., 2021). As a part of a schoolwide SEL implementation, CASEL (2018) recommends adoption of explicit SEL mandates and the adoption of evidence-based programs. CASEL (2018) goes on to explain the importance teachers play as facilitators over the SEL of their class. Thoughtful, planned, explicit SEL instruction builds competence in students' SEC growth (Yoder, 2018).

Self-assessment and reflection. Self-reflection and self-assessment are instructional tasks where teachers ask students to reflect on their work and their process (Yoder, 2018). Teachers take the roles of facilitators paving the way by setting clear goals and benchmarks with students (Yoder, 2014). Teachers need to instruct students in how to assess their own work against performance standards; whether teacher created or co-created in the classroom (The Source, n.d.). With guidance and support, students learn to monitor their progress toward meeting the standards. Yoder (2014) points out that students who are able to use self-assessment and reflection academically can go beyond social-emotional development and growth.

Summary. Through modeling, teaching, actions, and words, teachers influence the development of SECs in their students. As teachers provide students with opportunities for cooperative learning, classroom discussions, self-assessment and reflection, positive language, student-centered discipline, and warmth and support, they are facilitating growth in SEL (Yoder, 2018).

Stream 3: Teaching Through a Global Pandemic

Challenges. In the spring of 2020, as COVID-19 surged across the world, schools began transitioning to distance learning. Many states and schools continued online learning entering the 2021-2022 school year. COVID-19 has had lasting effects on students, families, and educators as

they navigate restrictions and disruptions to learning (Zieher et al., 2021). While the long-term effects of COVID-19 may not be known currently, prior research suggests sudden changes to student routines negatively affect student's mental health (Strambler et al., 2020).

Understanding the setting. Since the spring of 2020, schools across the globe have been bouncing between in-person, and online learning (Zieher et al., 2021). Due to restrictions at the federal, state, and county level, districts required flexibility to respond as COVID-19 outbreaks happened on local levels. Many teachers found themselves teaching via online delivery methods for the first time in their career. Yang (2021) explains the challenges faced by educators as they navigated their way through instructional technologies, with varying levels of training. Green and Bettini (2020) found the COVID-19 pandemic magnified the risk factors faced by educators such as: overwhelming workloads, high levels of stress, secondary traumatic stress, and compassion fatigue. Educators were not the only ones to feel the sting of change in response to COVID-19.

Switch in focus. Along with the switch from in-person to online learning, there was also a change in focus from academics to meeting the changing social and emotional needs of students. When asked to compare SEL programs and provisions today to five years ago, Wigelsworth et al. (2021) found about 50% of schools reported they are devoting “much more time” to SEL and SEC. As students return to in-person school, the focus remains shifted to SEL in response to impacts on mental health and wellbeing because of stress from COVID-19 (Schwartz et al., 2021). CASEL (2020) states the increased focus on SEL following the COVID-19 pandemic is in part due to the feelings of isolation, stress, and loss experienced by students and families.

Lack of equity. The change from in-person to online learning highlighted equity issues both from different school districts and from schools within those districts (Ezra et al., 2021). Wigelsworth et al. (2021) cite lack of time, training, and support as barriers for teachers to identify successful SEL implementation. Teachers were not the only ones feeling the sting of inequity during the pandemic. Students with lower socio-economic status experienced a digital inequity, which was represented by disparities in technology access and experience (Ezra et al., 2021). Ezra et al. (2021) went on to point out that students of families with adults who are not able to provide support and structure during online learning were at a disadvantage when compared to peers who have adult support. Jones et al. (2017) impress the importance of the role schools play in checking in with families and students to see if there is anything necessary to meet their family's needs.

Summary. As we move into a new phase of life after COVID-19, students and teachers transition to in-person learning and SEL remains at the forefront of school initiatives to meet the evolving needs of their students (Zieher et al., 2021). As empathy and resilience continue to be a focus to strengthen schools and communities, schools can support students in this area by building their SECs through SEL (CASEL, 2020). CASEL (2020) goes on to suggest schools continue to give students and staff opportunities for deepening relationships, design opportunities for communities to connect, and create a safe and supportive learning environment for students.

Chapter 3: Research Method

“You know my methods” (Doyle, p. 416, 1894).

Introduction

This phenomenological study examined veteran teachers’ perceptions of teaching social-emotional learning following the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter is organized into the following sections: research methodology and design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, assumptions, validation, and lastly, ethical considerations for the study describing the lived experiences of educators as they relate to addressing the social-emotional learning (SEL) needs of the students at a K-6 elementary school in a suburban neighborhood of Portland, Oregon.

Research Methodology and Design

Designed to use a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study examined veteran teachers’ experiences teaching SEL at a K-6 elementary school in a suburban neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. Qualitative research relies on analysis, and interpretation of data by researchers to gain insight into a phenomenon (Gay et al., 2006). Creswell & Poth (2018), state qualitative research empowers people through their experiences and voices, while attempting to minimize any power dynamics between the participants of the study and the researcher. This type of qualitative research aims to describe individuals’ shared experience of a lived phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In this case, the phenomenon being teaching elementary students SEL following the COVID-19 pandemic. Creswell (2013) continues to point out that a phenomenological researcher’s role is to focus on describing the commonalities of participants as they experience a phenomenon. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) highlight the researcher’s role of

clarifying and recognizing the phenomena through the participant's experiences. This study aimed to accomplish this through interviews and a survey.

This study was designed to gather and record the experiences of educators while interviewing them about their experiences. Focusing on educators' responses to survey and interview questions, this study aimed to gather the feelings and perceptions of veteran teachers about how social-emotional learning is happening in their classrooms.

Using interviews and surveys are two methods of gathering qualitative data. Anderson and Holloway-Libell (2014) bring up the setting of the interviews as an important part of a qualitative study. They state qualitative studies need to be conducted in a natural setting, where they can analyze and report the complex detailed views of the participants. Through teacher interviews, the researcher gathered information on teachers' perceptions of social-emotional learning post COVID-19, and what supports are needed. An administrator was given the option to be surveyed to determine their perception of how teachers perceive SEL at the elementary school. The following qualitative questions guide this study:

RQ1

How do veteran elementary general education teachers describe their experiences incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons into their classrooms during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2

What professional learning opportunities are needed to support veteran elementary school teachers in teaching SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Population and Sample

Due to the phenomenological nature of this study, the researcher used purposeful sampling as a means of deliberately sampling a group of individuals to best inform the researcher about the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study was conducted in a suburban school district in the Portland Metropolitan area. The school in the study has 385 students enrolled in grades K-6. For this study, four classroom teachers chose to participate, while the administrator of the building chose not to participate. In addition, there was another classroom teacher chosen to participate as a pilot interview and informed the researcher on how to proceed conducting the subsequent interviews. All participants self-identify as a “veteran” teacher. Qualitative studies such as this one, these differ from quantitative studies in that they include a small, but purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013). The participants for this study were purposefully selected from the teaching staff at a K-6th grade elementary school, where the district has put a priority on social-emotional learning. The participants of this study provided the researcher with valuable information about their experience. Gay et al. (2006) describe qualitative sampling as a process where the individual participants in the study help the researcher to understand the phenomenon being researched. In addition to classroom teachers, one administrator from the school was asked to complete a survey of their perceptions of how teachers viewed social-emotional learning at their school. Anderson and Holloway-Libell (2014) explain the interview process consists of open-ended questions allowing the researcher an opportunity to dig deeper with follow-up questions.

Participants in the study were recruited by email. The email list was curated from licensed classroom teachers in the targeted elementary school. Veteran teachers in the building were invited to participate based on their teaching assignments when the phenomenon occurred.

Instrumentation

The researcher developed the Administrator Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning Questionnaire after a review of literature and research. The survey consists of nine questions formulated to gather information about the administrator of the building's perceptions of the SEL happening in the school. The format of the interviews will follow Seidman's interview protocol and be broken down into three separate 60–90-minute interviews (Seidman, 2019). Following Seidman's recommendations, the first interview focused on the participants' life histories as they relate to the phenomenon. The second interview explored the individual's recent lived experiences through story. The final interview highlighted the participant's reflections on their lived experience.

Data Collection

The primary purpose of this study was to gather information on veteran teacher perceptions of social-emotional learning following the COVID-19 pandemic. Approval was sought by George Fox University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and granted before individuals were contacted for potential participation in the study. Interviews were the main data collection method used to gather stories, experiences, and feelings regarding the phenomenon. Teachers implementing social-emotional learning, and who self-identify as a veteran teacher, provided the data for this study.

Ethical considerations for this study included concealing participants' identities, detailed information about the study, and obtaining their permission. Each participant received a participation letter prior to scheduling their first interview with the researcher. Due to the nature of qualitative data, collection requires the researcher to collect non-numeric data to gain insight

into a phenomenon (Gay et al., 2006). Data in the study was collected through two means: a survey for the administrator containing demographics as well as open-ended questions, and a series of three interviews with veteran teachers. The participants were notified by personal email, inviting them to participate in the study. The participants were given a copy of the interview questions prior to the interview for review. The interviews took place in person, at a location of the participant's choosing, in a google meet, or on the phone. The administrator survey was sent electronically.

Data Analysis

The data analysis procedures used to analyze: (a) the survey data from the administrator, including but not limited to the demographic and open-ended questions, and (b) the interview questions used to collect the experiences from veteran teachers. The survey responses were analyzed to address the two research questions to determine teachers' perception of social-emotional learning following the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the researcher explored teachers' perceptions of the supports needed for successful outcomes in their classroom. After transcription, the interviews were coded by emergent themes using NVivo.

On the Administrator Questionnaire, the open-ended responses were coded by emergent themes and number of guided protocol questions. The researcher coded the responses to determine the teachers' perceptions of social-emotional learning, using common themes and threads as a guiding factor. Using Creswell's (2013) six steps of data analysis, the researcher first organized the data, reading all responses and notes before coding, describing the essence of the phenomenon, grouping statements into units, developing a textural description, and finally presenting the findings in chapter four. Codes were used to group responses for each question,

further ensuring confidentiality of each participant as names were not included in the demographics of the interview.

To enhance credibility, the researcher used triangulation to establish a current theme or perspective. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) define triangulation as a method used by a researcher to use a variety of data sources or subjects when collecting data for a study. For this study, the researcher used multiple participants from the school and attempted to collect data using two different means to add variety to the data collected.

Assumptions

The researcher brought to this study the belief that the interview questions and process will accurately reflect the phenomenon being studied. The researcher went into the study with the assumption that the participants would answer truthfully and wholly. The delimitation of sample size helped the researcher narrow the scope of the study by studying the phenomenon as it relates specifically to the school community in the study.

Validation

The interview process followed Seidman's (2019) protocol for interviewing. The researcher used member checking, or the process of participant verification as part of the data analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). After the transcription was available for the interviews, participants had the option of reviewing the transcripts for accuracy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, the survey was reviewed by the researcher's dissertation chair and/or committee members who served as experts in instrument design and social-emotional learning. Gay et al., (2006), describe validity as the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. Reliability on the other hand, is the degree of consistency of an instrument

(Gay et al., 2006). The content of the researcher's survey is taken from two previously approved instruments, where reliability and validity of the content were previously confirmed.

Ethical Assurances

This study received approval from the George Fox University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection. Participation in the study was completely voluntary and anonymous. Participants were not paid for participation and could withdraw or discontinue from the study at any time without penalty. During the interview, only the participant and researcher were present. No other faculty and administrators were present or had access to the notes or transcripts. This precaution prevents participant's comments from having any negative repercussions. For anonymity, the school in the study will be referred to as Elementary School.

Participants were not identified by name. For the purposes of this study, participants were assigned a number as means of identification. Participants are only referenced by the number assigned to them. The tapes and notes from the interviews were kept in a locked cabinet only accessible by the researcher. All audio files and notes were destroyed after they had been transcribed using NVivo's transcription tool. Subsequent uses of records and data are subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

The role of the researcher during the interview and survey portion of the study was to facilitate and record the stories and experiences of the educators. As the researcher works in the building in the study, bias may have been present towards systems, staff, and students in the building. To help ensure objectivity, the researcher asked the questions on the interview sheet and avoided follow up questions. Follow up questions were only asked if clarification was needed, such as to what or whom a pronoun was referring to. Due to the nature of

phenomenological research, the participants may have experienced social desirability bias, or the concern or stigma felt due to confidentiality and privacy (Marcus & Schütz, 2005). To be as objective as possible, the researcher remained open-minded while gathering data for the study.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented the specific methodology used for this qualitative phenomenological study. It included the purpose, research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, assumptions, validation, ethical assurances, and summary. This chapter included detailed information about who was included in the study and how data was collected. The participants were purposefully selected based on their assignment in the building as well as years of experience teaching. As a phenomenological study focuses on the lived experiences, there is not a minimum number of participants required and participants had a choice to drop out at any time. The instrumentation section described the survey, including demographics and ten open-ended questions. Data collection and analysis procedures were discussed for two means of collection: (a) survey containing demographics and ten open-ended questions, and (b) responses to interview questions provided by classroom teachers. The findings of the survey and interviews are presented in Chapter IV. In Chapter V, the researcher provides discussions, implications, recommendations, and conclusions.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to use qualitative measures to identify teacher perceptions of social-emotional learning (SEL) during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter begins with an overview of preparing the data for analysis and continues

with the results organized by research questions, and close with findings from the study. The findings are organized by the two guiding research questions:

1. How do veteran elementary general education teachers describe their experiences incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons into their classrooms during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What professional learning opportunities are needed to support veteran elementary school teachers in teaching SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

The main findings were in the areas of professional development opportunities and support for veteran teachers implementing SEL. With the information gathered in this study, districts may have the ability to tailor professional development to assist all teachers in incorporating SEL into the classroom.

Preparation of the Data

Using Seidman's interview protocol, the four participants interviewed in this study attended three interviews via phone, in person, Google Meet, and/or interactive Google document. A participant from the study approached the researcher and asked to include an interactive Google Document as a means of interview, citing anxiety. Since the format allowed for two-way communication, between the researcher and participant, it was included as an accommodation. The first interview consisted of four questions focusing on the life history of the participant. The second interview was the participants' experience told through answers to three questions, and a series of sub questions. Interview questions focused on what social-emotional learning teachers implemented at their campus and in their experience. The third and final

interview focused on the participants' reflection on the meaning of the phenomenon. Final interview questions focused on how they felt about the implementation of social-emotional learning in their school and if they felt there were any professional learning opportunities they would benefit from.

Interviews were recorded by the researcher and stored on a password-protected computer. Each interview was recorded through NVivo using the interview tool. After, each was transcribed within Nvivo to fully transcribe the interviews. After transcription, each participant was given access to a copy to review for accuracy before the interviews were coded by emergent themes using NVivo.

To maintain trustworthiness, the data were triangulated using member checking, also known as informant validation. To increase credibility and reliability, informant validation was used during the interview by the researcher as well as at the conclusion of the study. To reduce bias, the researcher asked the participants the interview questions and did not comment or question past the questions in the interview. This ensured each participant received the same question without bias.

In reporting the findings, the researcher refers to all participants with the letter P for participants, and a number pseudonym: P1, P2, P3, and P4. The researcher collected demographic information from the participants and displayed it in Table 1. The table shows the participants were all female and ranged in classroom teaching experience from 15 to 33 years. Each had spent at least nine years at the campus where the study was conducted, the longest having been there for 22 years.

Table 1

Demographic Information

Table 1 is organized by participants and gives information on gender, years teaching in a classroom setting, and years spent in a classroom setting at this campus.

	Participant 1 (P1)	Participant 2 (P2)	Participant 3 (P3)	Participant 4 (P4)
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female
Years Teaching	20	33	28	15
Years on Campus	9	22	18	9

Results

With the interviews complete, the researcher used NVivo qualitative data analytic software to identify emerging themes and subthemes. The word frequency tool in NVivo's explore options, provided the researcher with a visual representation of the frequency of specific words used by the participants in the interview. This data was in the form of a word cloud and is labeled figure 3 and can be seen in Appendix E. The researcher compiled the information from the word frequency cloud and transcripts to create a table of the words frequently used in response to the interview questions. Table 2 shows the 25 most frequently used words by the interviews. The table is organized in descending order starting with the word most frequently used. At the heart of the interviews was "student" or "students" with the greatest appearance at 57 times. From there, the table shows participants' key words used when describing their experience teaching SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2

Word Frequency from Transcripts

Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
student(s)	57	social awareness	39	talking	32
students know	54	morning meeting	39	classroom	31
students think	52	competencies	39	lessons	30
teachers	49	slides	38	time	30
using SEL	47	feel important	38	professional development	29
years teaching	45	lessons	36		
things (obstacle)	42	CASEL	35		
social emotional learning	42	expected behavior	35		
self-awareness	41	school district	34		
kids	40	success	33		

Note: Table 2 shows the data of frequency of word use during the complete set of interviews. Data is presented in descending order starting with the most frequently used word.

The researcher coded the key words by themes, and then sorted those themes into one of three categories: relating to RQ1, relating to RQ2, or not related to either research question.

Figure 3 was created to show the three themes which emerged from the data, the first was

directly related to RQ1, while the second two themes related to RQ2. Figure 3 shows a graphic representation of the themes and subthemes, which will be discussed below.

The first theme to emerge from the interviews related to campus specific social-emotional learning. While participants described a variety of programs available to them for promoting social-emotional learning (SEL) among students, the availability of these programs does not necessarily guarantee their effectiveness. All four participants expressed concern as to whether the assessment was measuring what it was supposed to measure. In addition, participants were concerned about changes made to the assessment midway through the year. Additionally, three out of four participants reported the COVID-19 pandemic had created interruptions to learning and program roll out. With the shift to remote and hybrid learning, it has become more challenging for educators to implement SEL programs and assess their effectiveness (Xiong et al., 2020).

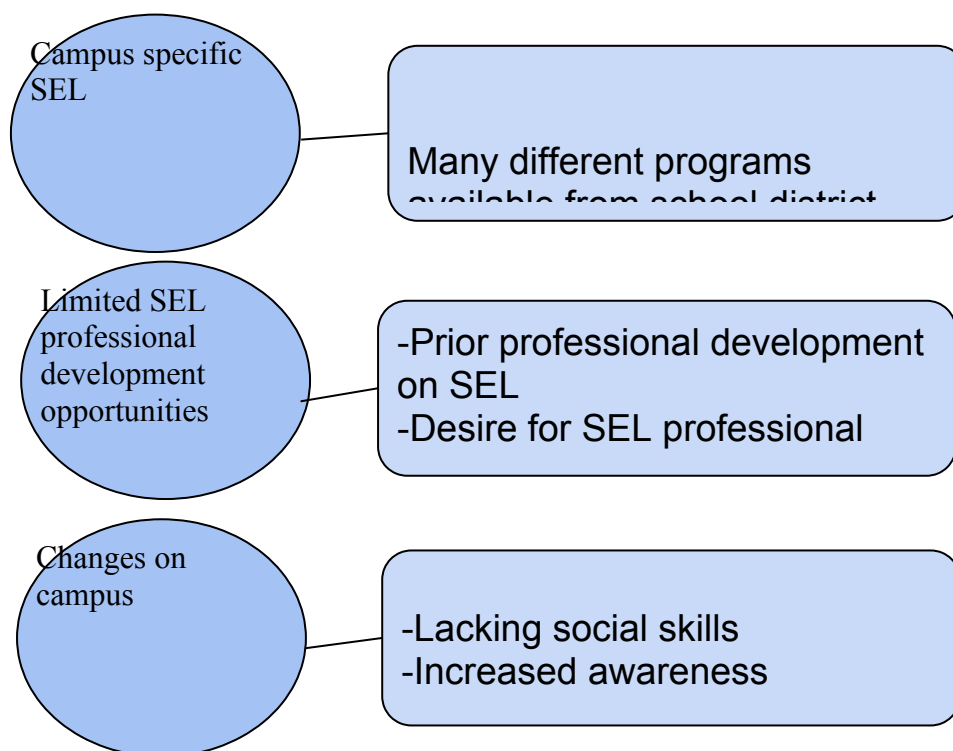
The second theme to emerge was the participant's report of limited professional development opportunities to support their implementation of SEL. Without adequate professional development, educators may struggle to effectively integrate SEL into their instruction and support students in developing social-emotional skills. Participants expressed a desire for ongoing, collaborative professional development, tailored to the needs and concerns of their students.

The final theme to emerge described the changes the campus has undergone since focusing on SEL. Participants reported an increased awareness and understanding of social-emotional concepts among their students. This suggests that efforts to promote SEL, even in the

midst of the pandemic, may be having a positive impact on students' well-being and development.

Figure 3

Key Themes and Sub themes



Note: The darker blue circles on the left represent the key themes that emerged from the interviews. To the right, the lighter blue rectangles show the corresponding sub themes which emerged during the interviews.

Research Question 1

How do veteran elementary general education teachers describe their experiences incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons into their classrooms during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Variety of Programs

To analyze the data, the researcher generated themes and subthemes using NVivo data software. The researcher used NVivo's transcription tools to import the transcribed interviews for analysis. Once completed, the researcher used heading styles in NVivo to automatically organize the participant's responses to each question. In addition, after creating the organized headings, the researcher ran a quick word frequency query for each generated theme as well as an overall word frequency query as shown in Figure 2 using the word cloud tool. As the researcher coded the material by theme, they used the mind map tool to create a chart of themes and subthemes (Figure 3). Participants described their experiences teaching SEL on the Elementary School campus during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants described a variety of SEL programs such as Sanford-Harmony, PAX, PBIS, and Zones of Regulation when describing programs used to promote SEL.

Along with these programs, participants described a Google Slideshow created by a former teacher in the district. P1 explains "Each week staff is given a Google Slide show which uses elements of Sanford-Harmony and other SEL to teach the campus' CASEL focus competency of the month."

In addition to these programs, all four participants reported morning meetings being a part of their daily schedules following the return to in-person class after the COVID-19 pandemic. P2 reported that "Rollout was originally around the beginning of Covid." P2

continued to describe the campus expectation of morning-meeting being “teachers will use the allotted half-hour time slot (in their schedule) to use provided materials for a daily morning meeting session with students.”

Assessment of SEL

Participants uniformly expressed concern over the district provided, mandatory, SEL assessment. Participants shared an assessment that had been created in the Fall at the district level and then passed on to teachers to assess student understanding of the five social-emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills. P2 described the assessment in the following:

At the beginning of the year, the district had teachers give students a baseline test for student knowledge and understanding of the competencies. It was poorly written and implemented and the district plans to make changes in the future since the data was difficult to extrapolate. (P2)

Participants also expressed concern over the lack of differentiation in the assessment. P3 expounded on this adding the provided assessment was, “definitely not meant for primary students.” P2 went on to explain other concerns with the provided assessment as:

In theory, the district will provide an end-of-year assessment on student understanding of the competencies. However, since the baseline data is so skewed, I am not sure what to expect. For my students, I don’t have a specific way to measure student growth in Social Emotional Learning. (P2)

Other participants said they do not plan to rely on the assessment and instead are using alternative methods to check for understanding. P3 shared that they are not relying on the

provided assessment and are instead, “looking to see if they are using what we're talking about in class. Do they use the word? Do they talk about it?” P1 and P4 expressed they were also using check-ins with students throughout the week to see if they are using the SEC vocabulary and if it is being used correctly.

COVID-19 Disruptions

Participants mentioned numerous disruptions to both the teaching of SEL and SEC and in the rollout of professional development due to the COVID-19 pandemic. P1 described limited training in SEL, stating their training was “somewhat in morning meetings prior to moving to online only during the pandemic.” P1 commented that following the return to in-person school following COVID-19, “we had been introduced to things like morning meetings and had been given a box of materials for Sanford-Harmony, but we weren’t really sure where to go from there.” All participants expressed concern that new SEL programs had been started before COVID-19, but not all have continued with momentum.

Research Question 2

What professional learning opportunities are needed to support veteran elementary school teachers in teaching SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Professional Development Opportunities

Participants uniformly described feeling ill-prepared to teach SEL given the professional development opportunities they have had.

I feel like besides PAX, which is kind of but more behavior than social-emotional, is the only training I have received. I feel they are like, hey there's this program

we got, here's Sanford-Harmony, let's go through the box that we gave you and look at the things, and now go use it. (P3)

This sentiment continued with P1 stating, “I have been partially trained, if you can call handing me a box a training, in Sanford-Harmony and PAX.”

P2 described their SEL professional development as “Training for morning meetings has been minimal. Rollout was originally around the beginning of Covid. Teachers got their own Sanford Harmony kit with a teacher manual.”

Regarding what professional development opportunities they would like to have, participants suggested time, training, and experts. Participants 1 and 4 expressed they would like time more than professional development. Both participants said they need time to go over the materials given and ask questions.

I would love to see a district video library where teachers and staff can upload examples of morning meetings, successful SEL lessons, and school-wide practices that can be accessed by the entire district. (P2)

P3 and P1 both stated they would like professional development to be from “experts in the field...not teacher trainers.”

Changes on Campus

All four participants described a positive change on the campus since the focus has shifted to include SEL.

When morning meeting was first presented to our staff, I did have the attitude of this being “Just one more thing added to our plates.” Then, Covid happened. SEL suddenly became very important to me. With my personal philosophy that

student self-esteem is more important than academics, SEL lessons became a way for me to help my students increase not only their self-esteem but their very lacking social skills. (P2)

Other participants (P1 and P3) described the change they see on campus as a greater awareness.

It's an awareness... they still don't know how to solve these things, they still don't know how to deal with it, but if you bring it up to them they can be like. "Oh yeah! I do remember talking about that" but they haven't made the connection of this is the thing that we were talking about. (P1)

P4 described their students as, "having a greater sense of self-awareness and social awareness." P3 said, "My kids have a greater awareness of what is going on and how their actions are affecting them and others."

Evaluation of the Findings

This section of the chapter focuses on results that emerged from themes and subthemes mentioned above. The findings are interpreted through the theory, research, and practice described in Chapters 1 and 2. The findings and all related interpretations inform the conclusion of this chapter as well as the recommendations, which are presented in Chapter 5.

Three specific findings were identified: 1) veteran teachers would like professional development on the SEL materials the district currently is using; 2) veteran teachers want an assessment tool that is valid and reliable; 3) positive changes are happening.

The first finding was that veteran teachers expressed a desire for professional development on the SEL materials that the district is currently using. This suggests that although

the teachers have been working with the materials for some time, they still feel they need additional training to effectively implement the program. This finding highlights the importance of ongoing professional development to ensure teachers have the skills and knowledge needed to deliver effective SEL instruction.

The second finding was that veteran teachers want an assessment tool that is valid and reliable. This suggests the teachers are concerned about accurately measuring student progress in SEL skills and want to use assessment tools backed by research and proven to be effective. Having access to valid and reliable assessment tools can help teachers tailor instruction to meet the specific needs of their students and track progress over time.

The third finding was that positive changes are happening. This suggests although there are areas for improvement, the district's SEL program is having a positive impact on students and teachers. This finding is encouraging and suggests the district's efforts to implement SEL are making a difference in the lives of students.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of ongoing professional development, the need for valid and reliable assessment tools, and the positive impact of SEL programs. These findings can inform district-wide efforts to strengthen SEL instruction and support social-emotional development.

Research Question 1

How do veteran elementary general education teachers describe their experiences incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons into their classrooms during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Veteran elementary teachers see an increased need for SEL following the COVID-19 pandemic. Cavioni, Grazzani, and Ornaghi (2020) state an increased urgency and spotlight on SEL. Gicheva (2022) describes the significant changes to schools and teaching in the two years following the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. P2 echoed this stating, “when COVID happened, and suddenly SEL became very important to me. There was a high need.” Some researchers also point to the increase in focus on SEL following COVID-19 as a method of increasing student achievement and decreasing problematic behaviors. P2 explained that for them “SEL lessons became a way for me to help my students increase not only their self-esteem, but their very lacking social skills.” Along these lines, another finding in this chapter was the positive changes the participants are seeing at their campus.

Veteran elementary teachers see a positive change in student awareness of themselves and others following the teaching of SEC. SEL in the classroom benefits both student’s and teacher’s SEC (CASEL, 2018; Durlak, 2016). The positive changes the participants mentioned dealt with the area of awareness. P1 explained it as “a positive awareness of how they interact with others.” Participants described both an increase in self-awareness and social awareness. Self-awareness, or the ability to understand your own emotions, values, and goals is the first SEC to develop (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017; Smith, Killgore & Lane, 2017). Social awareness is also a SEC that does not require the higher order thinking skills that responsible decision making, and relationship management do (Lyashevsky, 2018; Smith, Killgore & Lane, 2017). P3 explained their students are more “aware of how their actions affect others.”

Social emotional learning (SEL) is an important part of education that helps students develop skills that promote their social and emotional wellbeing. However, it is not only students

who benefit from SEL programs; teachers also reported improvements in their own social and emotional skills because of implementing these programs (Jomaa, Duquette, & Whitley, 2023). Teachers reported an increased self-awareness in both students and them because of SEL. Self-awareness is the ability to recognize and understand one's own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. P1 reported they "became more aware of their own emotions." P1 and P4 reported becoming more reflective and feeling more in control of their own emotions. This can be helpful in the classroom as a teacher who is more self-aware may be better able to recognize when they feel stressed or overwhelmed and take steps to manage those feelings. They may also be better able to recognize when they are feeling frustrated or impatient with a student and take steps to avoid reacting in a way that might be harmful or unproductive.

Another aspect of SEL teachers reported was an increased social awareness. Social awareness is the ability to understand and empathize with others, recognize social cues and norms, and navigate social situations effectively. Participants reported they became more aware of the needs and perspectives of their students. They also reported they became more skilled at managing classroom dynamics and building positive relationships with their students. For example, a teacher who is more socially aware may be better able to recognize when a student is struggling with a particular task or concept and offer additional support. They may also be better able to recognize when a student is feeling isolated or excluded and take steps to help feel more included and valued. By developing greater social awareness, teachers can create a more positive and supportive classroom environment that can help all students thrive (Cavioni, Grazzani, & Ornaghi, 2020). Participants reported the implementation of SEL at Elementary School has had

far-reaching benefits for both students and teachers. By developing social and emotional skills, teachers are better equipped to manage the demands of their jobs and build positive relationships.

Research Question 2

What professional learning opportunities are needed to support veteran elementary school teachers in teaching SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Veteran elementary teachers want the opportunity to do a deep dive of the SEL curriculum supplied to them and be able to collaborate and ask questions. Research supports this saying professional development for educators needs to be continuous and collaborative (Durlak, 2016; Elias, 2019). Social-emotional learning (SEL) has become increasingly important in education, with research showing its positive impact on academic performance and student well-being. However, implementing SEL can be challenging for educators, particularly those who are veterans in their field. According to recent research, veteran elementary teachers want the opportunity to do a deep dive into the SEL curriculum supplied to them, collaborate with their colleagues, and ask questions to effectively implement SEL in their classrooms. P1 explained that while they had been supplied with curriculum such as Stanford Harmony, PAX, morning meeting, and second steps, very little follow up or training had been done since passing out materials to the teachers. P1 describes it as “we just got a box of curriculum and then they ask if there are any questions. I didn’t know what to ask because I didn’t know what I was looking at.”

Professional development for educators is essential for the successful implementation of new programs, including SEL. It is not enough to simply provide teachers with materials and expect them to know how to use them effectively. Teachers need ongoing, comprehensive professional development, tailored to their specific needs and concerns. Elias (2019) describes a

model of professional development which is cohort-based and ongoing. In the case of SEL, this means providing opportunities for teachers to deeply explore the curriculum and learn how to integrate it into their daily instruction.

Research supports the idea that professional development for educators needs to be continuous and collaborative. P2 expressed a desire for “more collaboration” when discussing SEL professional development. According to a report by the National Council on Teacher Quality, effective professional development should be “job-embedded, data-driven, and collaborative.” This means that professional development should be directly relevant to the teacher’s job, provide opportunities to analyze student data and adjust instruction accordingly, and involve collaboration with colleagues.

In the case of SEL, providing veteran elementary teachers with the opportunity to do a deep dive into the curriculum and collaborate with colleagues can be particularly effective. SEL is not just a set of activities or lessons; it is a way of thinking about and approaching teaching and learning. Teachers need to understand the underlying principles of SEL in order to effectively integrate it into their instruction.

Doing a deep dive into the curriculum can help teachers better understand the principles of SEL and how to effectively use the materials in their classrooms. This may include exploring the research behind SEL, analyzing specific activities and lessons, and identifying areas where additional supports is needed. By taking the time to do a deep dive, teachers can feel more confident in their ability to implement SEL effectively. P4 “I wish I had time to go over the materials with my team and make a plan.”

Collaboration is also essential to successful implementation of SEL. Teachers need opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues to share ideas, ask questions, and get feedback. Collaboration can help teachers feel supported and connected and can lead to more effective implementation of SEL in the classroom.

In addition to providing opportunities for collaboration, it is important to create a culture of ongoing learning and growth. Teachers need to feel supported in their efforts to implement SEL, and they need to know that they will have ongoing opportunities for professional development and support.

In conclusion, veteran elementary teachers need the opportunity to do a deep dive into the SEL curriculum supplied to them, collaborate with their colleagues, and ask questions to effectively implement SEL in their classrooms. Professional development for educators needs to be continuous, collaborative, and tailored to the specific needs and concerns of teachers. By providing opportunities for ongoing learning and growth, schools can support the well-being of both students and educators and promote positive outcomes in education more broadly.

Summary

Research has shown students who have healthy developed social-emotional competencies achieve more socially, academically, and behaviorally than those who do not (Cavioni et al., 2020; Durlak et al., 2015). Schools, seeing the social-emotional needs of students following the COVID-19 pandemic are promoting SEL at an urgent pace (Absher, Maze, and Brymer, 2021).

To implement SEL strategies, teachers need ongoing professional learning opportunities which provide continuous support (Durlak, 2016; Elias, 2019). This chapter discussed in depth the answers to and themes emerging from phenomenological interviews with four veteran

teachers placed in the same elementary campus. The participants conducted three interviews with the researcher focusing on their personal history, shared experience of the phenomenon, and finally their thoughts on where to go from here.

Chapter 5 provides recommendations for both practice and further research. These recommendations were written for school districts designing SEL professional development for teachers specifically.

Chapter 5: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to use qualitative measures to identify teacher perceptions of social-emotional learning (SEL) during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. Literature shows a correlation between elementary school students' social-emotional competencies (SEC) and their academic, social, and behavioral achievement (CASEL, 2019). What's more, there is strong support that students' SEC's are greatly influenced by the social and instructional teaching practices used by classroom teachers. The problem this study sought to address was veteran teachers' experiences teaching social-emotional learning (SEL) during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The following questions guided the research:

1. How do veteran elementary general education teachers describe their experiences incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons into their classrooms during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What professional learning opportunities are needed to support veteran elementary school teachers in teaching SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Four veteran classroom teachers from the same elementary school talked with the researcher in a series of three interviews. Data collected through the interviews was recorded and transcribed. After transcription, the researcher reviewed the transcripts and notes and provided a copy to each participant for member checking. After member checking was completed, the researcher used NVivo qualitative data software to code the data for frequent words or phrases. From there, the researcher created labels to assign sections to the transcribed interviews. After that, the researcher utilized Nvivo further to expunge themes and sub themes related to each research question. The themes that emerged through coding were (1) school wide SEL programs,

(2) limited professional development, (3) changes on campus. The following chapter will begin with the implications, broken down by research question, and then move on to recommendations for both practice, and end with future research.

Implications

Implications are based on the findings detailed in Chapter 4 and are presented with its corresponding research question.

Research Question 1

How do veteran elementary general education teachers describe their experiences incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons into their classrooms during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Participants in the study described numerous new SEL programs, which were started by the school district prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, almost two full school years later, many of those programs are still around and being used, however, the staff is not confident in how to use them. P1 explained “I know I am not using all the parts, but I am using the parts I know I feel comfortable with.”

Across the board, participants noticed a positive change in the culture of the campus and described it as a greater awareness. P2 described the change as “students are better equipped to show compassion for fellow students as well as learning how to find a voice to meet their own needs.” Research points out self and social awareness are two of the competencies that do not require higher order thinking skills (Wallender et al., 2020; Yoder, 2014).

Research Question 2

What professional learning opportunities are needed to support veteran elementary school teachers in teaching SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

The most significant implication of this study is that even veteran elementary teachers feel they need more time, support, and collaboration when it comes to SEL professional development. During the interviews, participants repeatedly shared they did not feel they had adequate professional development to successfully implement the SEL curriculum supplied to them. Participants said they needed time to go over the new materials presented to them as well as be able to talk with others and ask questions when needed. P3 explained “it would be helpful to meet with teaching partners to go over materials and plan.” Participants also voiced they would like professional development to be led by experts as opposed to in-building staff. This sentiment is reinforced and echoed by research showing SEL professional development needs to be collaborative, continuous, and led by experts in the field (Durlak, 2016; Elias, 2019)..

In addition, participants uniformly agreed the current assessment of SEL was not the valid or reliable measure they wanted. Research also supports the importance of using a quality social-emotional learning assessment when using the results to inform practice (Jonson, 2022).

Recommendations for Practice

This study addressed the new and evolving needs of students and teachers in SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It investigated the perceptions of veteran elementary teachers with the goal of identifying common needs of support. The most significant finding of this study was that veteran teachers need time, support, and collaboration to effectively teach SEL. Considering this, the recommendations focus on professional development and assessment of SEL.

The first recommendation is to tailor professional development to teachers' needs. Districts should conduct a needs assessment to determine what types of professional development teachers need to effectively implement SEL strategies. Professional development should be tailored to meet the specific needs of teachers and their classrooms. One way to accomplish this, is to upload recorded training to a video library, accessible by employees. Another way of providing this is to offer ongoing, job-embedded professional development. SEL training should be ongoing and integrated into the teachers' daily work. This can include coaching, mentoring, or regular check-ins to ensure teachers have the support they need to effectively implement SEL strategies. O'Connor et al. (2017) states to teach SEL strategies effectively, teachers need support and guidance.

The next recommendation for professional development is around collaboration and teamwork. Collaborative learning communities can provide teachers with opportunities to share ideas, strategies, and resources related to SEL. District should promote collaboration and teamwork among teachers to support the effective implementation of SEL. Participants voiced they would like the opportunity to collaborate with both colleagues and experts while they are receiving professional development. Research agrees that when professional development is collaborative and continuous, it is more effective (Durlak, 2016; Elias, 2019).

The final recommendation is that assessments of SEL need to be valid and reliable. If districts provide educators with an assessment, it should be valid and reliable. Students at all levels of the school should be able to access the assessment at their learning level. Participants in the study could identify a positive change on campus related to SEL but were unsure progress

would be noticeable given the current assessment. Jonson (2022) states, it is imperative for assessments to be accessible to students and of high quality.

Recommendations for Future Research

In addition to recommendations for practice, the researcher offers the following recommendations for further research:

1. Expand the sample size. In this study, the researcher purposely limited the sample to veteran teachers at one campus who all experienced the phenomenon. To better understand the phenomenon, the study could expand in sample size to include multiple teachers from multiple campuses.
2. Diversify the sample. The participants in this sample were all Caucasian females. Furthermore, this study focused on elementary school, whereas it could expand to include grades K-12.
3. Expand the research sites to include both rural and urban sites. To implement SEL most effectively and the development of SEC, teachers need strategies that are tailored to the unique needs of their students. Students in urban and rural districts may face very different challenges than their urban or suburban counterparts.

Conclusions

This phenomenological study sought to understand the experiences of veteran teachers teaching SEL during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It also examined what changes teachers were seeing, and what supports they felt they needed to be successful implementing SEL. To do this, four veteran elementary teachers met with the researcher in a series of three interviews focused on the history, experience, and thoughts on the phenomenon.

Research shows the significant impact healthy SEC's have on social, emotional, academic, and behavioral success. While this study utilized a small sample, the stories shared by the participants can inform positive change in the professional development and support that teachers give regarding SEL. The findings from this study can be used to extrapolate that teachers see the benefit of SEL and want more professional development in the area.

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Appendix A

Guided Interview Protocol

Guided Interview Protocol Questions for Classroom Teachers

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore teachers' experiences teaching social-emotional learning during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. At this stage in the research, social emotional learning will be generally defined as 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 (CASEL, 2016).

Interview One: Focused Life History

1. Tell me about your time as an educator.
2. How long have you been a classroom teacher?
3. How long have you worked on this campus?
4. What is your teaching philosophy?

Interview Two: The Detail of Experience

1. How does your campus implement social-emotional learning?
 - a. Tell me about programs, initiatives, time allotted weekly, locations, and campus expectations.

- b. Tell me about the professional development or learning opportunities you have had in relation to social-emotional learning?
- 2. What are your expectations regarding teachers implementing social-emotional learning in the classroom?
 - a. Tell me about accountability and how administrators ensure that the implementation consists of fidelity and integrity.
- 3. How do you all progress monitor the effectiveness of the implementation?
 - a. Tell me how you assess students' level of growth as it relates to social-emotional competencies

Interview Three: Reflection on Meaning

- 1. How do teachers feel about the implementation of social-emotional learning?
 - a. Tell me how you perceive their acceptance or resistance.
- 2. Describe your feelings on how the implementation of social-emotional learning has influenced academic achievement and behavior on your campus.
 - a. Tell me if the campus culture has changed, and if so, how has it changed.
 - b. Tell me if students have better outcomes, and if so, explain.
- 3. Are there any trainings or learning opportunities you feel would benefit your classroom's social-emotional learning?

Thank them for participating and explain how the remainder of the study will work.

Appendix B

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Allison Haulton from George Fox University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about veteran teachers' experiences teaching social-emotional learning in an elementary setting. I agree to the following statements:

- My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one on my campus will be told.
- I understand that the topic may be of interest to me. However, if I feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- Participation involves being interviewed by a researcher from George Fox University three times and each interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Notes will be taken during the interview, as well as an audio tape being used to capture responses accurately and precisely.
- I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained during this interview, and that my confidentiality, as a participant in this study, will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
- Faculty and other administrators, from my campus, will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.
- I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects committee at George Fox University. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the IRB may be contacted through the university.
- I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I have been given a copy of this consent form.

My Signature

Date

My Printed Name

Signature of the Researcher

Appendix C

Participation Letter

Dear Respondent,

I am a doctoral student in the Education Department at George Fox University, completing my dissertation on veteran teachers' experiences teaching social-emotional learning during and post COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this research is to explore how teachers perceive social-emotional learning in schools, gather information about what is working, and what supports are needed. Through your participation, I hope to gain knowledge in teachers' honest feelings about the benefits and/or challenges of implementing social-emotional learning into the curriculum.

Enclosed with this letter is a survey that asks a variety of questions about your attitudes toward the current collaboration with CASEL. I am asking you to look over the survey and, if you choose to do so, complete the survey, and submit it for data collection. If you choose to participate, please put your name on your survey. You will be assigned a number once it is received. From then on, all reference to you will be by number, and no one other than myself will know whether you participated in this research. Your responses will not be identified with you personally, nor will anyone be able to determine who completed a survey. None of your answers, on the survey, will be shared individually. The purpose of the survey results is to find common perceptions and feelings, amongst teachers, about the implementation of social-emotional learning at Indian Hills Elementary. There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research, nor are there any costs for participating in the study.

I hope you will take a few minutes to complete this survey. Without the help of people like you, research in schools would not be possible. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you do not participate. If you have any questions or concerns about completing the survey or about participating, you may contact me at (503) 484-4165 or at allisonhaulton@gmail.com. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Dr. Debby Espinor at George Fox University by mail at 12753 SW 68th Ave., Portland, OR 97223, by phone at (503)554-2875, or by e-mail at despinor@georgefox.edu.

Sincerely,

Allison Haulton

Allison Haulton, M.Ed.

Doctoral Candidate

Education Department

George Fox University

Appendix D**Administrator Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning Questionnaire**

Name: _____

Years of Teaching: _____ Ethnicity: _____ Gender: _____

1. Define social-emotional learning in your own words.

2. Describe how your school implements social-emotional learning.

3. How has the implementation of social-emotional learning influenced your students' academic outcomes?

4. How has the implementation of social-emotional learning influenced student behavior on your campus?

5. In what ways has the implementation of social-emotional learning influenced the school culture on your campus?

6. How important is the implementation of social-emotional learning for school-aged children?

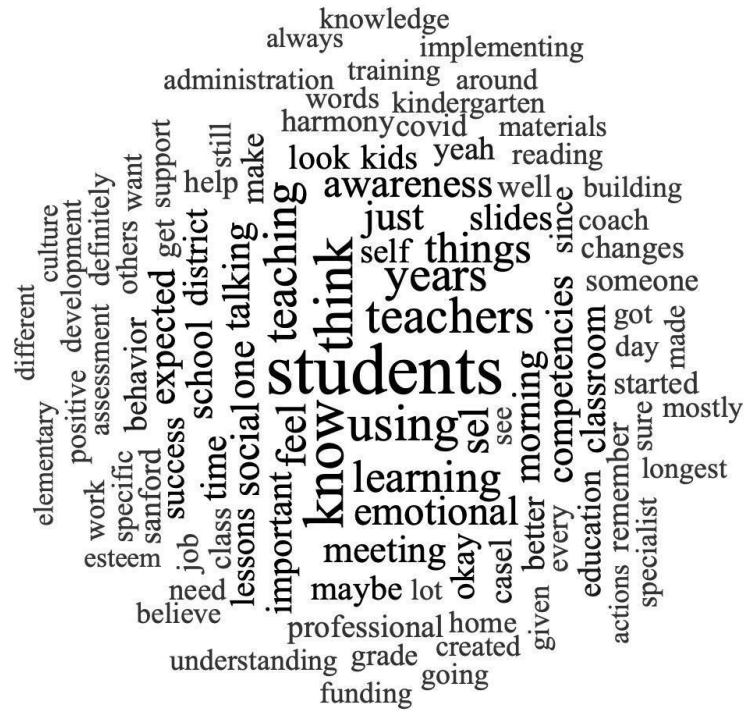
7. Explain reasons why teachers might be hesitant to implement social-emotional learning in their classrooms.

8. Describe what makes the implementation of social-emotional learning successful.

9. What have you learned about educating others, since implementing social-emotional learning, which you didn't recognize before?

Appendix E

Figure 3



Word Cloud of Keywords