SEL WALKTHROUGHS: PROMOTING PRACTICES THAT FOSTER SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

SEL WALKTHROUGHS: PROMOTING PRACTICES THAT FOSTER SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

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Northern Illinois University, 2024
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The concept of social and emotional learning (SEL) has been around Illinois since the early 2000s and a part of legislation for schools to implement since 2003. This dissertation focuses on the extant data of 483 observations from the Municipal Nashville Public School (MNPS) SEL walkthrough tool, which was utilized to investigate SEL implementation in select Illinois schools. Data were collected in the South Cook County area of Illinois.

This dissertation provides a review of literature in the areas of SEL that should be taught in K-12 schools and provides an in-depth review of best practices for utilizing walkthrough observations in order to assess implementation and how results of such observations can improve SEL implementation. An empirical study analyzes the data collected from the MNPS walkthrough tool, and the findings and discussion provide context for SEL walkthrough tools to be utilized by schools that would conduct SEL walkthroughs.

A final chapter describes two professional learning opportunities to increase performance scores in the MNPS SEL walkthrough tool. The first session builds the capacity of educators on the depth of SEL, the strategies, practices, and structures to implement SEL and the several avenues in the process for students to learn SEL. The second session is developed for those using
the SEL walkthrough tool and for those districts that want to improve on any elements found to have the lower performance scores.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to acknowledge the many people involved in my development as an educator and as a person. First, thank you to my family for supporting me over the last decade in my pursuit of administration, superintendence and now doctoral degree. I would have not been able to do it without my wife’s patience and sacrifice. Thank you to my kids for having extracurriculars in which I could focus and write. This dissertation is a direct result of the character that my mother who encouraged and modeled to me each and every day as a growing man.

On a professional level, Dr. Kinder, I thank you for pushing me to want more within education and harnessing my passion to support as many people as possible. I can’t express the niche you played in my educational experience to become a doctor as well as many other positions in education. Dr. Summers, I thank you for your time to push me through the process in a short time period and collaborate on SEL walkthroughs. Dr. Frye and Dr. Creed, you have surely made my mind stronger in thinking about not just SEL but processes to organize the information. And I want Millie Shepich to know how instrumental she has been in educational path as well as a constant figure of what is looks like to be in education for the right reasons.

Lastly, I want to thank all my favorite educators in South Cook and my favorite schools.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has been a topic of interest in Illinois for decades. Committees were formed in Illinois to write the social and emotional learning standards in the late 1990’s, with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) formally adopting SEL standards in 2005 (M. Shepich, personal communication, December 1, 2022). Although the state has had a set of standards in place since 2005, ISBE has never offered formal guidance or an assessment tool for how schools can measure the level of implementation of SEL. The SEL standards were created in part because of the Children’s Mental Health Act of 2003 to support mental health with social and emotional learning. However, there is a need to support schools in the measurement of practices that foster SEL pertinent to students’ social and emotional learning success. Forty-four states provide guidance on the implementation of SEL even if there is not a comprehensive set of standards (Dermody & Dusenbury, 2022). In 2021, the Emotional Intelligence and Social Emotional Learning (EISEL) task force final report supported SEL in Illinois with guidance on best practices, needs assessments of students, implementing resources and updating standards (ISBE, 2021). However, the EISEL report did not include tools for implementation or mention supports for key practices.

While providing consultation to schools on implementing social and emotional learning since 2017 at the South Cook Regional Office of Education, many districts are familiar with the theoretical framework of CASEL, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. Districts, however, are not familiar with CASEL’s theory of action (TOA) assessment guide to
measure implementation levels. Also, districts are not familiar with the SEL walkthrough tool that identifies the elements needed to effectively integrate an SEL program that is taught with fidelity in their schools. There are multiple researchers, organizations, and schools that connect the use of certain practices or elements to foster SEL (e.g., Chu & DeArmond, 2021; Duchesneau, 2020; Durlak, 2015; Yoder, 2014). Schools express that they have a program, but there is a lack of the curriculum being used and to a further extent integrated within core content and the school.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of practice is that South Cook districts in Illinois do not have a tool to measure school and classroom practices that foster SEL, and they do not have the internal capacity to properly assess SEL. This quantitative study uses the extant data from SEL walkthroughs I conducted.

Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 is a literature review focusing on key aspects to describe the social and emotional walkthrough and practice to collect data to be analyzed. Additionally, student voice and reflection are focused on while being measured in the SEL walkthrough tool. Chapter 3 includes a short literature review, methodology, and instrumentation. Chapter 4 describes the analytical procedures and collection of the extent data. Discussion and findings as well as limitations and the conclusion from the statistics collected from the SEL walkthrough tool can be found in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 is a professional learning in-service to educate and provide applicable ways in which to include to increase the opportunities of growth most commonly
found from the findings and discussion. This chapter includes highlighted practices from some focused elements and information gleaned from Chapter 2.

**Study Purpose**

The major purpose of this study was to utilize already existing data to gain insight into the elements that foster social and emotional learning defined in the Municipal Nashville Public School SEL walkthrough tool. It is important to provide relevance to the overall scores provided to the schools based on the 17 elements as well as the degree and frequency compared to proximal districts. The relevance of scores provides context for districts of similarity to make quicker or informed decisions on next steps to further implement some of the elements such as Student Voice and Student Reflection. Moreover, the purpose was to explore the literature on the use of walkthrough practices to identify needed areas of strength and opportunities for growth to guide implementation of social and emotional learning. I looked to legitimize the process done at the Intermediate Service Center (ISC) and the corresponding data to continue this process with concrete substance behind the work that has been done to support school in implementation of SEL.

The results of the SEL walkthroughs were relevant for the current time period due to there being so many SEL walkthrough observations in the South Cook region collected and schools continuously needing to improve in SEL to support students’ safety and mental health. The range of schools implementation levels varied from just starting in the process to beyond the use of an explicit SEL program. Some schools had SEL resources but the resources were not taught with fidelity. This became problematic in trying to integrate practices and SEL content into core content subjects of math, English language arts, social studies, etc. All schools varied to
some degree on their state of implementation. This study provided further context to support other schools in not only South Cook, Illinois but also districts that are implementing SEL and refining SEL in their buildings.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study: Q1: To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in the educational space? Q2: To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in content and grade levels? Q3: To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in comparison between the classroom environment and classroom instruction? Q4: To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in comparison among districts?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was the study provides statistics related to practices and structures to first be focused on or implemented in order to foster social emotional learning in the school environment. Secondarily, this study informs districts about the use of a SEL tool that can be used to make data informed decisions to increase SEL in their school environment. The method of dissemination is a professional development/training on the concept of social and emotional learning, the elements that foster SEL, and a targeted breakdown of those elements that need the most support in districts. The elements that have the most opportunity for growth are based on each district’s data, evidence-based reviews, and goals for improving each element correlated to the SEL competencies and sub competencies. These are further explored in how
they can be implemented into the school through daily practices, explicit teaching, integration into content, modeled by staff and/or incorporated in the school wide environment. Dissemination of the SEL walkthrough process and findings provide a strategy to support districts with implementation of SEL. The SEL walkthrough tool defines the prevalence or frequency of instructional and social practices that support the five core competencies. The use of an SEL walkthrough tool supports districts in identifying strengths and opportunities for growth for continuous improvement of social and emotional learning practices.

Moreover, the use of data from a statistical analysis from the 512 observations guides schools and districts on what the next steps should be. If we can identify for a school that the elements that foster SEL are at a low rate such as a score under two on the rubric provided by the MNPS system, we can then make the next steps to strategically focused on integrating those practices through professional learning and coaching. SEL is a focus as seen by funding of the SEL hub, EISEL task force, and state standards (ISBE, 2023). Finally, all districts are implementing SEL into their schools but to what degree is debatable partly because of the lack of measurement of implementation.

Intended Audience

The intended audience to use the research of SEL walkthroughs in school buildings was for roles such as building leaders and practitioners leading or co-leading SEL implementation. The suggested audience are those that form the district’s school improvement team or SEL team. This research will provide guidance on next steps on matters of which structures and SEL practices should be prioritized and monitored to implement SEL systemwide. SEL leaders benefit from knowing the extent data which exists for schools in defining the most often areas of
improvement and strengths. Districts then can make more informed and quicker decisions on their focuses of the year in implementing SEL in the classrooms and building environment.

Context of this Dissertation

The districts that took part in the SEL walkthroughs had a focus of improving SEL within their schools. In working with districts, districts also spoke of workforce use and even the need for adults to improve their own competencies to better model and role model SEL. All districts were in different places regarding why SEL was being implemented and the degree to which it was being implemented. For example, the level of implementation varied in districts even before approaching me to conduct walkthroughs. Some districts had a curriculum in place, they may have had intentionality and requirements of the SEL within the classrooms, they could have been using tools to measure SEL, and/or they could have had practices and structures in place that foster SEL. From the standpoint of SEL curriculum and resources, most schools were using Second Step (Committee for Children, 2009) but there were a couple of other resources such as Harmony Curriculum (Harmony Academy, n.d.), Peekapak (n.d.), or a life skills curriculum. Each one of these resources have different sequences of which SEL subcompetencies are being taught and in which order. Additionally, there were several districts that focused on emotional regulation with Zones of Regulation (n.d.) or practices of growth mindset. A couple of districts were utilizing literature books to integrate SEL and daily practices such as morning circles or a restorative circle to focus on certain subcompetencies. Lastly, some wanted to utilize SEL but the range of actual implementation varied. In some schools SEL resources were used voluntarily yet some schools had some type of requirement but little follow
through on the usage or fidelity of the program. Some schools had intentional structures or
resources put into place to use SEL in the classroom and school but the schools were more
interested in how well they were implementing SEL besides the time set aside for formal SEL
lessons.

Also prior to the SEL walkthrough, some schools had more robust training that included
multiple hours on SEL standards, descriptors, and strategies prior to the walkthrough, an SEL
team was developed, and an administrative team had built their own capacity. Some schools had
professional training on their SEL resources and/or curriculum. There were other schools that
only had an hour of professional learning and only the administration was involved with SEL
rather than a team which included teachers, social workers, etc. to be champions in the
implementation process. The level of readiness or degree of SEL implementation was not
recorded to be a part of this study as it was not the purpose of this study, however it is important
to note that implementation varied by location.

Positionality Statement

To rid yourself of all biases is impossible, and as explained to those that use my services,
the biases that I possess are needed to best support their schools. I state when visiting schools to
do a needs assessment or social and emotional walkthrough that what they are getting is a
perspective that I do not have any previously held biases about what is currently happening in
their building such as what curriculum is being taught, the number of hours of effort put forth into
certain programs or practices, or even a personal connection to the staff, students, or culture of the
building. However, I have always then ended our conversations with I can never rid myself of all
of my biases. What are some of my biases that I need to consider when working with others and
As a person I grew up in a district in Illinois that is one of the only districts that has three exemplary schools. This is a public school district and my attendance there was really a matter of moving to the right place at the right time rather than the advantage of a family with wealth. We were a family who had to work for our one-story ranch, and at times it was not easy to be able to afford a house. We even had friends live in the basement of the house for most of my childhood. The instability of jobs, coupled with divorces, and lack of access to higher paying jobs added to the challenges to move ahead. The mindset of our family to work for our place in life comes from our immigrant heritage that traveled to the United States with us. I can say with confidence that the ability to see my parents’ struggles in contrast to wealthier classmates and friends pushed me to perform at a high level to provide myself with all the opportunities in life.

I am a white non-religious male who was raised for the most part by my mother who instilled the ideas of what a person should do and not what a woman or man does. I carried that over into teaching, and it is part of my perspective when seeing the gender biases that exist in our world. I am white but have always struggled with the concept that the family who brought me here had very little privilege where they came from but is now perceived as having privilege mostly because of the color of our skin. Moreover, many of my family members’ names were changed just to fit the American culture.

Standing in front of a classroom of non-white students as mainly the only White/Caucasian person in the room for 10 years, I heard, felt, and identified the relationship that existed with students due to my skin color and theirs. I also noticed this with sports when I was the only White/Caucasian athlete on the track. I also later noticed this when I was one of two White/Caucasian college students in the Black Student Union. It was not until my education over
the last years that I have learned to see more what privilege I have due to my skin color. I always gave credit to my hard work, personality, and ideas but I can see that the biases many possess have helped move me forward due to how I look.

In looking into my current role as a Regional Office of Education employee, I see my educational background forming my ethical framework to analyze the level of implementation of practices within schools. Having been an alternative teacher for 10 years as well as two years in a more socioeconomic privileged public school and having been gifted with the opportunity to visit many schools in the South Cook region, I now focus on the intent of the practice and what is best for the majority. When it comes to the practices related to socioeconomic status, which includes gender and race, I see in classrooms, I tend to find the rules in life that can shift perspectives of administrators to provide training that removes barriers for students such as exchanging terms in educators’ language that would better impact students who have had trauma or are being culturally diminished as a person. I practice this myself as I learn more about my cisgender biases and Midwestern phrases. I am currently struggling with the traditional, “Boys and girls, let’s focus.” I can also see how my social upbringing is ingrained in what practices that I personally want to see in education such as student voice, collaboration, and collective reflection.

Defining the SEL Walkthrough Terms

Elements are identified practices and structures that promote or foster social and emotional five core competencies and sub competencies. These elements include instructional and social elements to observe on Expectations and Learning Goals, Explicit Teaching of SEL Skills, SEL Integrated into Instructional Content, Use of Interactive Pedagogies, Teacher Feedback and Monitoring, Student Engagement, Student Collaboration, Teacher as a Facilitator,
Student Reflection, Classroom Atmosphere, Class Rules, Student Behavior, Behavior Management, Classroom Procedure, Teacher Interaction & Communication, Student Voice and Student Work Displayed (MNPS, 2017). Additionally, domain 1 of the MNPS walkthrough tool focuses on the school environment for the purpose of identifying and observing throughout the walkthrough. Domains are the three major areas of the walkthrough tool which also include domain 2: Classroom Instruction and domain 3: Classroom Environment, Discipline and Management. In the domain of school environment, there are five elements including Atmosphere in Common Areas, Vision/Mission/Values Statements Displayed, Student Work Displayed, Student Relationships, and Adult Relationships. The school environment domain was analyzed in the report and is not included as a description of the district. Two elements are defined in the literature review which are Student Voice and Student Reflection. This gives the extent data purposefulness and measures the degree of use on a frequency level relative to the performance descriptors from the MNPS rubric. Student Voice and Student Reflection were selected for the purposes of each one being in a separate part of the tool to measure SEL implementation and these were common elements identified by districts during the SEL walkthroughs as areas of focus. As such, the literature review for this dissertation is constrained to a brief overview of SEL and a more in-depth discussion of student voice and student reflection. An extensive presentation of all SEL elements is outside of the scope of this dissertation. SEL is defined in the theoretical framework using Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning. Furthermore, in the literature review, the terms of external rater, walkthrough, and needs assessment are defined with evidence.

One established tool to measure instructional practices are walkthroughs or needs assessments. Rouleau and Corner (2020) define a walkthrough as a “snapshot” ranging between
5-15 minutes for observing focused practices to collect data that informs leaders within the building. Rouleau and Corner reference multiple articles which view a walkthrough as a transformative tool to direct instructional and social practices in guiding educators for next steps. A walkthrough is an effective tool in part of the inquiry cycle for school improvement (Cervone & Martinez-Miller, 2007). The concept of walkthroughs applied to SEL ensures that walkthroughs serve as tools in identifying needs within the classroom and school environment which foster SEL. The comparison of the collection of data points from a wide range of South Cook schools provides insight into which elements are needed in implementing SEL systemwide to support explicit and integrated learning.

Definitions

Elements. Social and instructional identified practices and structures that promote or foster social and emotional five core competencies and subcompetencies.

Walkthrough. “A “snapshot” ranging between 5-15 minutes for observing focused practices to collect data that informs leaders within the building” (Rouleau & Corner, 2020)

Competencies. “Competencies are the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors that contribute to individual and organizational performance.” (National Institutes of Health, 2017); Core competencies refers to CASEL’s five core competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Subcompetencies. Skills or indicators under each of the five social emotional core competencies that a person would develop in order to be efficient and effective.

Social Emotional Learning. “An integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge,
skills, and attitudes to develop healthier identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsive and caring decisions” (CASEL, 2023).

Reflection. “As a higher-order cognitive ability, reflection is conceptualized as a specialized form of thinking, a purposeful inquiry of what we learn from experiences” (Dewey, 1910/1933). “A mindful process of looking back at one’s experience and evaluating it to gain insights about the complexity of learning and about oneself as a learner” (Dewey, 1910/1933).

External Rater. “A consultant who visits the organization and is familiar with the organization but is engaged in other organizations as well” (Weiner et al., 2008).

Practices. For the purposes of this study, practices are educational processes and pedagogical protocols to promote opportunities to increase the usage of the MNPS elements such as creating norms, asking open ended questions, etc.

Structures. For the purposes of this study, structures are tangible arrangements, displays, or organizations that provide opportunities for elements of the MNPS such as reflection, collaboration, etc.

Student Voice. “Students also need opportunities to identify topics that are important to them, co-construct solutions, and analyze ways in which they enact agency within their learning environment” (i.e., enhancing student voice; Scharf, 2016).

Domain. For the purposes of this study, domain refers to the three major sections of the SEL walkthrough tool: Classroom instruction, Classroom Environment, Discipline and Management, and Schoolwide Environment.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has been a topic of interest in Illinois for decades. Committees formed in Illinois to write the social and emotional learning standards in the late 1990s, with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) formally adopting SEL standards in 2005 (M. Shepich, personal communication, December 1, 2022). Although the state has had a set of standards in place since 2005, ISBE has never offered formal guidance or an assessment tool for how schools can measure the level of implementation of SEL. The SEL standards were created in part because of the Children’s Mental Health Act of 2003 to support mental health with social and emotional learning. The need to support schools in the measurement of practices that foster SEL is pertinent to social and emotional learning success.

In 2021 the Emotional Intelligence and Social Emotional Learning (EISEL) task force final report supported SEL in Illinois with guidance on best practices, needs assessments of students, implementing resources and updating standards (ISBE, 2021). However, the EISEL report did not include tools for implementation or mention supports around key practices. Further, the need to support schools with SEL is not only an Illinois issue but also a national need. Twenty-seven states now have free-standing SEL standards (Dermody & Dusenbury, 2022). Forty-four states provide guidance on the implementation of SEL even if there is not a comprehensive set of standards (Dermody & Dusenbury, 2022).
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this dissertation is the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning’s (CASEL) core competencies and specific to this dissertation, the subcompetencies that connect to student voice and student reflection (Figure 1). Blyth et al. (2018) refer to frameworks as necessary to communicate the practices, curriculum, resources, etc. as a means to measure efforts. The Illinois learning standards are tied to the five core competencies by CASEL but they are not directly aligned to the subcompetencies listed.

![Figure 1. CASEL and Alliance SEL framework.](image)

CASEL is a national leader in defining and improving SEL, not only in classrooms and schools but also with diverse stakeholders. Because CASEL is considered a national leader in
SEL, it is CASEL’s (2023) definition and framework of SEL that will be utilized for this dissertation. CASEL defines SEL as,

an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthier identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsive and caring decisions. (p. 1)

However, there is much more that is needed to implement SEL with fidelity beyond a common definition. Whether SEL is taught through daily practices, explicitly through a curriculum or embedded in core content, the practices that foster SEL are crucial for developing students’ and staffs’ interrelated competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2023). These subareas of SEL are collectively referred to as CASEL’s five core competencies. The five core competencies are interrelated and are used throughout the development of the adult and child through key settings of classrooms, school, family, and community (CASEL, 2023). The five core competencies do not build on each other but are interconnected. Each is discussed in further detail below. There are multiple models of social and emotional learning such the integrate-self model (iSelf) from Brzycki (2013) and differing competencies in the framework of Frey et al. (2019). Frey et al.’s integrated SEL framework includes components such as public spirit, agency and identity, and cognitive regulation that differ from CASEL’s five core competencies. Alternative businesses have at least 188 models dating back to 1998 which cover main competencies of social and emotional learning (Goleman, 1998). While going further back, the social and emotional learning framework originates from Goleman’s (1995) *Emotional Intelligence*. 
Research on Subcompetencies

Subcompetencies are the skills or indicators under each of the core competencies that a person would develop. For example, in the self-awareness core competence, there are subcompetencies of labeling one’s feelings, relating feelings and thoughts to behavior, optimism, and self-efficacy. In the core competency of social awareness, the subcompetencies include empathy and perspective taking. In the core competency of responsible decision-making, there are the subcompetencies of evaluating realistic consequences of various actions, considering the well-being of self and others, making constructive, safe choices for self, relationships and school (CASEL, 2023). This is not the full list but again, for the purposes of this dissertation, these are the most connected competencies and subcompetencies to Student Voice and Student Reflection, which is the specific focus of this dissertation. CASEL’s framework has allowed the Illinois State Board of Education to set standards which guide programs and integrated approaches of SEL (Frye et al., 2022).

As stated earlier, within the five core competencies of CASEL’s framework, there are subcompetencies, which are subsets of skills most linked to the core competence. The Joint Advisory Group defines it as “subcompetencies are the general skills and behaviors that are required to be able to complete a particular competency.” The term subcompetency will be used in this research as other models having various phrases for these skills such as element, indicators, or competencies. The following competencies are defined using the Assessment Work Group 2019 with lead author Clark McKnown and research on some subcompetencies. The intrapersonal core competencies of self-awareness and self-management are essential as the
interpersonal core competencies of social awareness and relationship building which all connect to the responsible decision-making of individuals.

Self-awareness is defined as knowing your strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset” (AWG, 2019). The regulation of emotion and understanding of emotions is a key to academic success, attendance, and graduation (Merrill et al. 2021). Ura et al.’s (2019) and Denham’s (2018) research directly state the emotional skills students need and the intended outcomes of teaching SEL as a school-based intervention to foster these subcompetencies. Allowing for thought time or reflection can foster outcomes that are indicative of becoming self-aware (Jones et al., 2017). Zhou and Ee (2012) add how self-awareness is about identification of strengths and weaknesses in addition to not just identifying emotions but self-regulating.

The other intrapersonal core competency of self-management is defined as effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating yourself to set and achieve goals (AWG, 2019). Self-awareness elicits the identification of emotions, but it also includes in self-management the regulation of emotions. Guo et al. (2019) discussed evidence that high achieving schools, specifically having less low-income students, use more self-regulation strategies. A subcompetency is teaching how to recognize feelings and then connecting the feelings to thought and behavior. For example, a person who experiences the emotion of anger would connect this to the disappointment of not being picked by their friend and then how this is affecting their actions towards peers, etc. SEL is supportive of mental health and Zhou and Ee (2012) the research relates to the control of impulses of extreme emotions that can affect not only themselves but also the mental and physical relationships with peers (Payton et al., 2000).
The core competency of social awareness is defined as understanding the perspectives of others and empathizing with them, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures (AWG, 2019). In looking at social awareness, Immordino-Yang et al. (2019) suggest that activities that build relationships prepare the brain for more complex learning and experiences that allow students to develop, explore, and discover. Social awareness is not always during activities with peers, but they must have the opportunity to engage with others through paired activities or chances to observe peers. Part of the social awareness promotion is the skills of taking perspective, conflict negotiation, and empathy which was reviewed in 111 SEL intervention studies by Ura et al. (2019). With opportunities to be applied to social situations, Denham’s (2018) research shows elementary students are able to resolve more complex social difficulties with a variety of solutions. In high school, Denham’s (2018) research also highlights the development skill in their study for a student to understand emotional perspectives and the individual complexity of learning other’s emotions.

Responsible decision-making is defined as making constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety, and social norms (AWG, 2019). The responsible description of decision-making is embedded in the idea of decisions affecting the self and social as well as being framed by parameters to make such decisions. Social and emotional learning interventions also reduce the development of risky behaviors (Durlak et al., 2011; American Institute for Research, 2021), which connects to making constructive and safe choices. Wilson’s (2017) research on classroom management tools found the importance of relationships but further the need to have students establish behavior expectation and students being provided with the opportunity to make ethical and moral decisions for their actions and feelings. Zhou and
Ee’s (2012) research mentions the subcompetencies of decisions based on the relationships of others through metacognition and skill training. Zhou and Ee (2012) items in their questionnaires include the skills of thinking about the situation, criteria, strengths and weaknesses of decisions. The subcompetencies of the CASEL framework provide a more complex scope of the skills in which students and adults continue to have to develop. I recognize that the subcompetencies that are listed in the 2019 or 2023 SEL framework will continue to change. Also, the subcompetencies do not show the full complexity of the SEL framework as there are descriptors at each grade level for the stages of SEL learning.

SEL in Schools

Immordino-Yang et al. (2019) stress the importance of the connection between academics and social emotional learning by stating that SEL is of paramount importance in a student’s ability to learn. The Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning (Durlak, 2015) provides chapters on the intentionality of teaching SEL in the classroom, school environment, and home to support the whole child which coincides with similar findings on many other SEL expert written white papers (McKnown, 2019; Yoder et al., 2021). In addition, Chu and DeArmond (2021) emphasize the importance of integration of SEL into already established practices through their study of two charter schools. Ura et al. (2019) targeted 111 studies from CASEL to define outcomes from measuring school-based SEL interventions and their effect on the 5 core competencies but not the practices or elements that schools used to foster SEL. In McClain’s (2019) research, there are clear benefits to infusing SEL into education such as communication, emotional regulation, and leadership which the theoretical framework of CASEL’s competencies include. There are many purposes of using the SEL framework beyond building lifelong skills. Additionally, Merrill et al.’s (2021) findings
established that not all SEL competencies lead to increased academic outcomes but subcompetencies such as growth mindset, self-regulation, and self-efficacy have shown academic connections as well as graduating on time and attendance improvement. Additionally, not all subgroups are impacted in the topics of attendance, graduation, and academics, but lifelong improvement for mental health and relationship are apparent (Merrill et al., 2021). Merrill et al.’s (2021) findings are the results of pre and post surveys given to over 9,000 students from 120 schools. Once more, the SEL framework has been validated, but the elements that support the implementation or effectiveness of explicit SEL and integrated SEL have not. Researchers agree that SEL needs to be explicitly taught, integrated, and acquired through the education setting (Durlak et al., 2011, Kurdi et al., 2022; National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, 2019; Olive et al., 2021).

Mahoney et al. (2020) suggest that SEL practices should be embedded throughout the K-12 environment to foster social and emotional learning in the building. Essentially, educators need to increase the use and quality of certain practices or elements which engage the five core competencies of a framework such as CASEL. However, professional development has to support teachers in learning what SEL is, how to integrate SEL, and what practices should be prioritized to nurture SEL in all content and environments within the school. McKnown (2019) states,

Professional learning should support educators’ understanding of what SEL is, what science says about its consequences, how SEL is related to education, what SEL standards exist and what competencies they describe, what evidence-based practices have been developed and how to use them, the role assessment can play in supporting high-quality teaching and learning, and the role of SEL in advancing equity. (p. 17)

The practices that promote social and emotional learning should be within the school environment and classroom instruction and environment.
Teaching and learning practices that focus intentionally on nurturing the competencies included in standards and guidelines. Teaching and learning can take the form of an SEL program or discrete practices that have been shown to be effective in rigorous research studies. To yield a measurable benefit, approaches to teaching and learning should be implemented with sufficient quality and intensity. Ideally, what and how the competence is taught to whom at what point in the year should be guided by data on student competence. (McKnown, 2019)

There are multiple researchers, organizations, and schools that connect the use of certain practices or elements to foster SEL (Chu & DeArmond, 2021; Duchesneau, 2020; Durlak, 2015; Yoder, 2014). Specific practices for SEL development in the school might include creating communication norms and defining how the activity is structured with conversation, help, activity, movement, and participation. Specific elements that would be evidence of these practices include student work displayed and the results of student input onto a poster for ways to cope with stress. Specific practices would include actions by the educator or school while an element may include artifacts or opportunities created in the school setting. Elements that foster social and emotional learning enhance student learning of SEL which allows the skills being taught to happen such as structures of how to think or thinking guides while looking at any activity. The thinking guide which is the poster can have reflective questions while reading for academic and social-emotional purposes. While there are numerous elements that could be observed in a school setting to demonstrate the school is implementing SEL, the focus of this dissertation was on the elements of Student Voice and Student Reflection or self-assessment.

SEL Practice: Student Voice

Student voice includes students’ involvement in leadership, choice, and voice. There are multiple ways in which students can have the opportunities to express their voice that are verbal and non-verbal with opportunities for leadership, choice, and voice (MNPS, 2017). Student voice
can be seen in the students’ ability to speak and answer questions. Student voice can be centered around being provided with opportunities to explore roles in the classroom that have responsibility and value. A role that has value is the greeter to the room that introduces students and outside guests. The greeter may use their time to just welcome and open the door. If we are talking about promoting students’ voices in the classroom, we are talking about providing SEL within an element that is in the best interest of the student. How are we to promote agency, dispositional targets, and build efficacy (self/collective) if we don’t have student voice with respect, rights, and responsibility (Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). Students need to have the opportunities to have roles, answer open ended questions especially that involve their opinions, enhance their own agency with student centered projects (Duchesneau, 2020; Dusenbury, 2015). Critical practices for an anti-biased education (Learning for Justice, n.d.) refers to practices that allow students to co-construct solutions as well as enhance student voice with jobs or roles of responsibility (2016, p. 9). There are still challenges with identifying whether a role provides student choice but the main premise is whether or not the role has value or meaning that provides leadership and voice. Kristin Souers, co-author of Fostering Resilient Learners, and Duchesneau (2020) have differing opinions on if a job is enough to suffice student voice. Dusenbury (2015) adds the use of questions to promote student voice and Duchesneau (2020) writes of “students have to set and monitor their own goals” (p. 14). Setting and monitoring goals is an overlapping element for students to reflect on their progress. All of these practices and elements have the ability to be seen and observed in the classroom.
SEL Practice: Reflection

An additional element to focus on that promotes the five core competencies is self-reflection on academic and social emotional learning. This construct is also sometimes referred to as self-assessment. Reflection includes student engagement in metacognitive practices surrounding SEL and academics. Reflection, self-assessment, or self-evaluation are not new practices or elements to education. For example, Hattie (Visible Learning, n.d.) found that evaluation and reflection had a .75 effect size and meta-cognition strategies had a .52 effect size in his examination of practices that increase student achievement, which equates to two years of academic growth in one school year. Additionally, the meta-analysis of Guo (2022) used a random-effects model which yielded a significant medium-sized effect. Strahan and Poteat’s (2020) exploratory study examined the use of reflection to promote self-management and responsible decision-making. The participants in Strahan and Poteat’s (2020) study analyzed the journals and interviews which provided connections of other skills such as identifying feelings, social awareness, strategic thinking about peer relationships and also identified the need for identified roles while in groups. Safir (2016) charged students with their own problem solving and student-centered discipline through reflections about student behavior and their own behavior to become self-reliant and inclusive. The Transforming Education (2020) guide and Torres (2019) promoted journaling for critical thinking and reflection for students with an emphasis on tackling social issues or sharing perspective backgrounds. Reflection does not have to be through writing, but many studies have used writing rather than audio recordings or digital recording. The connection among these researchers is the ability for students to have time to think. The American Institute for Research (AIR) mentions practices that overlap with student
voice practices such as students co-creating community agreements and reflecting on their own actions or the rules they are willing to follow. Additionally, Yoder et al.’s (2021) article identifies the use of reflective questions to help connect SEL and academic skills, express emotions, and identify thoughts. Guo (2022) analyzed 23 peer-reviewed journal articles which included only experimental studies with a control group. Guo (2022) reviewed meta cognitive practices beyond journaling that included reflection in action and during the action such as forms of journaling, role plays, simulations, and analysis of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. The above literature is not an exhaustive list but a guide to practices that promote student reflection. As reflection is a practice we want to encourage for students, Jagers et al. (2018) emphasize that as educators engage in responsibility and choice practices, it will be important for them to reflect on the types of choices they provide, ensuring that they are authentic for all of the students they serve. The practice of reflection is vital to student achievement and learning.

The next part of the review of literature examines the use of outside raters for SEL practice measurement through a walkthrough, the use of some form of a needs assessment, and the sharing of information to districts on next steps for implementation. The use of an SEL walkthrough tool will help districts identify their strengths and opportunities for growth for continuous improvement of social and emotional learning practices.

SEL Walkthroughs

There is an established need for SEL but there lacks the usage or awareness of tools to measure the scope of practices that foster SEL within the school environment and classroom. One established tool to measure instructional practices are walkthroughs or needs assessments. Rouleau and Corner (2020) define a walkthrough as a snapshot ranging between 5-15 minutes in
observing focused practices to collect data which informs leaders within the building. Rouleau and Corner (2020) reference multiple articles which view a walkthrough as a transformative tool to direct instructional and social practices in guiding educators for next steps. A walkthrough is an effective tool in part of the inquiry cycle for school improvement (Cervone & Martinez-Miller, 2007). There are many names for walkthrough observations from leaving visits, mini-observations, and data snapshots but Garza et al. (2016) state that whether used as a collection tool to support teachers and staff or used to collaboratively collect data, the walkthrough observation is an authentic data source. The concept of walkthroughs applied to SEL ensures that walkthroughs serve as tools in identifying needs within the classroom and school environment which foster SEL.

The SEL walkthrough is an assessment of SEL practices that helps a school team determine how often certain elements are in the educational setting, the types and frequency of practices that are occurring, and how the school can continuously improve SEL practices throughout the building. The elements of a measurement tool need to include those SEL practices that speak directly to CASEL’s five core competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The intention is to use the elements the school already has in place or identify outside supports if the school needs outside resources. An example of a SEL walkthrough tool is from Municipal Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), which provides five elements focusing on the school environment to identify and observe. These five include atmosphere in common areas, vision/mission/values statements displayed, student work displayed, student relationships, and adult relationships. There are 17 elements that are used in the MNPS walkthrough which provide descriptors for each element that can be observed in a K-12 classroom. These elements are
instructional and social elements to observe on expectations and learning goals, explicit teaching of SEL skills, SEL integrated into instructional content, use of interactive pedagogies, teacher feedback and monitoring, student engagement, student collaboration, teacher as a facilitator, student reflection, classroom atmosphere, class rules, student behavior, behavior management, teacher interaction and communication, student voice, and student work displayed (MNPS, 2017).

A needs assessment is crucial and can identify multiple steps for further development in implementing a schoolwide SEL model. A needs assessment is generally defined as a systematic examination of the gap that exists between the current state and desired state of an organization and the factors that can be attributed to this gap (Cuiccio & Husby-Slater, 2018). The SEL walkthrough tool is used in collaboration with the district’s SEL team, School Improvement Team, or key stakeholders and as an outside rater prepares the school to increase the quality and consistency of those practices which foster SEL.

A social emotional learning walkthrough tool has the capabilities for a rater to collect data and provide informed feedback on the current practices in the school which foster SEL for students and staff. The intent is to focus on current practices and identify the consistencies of those practices and their effectiveness is supporting the five core competencies. Aperture who is known for its SEL universal screener, DESSA and DECCA, which is a strength based and used to screen two million plus students has identified 10 practices that foster social emotional learning, which includes instructional practices of self-reflection, self-assessment, and classroom discussion (Duchesneau, 2020; Durlak, 2015; Yoder, 2014). Additionally, the practices that foster SEL suggested by Yoder (2014) include social practices of student-centered discipline, responsibility, and choice (AIR, 2021).
These practices are captured in the MNPS (2017) social and emotional walkthrough rubric and the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional walkthrough tool. The major drawback of the MNPS SEL walkthrough tool was the lack of its ability to produce data that is easily used by a school or district to make meaningful improvements unless compiled. The data needed to be put into a program or a spreadsheet to compile statistics in which could be analyzed for systemwide decisions. It was a paper-and-pencil document, and it lacked critical attributes or examples that an observer could look for to meet the description (MNPS, 2017). CASEL, in collaboration with Learning Science International, has taken their SEL walkthrough tool that includes the practices from the MNPS tool and digitized the results to provide feedback to support continuous improvement (CASEL, 2023). In both the CASEL and MNPS tools there are components like student voice, collaboration, and reflection which are needed to be a part of more than a 30-minute class but as a habit or practice for educators, the students, and the whole building. The SEL walkthrough tool provides a baseline of data to move SEL forward and later as interim assessment on certain elements to measure our successes of intentional implementation.

External Rater and Sharing Results

The role of the person who conducts an SEL walkthrough matters. Additionally, the way in which information is reported back to the school-based team is critical for driving explicit conversations for the next steps in the implementation of impactful SEL practices. Wanless et al. (2015) assessed a comprehensive set of readiness characteristics, using multiple raters, and discussed potential problems and pitfalls. Wanless et al. (2015) suggest that whenever possible, a school should not use a school-based rater, but instead should use an external rater who is
familiar with the organization. Weiner et al. (2008) suggests the school use a familiar external rater such as a consultant who visits the organization but is engaged in other organizations as well. Rouleau & Corner (2020) propose an administrator make a walkthrough a daily practice and mentions the limitations of administrators fitting it into the schedule for a five- to ten-minute walkthrough. Wanless et al. (2015) do not specify how familiar the rater should be with the organization, but they do strongly recommend the use of triangulation with individual raters when they rate an organization’s social and emotional readiness. Wanless et al. (2015) recognize the faults of reliability with only one rater but the corroboration of data is the key to increasing the value of the data’s use as well as including more stakeholders, such as the school-based social and emotional team, to define readiness and next steps. Multiple raters are needed to obtain the most valid information with individual reports from many perspectives such as district providers (Durlak, 2010). Moreover, one key aspect that Wanless et al. (2015) point out is the sharing of readiness results with the organization. When providing challenges an organization faces in implementation readiness, there are direct conversations that need to take place about opportunities for growth. There are strategic and delicate conversations, such as practices that can be hurtful to students (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015). An example is public behavior tracking systems which an organization has implemented for educators to use (Jung & Smith, 2018; National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development [NC-SEAD], 2019; Poole, 2020; Wilson, 2017). Wanless et al. (2015) state there are crucial and honest conversations that need to happen with schools to strengthen implementation. One key change to social and emotional learning walkthrough reports over the last five years was to shift delicate phrasing changes in reporting information from challenges/weakness to opportunities for growth (Dusenbury, 2015).
Summary

Based on the presented literature, a proposed strategy to effectively support districts with implementation of SEL is an SEL walkthrough process. The SEL walkthrough tool needs to measure SEL practices such as student voice and reflection to inform opportunities for growth and strengths to be shared for the school or district. The SEL walkthrough tool will define the prevalence or frequency of instructional and social practices that support the five core competencies. A further suggestion is to use an outside rater who has an expertise in the field of SEL. In collecting the data for informed decisions in an education setting and the use of educators’ classroom spaces, there are ethical questions to consider. There are also ethical considerations in the process, intention, and consideration for all stakeholders involved which clearly includes the students.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has been a topic of interest in Illinois for decades. Committees formed in Illinois to write the social and emotional learning standards in the late 1990s, with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) formally adopting SEL standards in 2005 (M. Shepich, personal communication, December 1, 2022). Although the state has had a set of standards in place since 2005, ISBE has never offered formal guidance or an assessment tool for how schools can measure the level of implementation of SEL. More recently, in 2021, the Emotional Intelligence and Social Emotional Learning (EISEL) task force final report supported SEL in Illinois with guidance on best practices, student needs assessments, implementing resources, and updating standards (ISBE, 2021). However, the EISEL report did not include tools for implementation or mention supports around key practices. Further, the need to support schools with SEL is not only an Illinois issue but also a national need. Twenty-seven states now have free-standing SEL standards (Dermody & Dusenbury, 2022). Forty-four states provide guidance on the implementation of SEL even if there is not a comprehensive set of standards (Dermody & Dusenbury, 2022).

The need to support schools in the measuring of practices that foster SEL is pertinent to social and emotional learning success, yet there is very little information about how best to assess implementation. To that end, the purpose of this study was to utilize already existing data to gain insight into the elements that foster social and emotional learning defined in an existing SEL walkthrough tool. The following questions guided this study:
Q1: To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in the educational space? What is the distribution of scores across the four categories?
Q2: To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in content and grade levels?
Q3: To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in comparison between the classroom environment and classroom instruction?
Q4: To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in comparison among districts?

Literature Review

Research on SEL Competencies

CASEL’s five core competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making define the understanding of this study. The five core competencies are tied to Illinois state standards and the work ISBE operates under when discussing SEL. There are numerous subcompetencies under the five core competencies (CASEL, 2023; see Figure 1). CASEL and Alliance SEL Framework display the focus of this paper’s subcompetencies. The paper discusses the research of the subcompetencies most connected to the practices and structures of student voice and reflection. The work of Merrill et al. (2021) highlights the notion that not all subcompetencies yield the same results towards SEL skills but has an impact on attendance and academic performance. The core competency of self-awareness needs reflection to become aware and specifically for development of emotional skills such as identifying feelings to then regulate (Denham, 2018; Jones et al., 2017; Ura et al., 2019;
Guo et al. (2019) and Zhou and Ee (2012) research connect the importance of schools to improve the core competency of self-regulation with strategies to mitigate extreme emotions which impact school and learning. The Assessment Work Group (AWG; 2019) continues to define the core competencies through this dissertation. Ura et al. (2021), Denham (2018), and Immordino-Yang et al. (2019) provide work on social awareness and its necessity to have peer involvement to gain skills such as perspective taking, empathy, and engaging in the understanding of their counterparts. Responsible decision-making literature is centered around reducing risky choices and assessing one’s choices (Durlak et al., 2011; AIR, 2021). Both Wilson (2017) and Zhou & Ee (2012) notice the use of the opportunity needing to be provided in order to make responsible and ethical decisions which may be structured in the classroom. CASEL’s core competencies and subcompetencies can be referenced in many studies and are crucial to understanding the frameworks of SEL.

**SEL in Schools**

Among researchers, there is a clear connection between social and emotional learning implemented in schools to improve academics (Chu & DeArmond, 2021; Durlak, 2015; Immordino-Yang et al., 2019; McKown, 2019; Yoder et al., 2021). Merrill et al.’s (2021) study captures the notion of SEL having varied impacts between student groups, intended outcomes on academics and attendance, and specific variation in results on focused subcompetencies. Moreover, we can see by Yoder et al. (2021) and Durlak (2015) the identification of practices and structures needed to implement SEL such as self-assessment and responsibility and choice. Mahoney et al. (2020) also suggest needed practices to integrate SEL with McKown (2019) specifically making the relationship between professional development and the integration of
evidence-based practices. Lastly, SEL in schools includes the use of the environment providing opportunities for learning with norms displayed, SEL student work, and artifacts that promote SEL reflection (Chu & DeArmond, 2021; Duchesneau, 2020; Durlak et al, 2015; Yoder, 2014).

**SEL Practice: Student Voice and Reflection**

The literature review is not exhaustive of all of the practices and structures that promote SEL in the classroom and environment but rather it focuses on student voice and reflection. Both student voice and reflection are a part of the SEL walkthrough tool and are described through four levels of usage and quality in the description of each element (MNPS, 2017). Many researchers have literature on student voice to include choice, voice, and leadership to build self-efficacy and autonomy (Duchesneau, 2020; Dusenbury et al., 2015; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). Additionally, there are organizations such as Learning for Justice 2016, authors and researchers who voice the need for students to be in control of their own learning (Duchesneau, 2020; Kristin Souers, personal communication, 2022). There are a vast number of strategies for reflection or meta-cognitive practices from journaling, strategic thinking, problem solving, reflective questions, etc. (Guo, 2022; Torres, 2019; Jagers et al., 2018; Strahan & Poteat, 2020; Transforming Education, 2020; Yoder et al., 2021), and there are reflection practices and structures during learning and after learning (Guo, 2022). There are times when reflection and student voice overlap with co-creating social norms and reflecting on the use of these norms in the classroom (AIR, 2021; Safir, 2016). The two elements of student voice and reflection are vital to developing student social and emotional learning through structures and practices in the school environment.
SEL Walkthrough

In looking at the search engines for research on SEL walkthroughs, no research was found. The term walkthrough has been defined by Rouleau & Corner (2020) as a tool for social and instructional practices. A walkthrough tool is a tool for improvement (Cervone & Martinez-Miller, 2007) and as an effective data source (Garza et al., 2016). CASEL uses the Municipal Nashville Public School SEL Walkthrough tool on their website coupled with an outside organization to digitize and utilize as a needs assessment to guide next steps forward with SEL. Duchesneau, (2020), Durlak et al. (2015), and Yoder (2014) identify social and instructional practices that are reflected in the MNPS (2017) SEL walkthrough tool. However, there is no research on the MNPS tool nor research using the SEL walkthrough tool and the statistics collected per element to inform educators on SEL implementation.

External Rater and Sharing Results

The use of a rater for a walkthrough in education is in need of an external rater, multiple raters and/or recommended to have a consultant that is familiar with the organization (Rouleau & Corner, 2020; Wanless et al., 2015; Weiner et al., 2008). Rouleau & Corner (2020) research addresses the administration’s limitations and the time consumed to complete schoolwide walkthroughs. In addition, the collection of data is as important as sharing the results. The sharing of results is strategic and includes honest, direct conversations entailing the use of appropriate phrasing of results (Dusenbury et al., 2015; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Wanless et al., 2015). The results of a SEL walkthrough tool’s elements and connection to subcompetencies
provide educational institutions with usable SEL statistics on social and instructional practices to improve implementation.

Method and Procedures

Instrumentation

A rubric created by the MNPS that includes performance level descriptions was used as a social-emotional walkthrough tool to define the elements that promote SEL. The SEL walkthrough tool is an assessment of SEL practices that can help a school team determine how often certain elements occur, how frequent practices and structures are present and utilized for SEL in the educational setting, and how the school can continuously improve SEL practices and structures throughout the building. The SEL walkthrough tool’s measurements includes those SEL elements that speak directly to CASEL’s five core competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The intention was to use the elements the school already has in place or identify outside supports if the school is in need of outside resources.

This study used de-identified data from the SEL Municipal Nashville Public School (MNPS) walkthrough tool. The tool is attached as Appendices A, B. and C, which provide descriptions for each level of performance per each element. Appendix A was utilized in each of the 20 school SEL walkthroughs with a school rating for Schoolwide Environment but the data is not a part of this dissertation. The MNPS tool is a rubric with performance level descriptors (PLD) with ordinal scores from 1 to 4. There are no descriptive words to describe the nominal ratings such as emerging or exemplary. The numbers at the top are from one to four and are
based on the extent of use in an educational space. An educational space consisted of classrooms, common spaces, support staff rooms, libraries, and a space in which 4 or more students were having content facilitated. The tool measures the 17 elements that support SEL implementation and the quality of use for each element. Appendix B, which is referred to as Domain 2, measures classroom instruction with 9 elements (2a through 2i). Appendix C, which is referred to as Domain 3, measures classroom environment, discipline, and behavior with eight elements (3a through 3h). When referring to the MNPS rubric, six of the 17 elements specifically use language which references social-emotional learning in the rubric. In order for a rating to receive a level 4 rating in six of the elements, there must be evidence of SEL in that element. For example, in the rubric for the element of Student Reflection, the descriptor for level four states “Teacher allows time for individual and collective student reflection by encouraging critical thinking to debrief academic & social-emotional learning.” In level 3 of reflection, the MNPS rubric descriptor references social-emotional learning but with “or” language. In the element of Student Collaboration, there is no reference to SEL in the descriptor, and this is the case for 11 of the 17.

Use of MNPS

Data used in this study were collected over five-years from 2018-2020 and 2022-2023. This yielded 512 observations of educational spaces within 20 schools in six districts in South Cook. The educational spaces were only observed once and the data was collected for baseline purposes. For most districts, approximately 90% or more of the actual observations took place in a classroom setting and all classrooms were visited using a map provided by the administrator as well as a daily schedule to provide more efficient observations. Educators were informed that an
observation was happening over a selected time period such as the week of October 1st through October 4th, but they were not aware of the exact time of the observation. In the data set used in this dissertation, observations took place between the beginning of October to Early December or late January to early May. For the purposes of observing educational settings, “educators” included a combination of paraprofessionals, substitutes, teachers, support staff and/or learning platforms like Exact Path, Prodigy Math, etc. The purpose of this dissertation is not to look for improvement within the data nor is the purpose to determine if there is specific use of an SEL program or curriculum. Initially, the purpose of conducting the walk-through observations was to provide districts with the frequency of practices that foster SEL, positive practices and structures to continue in their setting, and baseline for each domain as well as each element. This dissertation will use the data to inform schools and educators looking to utilize an SEL walkthrough tool with procedures to conduct walkthroughs and statistics in which to provide relevance to their scores.

The observations for each school were spread out over at least three days to include multiple points in the day. If a school had a small total number of classrooms, then observations were done in half day segments and staggered to observe morning, midday, and afternoon. The most observations ever conducted in a day was limited to ten to twelve due to the fatigue of the observer and the ability to review notes to better understand the observations. Ratings were not provided for large spaces but only to take anecdotal notes such as the library, lunchroom, outside recess, or large spaces of interaction. The anecdotal notes were written on the MNPS form with school-wide scores in School Environment, Domain 1, but are not utilized in this dissertation.
Population and Sample

The data used in this study was from schools that participated in SEL walkthroughs from 2018-2022 in the South Cook region of Illinois. Data was collected by the author serving as an external rater from the South Cook Regional Office of Education. Schools were not compelled to participate, they chose to participate. Collection of the data from each school and district was optional, so it was a convenience sample. Data were collected from only K-8 elementary observable spaces where students and educators were participating in educational learning. There were no high school observations in the data set.

Rater-Training

When conducting ratings, the external rater should become familiar with the rubric and refer to the descriptions in order to accurately record a rating. There was no prior formal training on the rating tool that took place. However, in order to adequately prepare to use the tool, the rater reviewed the PLDs to define what structures and practices would define ratings. Next, the rater obtained permission to observe classrooms at an alternative school. This pilot test consisted of observing each staff member’s classroom, completing the rating scale, and then sharing the findings with each staff member. In addition to self-training on the SEL rubric, the external rater also completed the Growth Through Learning (GTL). GTL was required by the state of Illinois when the Governor signed the Illinois Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) (ISBE, 2022). The training was for classroom observations and evaluation of teachers based on the Danielson Framework. The GTL training consisted of multiple modules on conducting classroom observations and multiple inter-rater reliability trainings to get certified by passing
assessments to conduct classroom evaluations. The external rater also is endorsed in the principal training for evaluating administrators. Last, the external rater also had formal training as an instructional coach. These trainings provide explicit training on skills needed to observe classrooms with reduced bias and inter-rater reliability.

Conducting Observations

The MNPS walkthrough tool is a paper copy form and the scores were either directly scored on a sheet of paper by circling the appropriate level of implementation with notes on the side margin to describe structures, practices, or observations. The MNPS tool has not been validated nor is that the purpose of the study. The MPNS was put into a digital form by the South Cook Intermediate Service Center using Google Sheets with tabs to enter scores through the drop-down feature in order to make observations easier to conduct.

When conducting the observations, the rating recorded for classes varied by the time in which certain practices or structures are observed. The objective is to observe all 17 elements within the 15-minute timeframe and complete the rubric. Ratings are typically completed by the end of the 15 minutes while in the classroom. The first 3-5 minutes of the 15 minutes are spent finding a safe space to set items down, to walk around, or find an appropriate space to observe without disturbing learning. Some elements are more readily observable and can be scored sooner. For example, it is easier to rate Classroom Rules and Student Work Displayed when those elements are displayed and easily seen. Whereas it is more difficult to rate if classroom rules are actually being utilized and adhered to or a public behavior tracking system (PBTS) is utilized or just a practice that was previously utilized and has not been taken down. When evidence of elements were present, anecdotal notes were written in each section and elements
were temporarily scored to keep track of the current status within the 5 minutes. Additionally, the external rater would review all scores entered after the last observation in the school or district. When finalizing scores and reports, the external rater would review documents with anecdotal notes in which scores needed to shift or confirm evidence for the initial rating. The work displayed in the proximal hallway of the classroom observed or artifacts on the door/vestibule that are a part of the classroom can be observed immediately, at the end, or while reviewing the ratings during the observation.

For each observation in a classroom, the time was set at 15 minutes to complete the MNPS rubric. After the 15 minutes, an additional five minutes were spent either in transition to other classrooms or in review to determine an accurate rating based on notes. In some instances, the external rater may make larger connections to how practices or structures are used in the classroom. An initial rating for Student Voice may have witnessed voice and choice in the classroom, but when reading over the anecdotal notes, there is evidence of collaborative rules for leadership or artifacts that provided students to lead which were not originally observed at the time of putting a temporary rating. Some time was spent in the hallway to observe or hear interactions between students and adults, hear the instructions, or observe student work displayed outside of the classroom that is on the wall, door, or outside the common area. If an element could not be witnessed or was unable to be scored, then there was no score in that element. Additionally, if a setting was testing, transitioning out, or would have been disrupted, the external consultant revisited or recorded the scores for the elements that could be scored, such as Student Work Displayed or Classroom Rules. Observations were occasionally done in a segmented 15-minute observation such as 12 minutes and then 3 minutes. The purpose is to rate all elements and when a class had to leave early, start testing, a visitor interrupted with
procedural announcement, or other variations in which class halted and scores were clarified or finished, the rater should revisited for additional minutes to get the most accurate depiction of what a full 15 minute observation would be.

Prior to the visits, the letter and announcement from the administration provided context on how the observation would take place, how to welcome the external rater and the purpose of the visit. The external rater would sometimes be greeted by the whole class or quietly find a space in the class to observe. The goal of the external rater is to be the least disruptive as possible and let the class organically take place as if the external rater was not in the class. Practices of the external rater may include initially sitting down and making non-verbal cues to students to pay attention to the teacher or lesson, answering or deflecting questions to observe, or possibly engaging in the class. The external rater walks around the classroom observing the space which includes students, teacher, support staff, and structures in the class that relate to the 17 elements. Scores were then entered during the observation and during the transition time in the hallway or outside the observed space.

The scores were put in a google spreadsheet after each day’s visits if done on the hard copies and categorized by grade level and subject matter. Subject matter included math, English language arts (ELA), science, social sciences, and others. The other nominal data consisted of specials such as art, media, technology, music, and band. The other category consisted of the physical education classes in which there was more than one educator. In those cases, the visit was done twice with a focus on each educator or done over an extended period such as 30 minutes for two instructors. Additionally, notes were taken on a form to support the score for the external consultant and later summarized with examples from all of the visits that would not specifically identify a teacher. Also, the notes relative to the observed strengths in the classroom
were reported to the districts and schools. The notes that did not reflect positive and meaningful information were put in a folder for later reference by the external consultant. The data were organized in the google spreadsheet. Each score had the numerical reference to the space observed that referenced back to the original hard copy of the observation. When utilizing the digital form, the rater would still have paper copies to write anecdotal notes to refer back to but scores would be directly inputted which decreased the number of steps for sharing results to the school/district. At the top of each document, the classroom number was written, subject matter and grade level which was obtained from the school maps. If a room had a repeating room number within the building, a letter would be added such as 109B. The rater would only know the name of the educator by observation with an educator introduction, students use of the educator’s name, or a direct conversation when approached. In the vertical columns above the scores, the observation was provided with a combination of a number and/or letter that related back to the hard copy of the MNPS rubric sheet. This practice was done to de-identify the data, even though, the district would only see the statistics through pivot tables and graphs. Pivot tables were created for each school and district that could be statistically analyzed for each domain: Classroom Instruction (domain 2) and Classroom Environment, Discipline, and Classroom Management (domain 3), grade level, grade band and content area. The statistical pivot tables and graphs were merged from each district’s data-set. The statistics utilized element totals to create meaningful statistical representations for classroom’s instruction, grade level, subject matter, etc.
Procedure

Districts contracted with the South Cook Regional Office of Education to conduct a SEL walkthrough to collect data in each educational space. Schools were informed through a letter from the administration and through verbal communication in a school meeting. The superintendent of each district gave permission for the data from all of the South Cook region schools that participated to be used in the current study. To share the results from the 512 observations, each observed district was described with demographics that give meaning and context (e.g., the demographics from the Illinois school report card). The demographics used included number of observations, percent white, population and Title I status. However, in order to protect the specific identity of the district, demographic statistics provided on the report card were rounded to the nearest multiple of 5% such as 30%, 35%, 40% and nearest hundred for population. For example, if a district had 32% Hispanic students (1,389 students), the description stated about 30% Hispanic students and over 1,300 students in District #1. A third party then recoded the School Codes and Description document as well as the raw data sheet from the 512 observations, so when analyzed, the schools’ statistics were not known to the rater for which they belong.

Analytical Procedures

In the quantitative study, the focus was on the relationship of the 17 elements from the MNPS SEL Walkthrough Tool to the average score for elements and frequency. The variables studied were grade level, grade band, subject matter, and the two domains of 1) Classroom Instruction and 2) Classroom Environment, Management and Discipline. Additionally, I looked
at the statistics to determine opportunities for growth and strengths within the South Cook region. Based on each grade band or school, I would like to define interquartile ranges using box plots and descriptive tables of the statistics to best define opportunities for growth and strength.

The data was nominal and ordinal measurements using the mean of all elements and each element’s total. Survey plots were created for the elements and the total but only select elements from the SEL walkthrough were displayed for each variable as well as grade level, grade band, and school. Additionally, I found the means for the two domains, which included Classroom Instruction and Classroom Environment, Manage and Discipline, and the variation between the two domains. I further analyzed the elements that had SEL explicitly described in the performance level descriptor of the rubric such as (2i) Student Reflection compared to those elements which are general elements to promote SEL such as (3f) Student Voice.

**Researcher Role**

The role of the researcher as cited in the literature review should be an outside rater for collecting the data (Wanless et al., 2015; Weiner et al., 2008). In looking at the statistical analysis of the collective data from the walkthroughs, there could be an assumption bias per district, but the study there was no current assumption of the statistics across all districts as these statistics were not compiled yet. The role of the researcher was to use data analysis programs to identify the correlations between elements in the MNPS walkthrough tool and to report the findings from the quantitative analysis. The goal was also to use outside perspectives such as the chair of the dissertation to confirm and/or question interpretations of the statistical information. There was inter-rater reliability for the initial collection of data. Two individuals from the regional office of education observed and used the MNPS tool to then compare ratings and
evidence for rating. This was only done for the initial SEL walkthroughs and the pilot using the SEL walkthrough tools at alternative schools in 2016-1017.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

In the results section of this dissertation, I provide context to the number of observations used from the extant data, the process for scrubbing the extant data, categories analyzed for frequency and average, and analysis of the frequency tables, pivot tables and graphs.

Preliminary Analyses

The first step in the data collection process was determining which extant data should be included in this dissertation. Any observation in which the subject could not be determined was removed from the analysis which decreased the number of schools being analyzed to 19 from the original 20. After the final data set was prepared, preliminary data analysis was conducted in order to gain information about the number of observations in the dataset and where those observations took place. The total number of observations of educational spaces was 483. Observations were conducted across various subject matters including Math, ELA, Science, Social Studies, PE/Health, and Other/Specials. Observations in ELA subjects were not all consistent when coded in the extant data. For example, observations were labeled ELA if the subject matter observed was writing, reading, or already labeled ELA. Other/Specials observations consisted of library, media, art, band, music, MTSS, SEL, technology, and other observations in which a subject could not appropriately labeled such as classes were working on organizational work, subject matters were not taught even though the schedule identified learning during the time period, or class procedures, reminders, and directions were being taught.
Table 1 shows a breakdown of the number of observations completed within each performance level descriptor and across each of the SEL elements. Table 2 shows the breakdown of the total number of observations conducted in each subject area.

Table 1

Total Number of Observations by Element

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MNPS Element</th>
<th>Level of Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(2a) Expectations and Learning Objectives</td>
<td>33 164 243 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2b) Explicit Teacher of SEL Skills</td>
<td>233 147 61 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2c) SEL Integrated into Instructional Content</td>
<td>275 103 59 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2d) Use of Interactive Pedagogy</td>
<td>21 113 182 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2e) Teacher Feedback &amp; Monitoring</td>
<td>16 104 252 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2f) Student Engagement</td>
<td>3 63 196 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2g) Student Collaboration</td>
<td>136 130 121 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2h) Teacher as a Facilitator</td>
<td>12 74 215 169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2i) Student Reflection</td>
<td>134 125 148 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3a) Classroom Atmosphere</td>
<td>18 98 206 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3b) Class Rules</td>
<td>34 181 182 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3c) Student Behavior</td>
<td>8 57 174 227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3d) Behavior Management</td>
<td>18 81 162 214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3e) Teacher Interaction &amp; Communication</td>
<td>12 70 171 221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3f) Student Voice</td>
<td>45 149 187 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3g) Student Work Displayed</td>
<td>175 109 120 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3h) Classroom Procedures:</td>
<td>9 46 142 260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Total Observations Conducted in Each Subject Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Observations</th>
<th>ELA</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Other/Specials</th>
<th>PE/Health</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
<th>Total Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>177</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In looking at the 483 observations, 23.36% of scores are in the level 4 descriptor with a range from 50.7% (3h. Classroom Procedures) to 3.5% (2b. Explicit Teaching of SEL Skills). A level 4 refers back to the MNPS rubric which is the highest performance level descriptor. Note that all of these categories do not specifically require SEL being taught or implemented to receive a level 4. 60.2% of Observations took place during the core subject matter of ELA and Math. The distribution of scores in the subject matter from Table 1 consisted of the following: less than 5% of the observations took place in PE/Health, between 5-10% of observations took place in Science or Social Studies, and 20.7% of observations were in the Other/Specials education setting which included library, media, art, band, music, MTSS, SEL, technology, and other observations.

For all schools, the elements of (2f) Student Engagement, (3c) Student Behavior, and (3h) Classroom Procedures have less than 10 of the scores at a level 1 performance descriptor with over 200 scores in the level 4 performance descriptor. All of the elements that have 100 or more level 1 scores refer to SEL in the performance level descriptor except (2g) Student Collaboration. (2g) Student Collaboration, (2i) Student Reflection, and (3g) Student Work Displayed had over 100 scores recorded in level 1 with less than 70 at Level 4. The frequencies of 2a-2c have a range
of 18-22 for level 4 scores recorded. (2i) Student Reflection has an even distribution from level 1-3 which indicates that there were opportunities to reflect on SEL as the Level 4 descriptor included. In (3f) Student Voice, the majority of the frequency of scores were at 2 and 3. (2f) Student Engagement, (3c) Behavior Management, (3d) Student Behavior, (3e) Teacher Interaction and Communication, and (3h) Classroom Procedures have at least 200 scores in the level 4 performance level descriptor.

Research Question One

To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in the educational space?

Overall, results indicate variability amongst the elements that were observed being fostered during the walkthroughs. All subject matters and grades had some elements that were observed but the level of implementation varied by subject and grade level.

In order to answer this research question, an average score was calculated by overall total score, each domain, elements with SEL referenced in the performance level descriptor (PLD), and elements without SEL referenced in the PLD observed using the walkthrough tool.

Table 3 represents five categories which include: Overall average score of all 17 elements; Domain 1: Classroom Instruction average score, Domain 2: Classroom Environment, Discipline and Management, Elements with SEL descriptions in the rubric; Elements without SEL descriptions in the rubric. There are a total of 8 elements in Domain 2, 7 elements in Domain 3, 7 elements in the elements with SEL descriptors which are displayed in Table 4, and 10 elements in the Non SEL descriptors. Note that the elements with SEL descriptors are in both Domain 2 and Domain 3. In order to score a level 4, the observation must show evidence of
practices or structures which include SEL and academics. Table 3 shows elements are substantially lower from the domain average or overall average compared to elements with SEL descriptors seen in Table 4. The average Score is 2.301 for those elements which have a performance level description that includes the words social and emotional learning. The category of Non SEL descriptors has the highest score of 3.017 and elements with SEL in the descriptor having the lowest average of 2.301. The Average score from amongst the 483 observations is 2.724. Elements such as (2b) Explicit Teaching of SEL skills, (2c) SEL Integrated into Instructional Content, and (3g) Student Work Displayed have the lowest averages of elements with SEL descriptions in the rubric. (2d) Use of Interactive Pedagogies and (2e) Teacher Feedback and Monitoring have the highest average scores of the elements with SEL descriptions averaging above 2.9.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Total Average of all Elements</td>
<td>2.724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain 2: Classroom Instruction</td>
<td>2.521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain 3: Classroom Environment, Discipline and Management</td>
<td>2.945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL Descriptors (7 elements)</td>
<td>2.301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non SEL Descriptors (10 elements)</td>
<td>3.017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

Average Scores of Each Element by PLDs with SEL Descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of MNPS SEL Walkthrough Tool</th>
<th>Overall Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2a. Expectation and Learning Objectives</td>
<td>2.545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b. Explicit Teaching of SEL Skills</td>
<td>1.712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c. SEL Integrated into Instructional Content</td>
<td>1.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d. Use of Interactive Pedagogies</td>
<td>2.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2e. Teacher Feedback and Monitoring</td>
<td>2.901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2i. Student Reflection</td>
<td>2.239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3g. Student Work Displayed</td>
<td>2.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Two

To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in content and grade levels?

In order to answer this research question, several tables and graphs are referenced below. Table 5 shows all elements relative to the subject matter and an overall average score for that element. Table 6 refers to average categorical scores used in Table 3. The categories included overall average score, domain averages, elements with SEL descriptors and Non SEL descriptors. Table 7 refers to the number of observations at each grade level and content. Within the literature review, there was a focus on Student Reflection and Student Voice. With respect to Student Voice specifically seen in Table 5 (Element Average by Subject), the lowest mean score was in PE/Health (2.250) and the highest mean score was in ELA (2.850). Similarly, Student
Reflection had the lowest mean score in PE/Health with an average score of 1.762 whereas the highest mean score was within ELA (2.343). Table 5 also shows Student Reflection was less present overall compared to Student Voice across all subject areas. Student Work Displayed had the largest range from 1.318 in PE/Health and 2.365 in ELA.

Table 5

Average Scores of Each Element by Subject Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of MNPS Walkthrough Tool</th>
<th>ELA</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Other/ Specials</th>
<th>PE/ Health</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2a. Expectation and Learning Objectives</td>
<td>2.649</td>
<td>2.445</td>
<td>2.581</td>
<td>2.304</td>
<td>2.472</td>
<td>2.500</td>
<td>2.545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b. Explicit Teaching of SEL Skills</td>
<td>1.722</td>
<td>1.618</td>
<td>1.989</td>
<td>1.773</td>
<td>1.472</td>
<td>1.424</td>
<td>1.712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c. SEL Integrated into Instructional Content</td>
<td>1.818</td>
<td>1.491</td>
<td>1.637</td>
<td>1.864</td>
<td>1.361</td>
<td>1.303</td>
<td>1.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d. Use of Interactive Pedagogies</td>
<td>3.054</td>
<td>2.798</td>
<td>3.065</td>
<td>3.391</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>2.406</td>
<td>2.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2e. Teacher feedback &amp; Monitoring</td>
<td>3.106</td>
<td>2.851</td>
<td>2.903</td>
<td>2.636</td>
<td>2.611</td>
<td>2.500</td>
<td>2.901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2g. Student Collaboration</td>
<td>2.455</td>
<td>2.176</td>
<td>2.086</td>
<td>2.609</td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>1.909</td>
<td>2.274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2h. Teacher as a Facilitator</td>
<td>3.324</td>
<td>3.061</td>
<td>3.096</td>
<td>2.913</td>
<td>3.083</td>
<td>2.848</td>
<td>3.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2i. Student Reflection</td>
<td>2.343</td>
<td>2.157</td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>1.762</td>
<td>2.222</td>
<td>2.031</td>
<td>2.239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a. Classroom Atmosphere</td>
<td>3.096</td>
<td>2.973</td>
<td>3.117</td>
<td>2.870</td>
<td>2.917</td>
<td>2.545</td>
<td>3.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b. Classroom Rules</td>
<td>2.657</td>
<td>2.578</td>
<td>2.635</td>
<td>2.364</td>
<td>2.556</td>
<td>2.576</td>
<td>2.606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3f. Student Voice</td>
<td>2.795</td>
<td>2.550</td>
<td>2.663</td>
<td>2.250</td>
<td>2.514</td>
<td>2.438</td>
<td>2.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3g. Student Work Displayed</td>
<td>2.365</td>
<td>2.145</td>
<td>1.914</td>
<td>1.318</td>
<td>2.030</td>
<td>1.848</td>
<td>2.109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

Average Categorical Scores of Each Element by Subject Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Elements with SEL in the Descriptor</th>
<th>Domain 2 (Instruction)</th>
<th>Domain 3 (Environment, Discipline &amp; Management)</th>
<th>Average Overall Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2.169</td>
<td>2.414</td>
<td>2.850</td>
<td>2.621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>1.996</td>
<td>2.217</td>
<td>2.718</td>
<td>2.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE/Health</td>
<td>2.161</td>
<td>2.528</td>
<td>2.633</td>
<td>2.585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Specials</td>
<td>2.349</td>
<td>2.550</td>
<td>2.964</td>
<td>2.753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>2.218</td>
<td>2.417</td>
<td>2.901</td>
<td>2.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>2.435</td>
<td>2.652</td>
<td>3.069</td>
<td>2.850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7

Frequency of Scores of Each Grade Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th># of Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th># of Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Specials</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE/Health</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Student Collaboration there was a large disparity between PE/Health with a score of 2.609 and Social Studies with a score of 1.909. Social Studies has the lowest average of 2.452 and the highest score is in ELA with 2.850. The elements of Student Engagement and Classroom Procedures were the only elements with average scores above 3.0 for each subject matter. On the other side, Student Work Displayed, Student Reflection, Student Collaboration, Explicit Teaching of SEL skills, and SEL Integrated into Instructional Content all had a subject matter in which one average score was between 1.303-1.914.

For the purpose of this analysis, note the scores for the walkthrough tool that have SEL written in the descriptor. There are seven of them (2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 2i, and 3g), and they are presented in Table 6 broken down by subject area. The average walkthrough score across all seven of the elements are as follows: Social Studies: 1.996; Science: 2.169; PE/Health: 2.161; Other/Specials: 2.349; Math: 2.218; ELA: 2.435. Table 6 highlights a more indepth look at each subject matter under categorical averages which in analyzing the data had significant fluctuations in score depending on the categorical average referenced. Based upon the 2.724 overall average from Table 3 (Categorical Averages), Table 6 shows ELA and Other/Specials were the only subjects above the overall average. The fluctuation in score from the Average Overall Score to the category of Elements with SEL in the Descriptor was most prominent in Science and Social Studies with a difference of .452 and .456. PE/Health had the most constant scores across the categories with a range variation of .472. Social Studies varied the most across all the categories with a range variation of .722. In looking at Table 6 and only those elements with SEL in the descriptor, Social Studies has a 2.002 and ELA with the highest score of 2.437.
Table 7 shows the frequency of scores of each grade level and subject and the total number of observations. Note in Table 7 there is one less observation for content compared to grade level, this is due to data having two contents listed and there being omitted from the statistics for content averages. The number of observations per grade ranged from 43-70 with a median of 55 observations per grade level as seen in Table 7. Even though there were less schools with the grade bands of 6-8th, there were numerous visits at these schools. The number of content observations range from 23 in PE/Health to 176 in ELA. There were many more observations in ELA, Math and Other/Specials. This is due to the nature of elementary schools having longer periods of ELA and Math.

Figures 2 and 3 show the trend that elements that foster SEL increase from K-2 to the 3-5 grade band. Then in the 6-8 grade band, the scores decrease below the K-2 average score in most of the elements. Figure 2 illustrates that the averages for the K-2 grade band is 2.778; 3-5 is 2.844, and 6-8 is 2.573. This can be seen in Figures 2 and 3. Consistently 6-8 has the lowest scores across the elements that foster SEL except in Classroom Rules. In that case K-2 has the lower score in Classroom Rules. From Figure 3, grade 8 has the lowest average overall score with 2.507 and grade 3 has the highest average of 2.873. Kindergarten, 3rd grade and 5th grade have scores above 2.85. While looking at the figures, it is important to reference the scores for elements with SEL descriptors ranging from 2.963 to 1.634 referenced in Table 4. In addition, note in Table 3 that the average score across all elements was 2.724. In Figure 2, Explicit Teaching of SEL Skills, SEL Integrated into Instructional Content, Student Collaboration, Student Reflection, and Student Work Displayed are all at or below 2.0 (or 2.301 average of SEL descriptors). Explicit Teaching of SEL skills and SEL Integrated into Instructional Content have
Figure 2. Score of each grade band by element comparison.
an average score of $\cong 1.70$. Student Reflection and Student Work Displayed have an average score of $\cong 2.20$. Student Reflection and Student Work Displayed have the majority of their scores in level 1-3 which is described in the rubric as not using SEL for reflection and not displaying a product of SEL work. Again, as a reference from Table 1, the average amount of scores in level 4 for all elements is 23.36%. Student reflection has 9% in the level 4 descriptor and Student Work Displayed has 10.54%. SEL Integrated into Instructional Content and Explicit teaching of SEL skills are more noticeable (higher averages) in K-2 than 3-5.
Research Question Three

To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in comparison between the classroom environment and classroom instruction?

To answer this research question, analysis of Tables 3, 5, 6, and 8 and Figures 4 and 5 were utilized. Table 3 refers to the five categorical averages and Table 8 refers to the two highlighted elements from the literature review of student reflection and student voice which coincide in Domain 2 (Classroom Instruction) and Domain 3 (Classroom Environment) of the MNPS rubric. Additionally, the analysis of grades, grade bands, categorical averages and subject matter are utilized. For the purposes of this research question, Classroom Instruction will be used in reference to Domain 2 in the MNPS rubric and Classroom Environment, Discipline and Management will be shortened to Classroom Environment in reference to Domain 3. Table 6 shows the averages per content in comparison of Classroom Instruction and Classroom Environment.

Table 8

Average Scores of Each Element by Grade and for Student Reflection and Student Voice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of MNPS Walkthrough Tool</th>
<th>Grade Band</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2i. Student Reflection</td>
<td>2.336</td>
<td>2.132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3f. Student Voice</td>
<td>2.808</td>
<td>2.479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Average</td>
<td>2.573</td>
<td>2.304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Domain 2: Classroom Instruction by Grade Band

Figure 4. Classroom instruction by grade band.
Figure 5. Classroom environment, management, and discipline by grade band.
Utilizing information from Table 3, the comparison between overall average scores amongst the Classroom Environment domain and Classroom Instruction domain show that scores in the Classroom Environment domain is 0.424 higher. Student Work Displayed is the only element in the Classroom Environment domain with a SEL descriptor. As referenced before, descriptors with SEL in the element’s rubric had on average lower elemental averages.

Table 6 shows all content areas and there is a large disparity between Classroom Instruction, Classroom Environment, and those elements with SEL in the descriptor relative to the MNPS rubric and those without. For subject matters, there was consistently a range of 0.105 to 0.501 increase in scores from Classroom Instruction to Classroom Environment. PE/Health has the least increase from 2.528 from Classroom Instruction to 2.633 in Classroom Environment. In Social Studies, there is a 0.722 range in categorical scores and Science, Math, Other/Specials, and ELA all have a range above 0.615. PE/Health is the content area that fluctuates the least between categories with a 0.472 range. Grades K-5 are all above 2.7 for average score of both domains 2 and 3.

As a focused topic in the introduction, Table 8 depicts the analysis of student reflection and student voice specifically. It is notable that Student Reflection has SEL explicitly referred to in the rubric and Student Voice does not. There is a .716 difference between elements with SEL in the descriptor (2.301) versus those without SEL in the descriptor (3.017) which can be referred to in Table 3 (Categorical Averages). Figures 4 and 5 depict all elements and they are disaggregated by grade band for each domain. In looking at the figures, the first-grade band in the graphs is 3-5, then 6-8, and finally K-2. Student Reflection from domain 2 is well below the average of 2.724 (Overall) or 2.521 (Domain 2) and less apparent in the grade bands K-2 and 6-8. Student Voice from domain 3 is more apparent in the lower grades and starts to decline in 6th
grade with an average of 2.387 in 7th and 8th compared to the average score of 2.725 in grades K-6. The highest elemental average score (3.399) in Classroom Instruction exists at 3-5 grade in Student Engagement and the lowest elemental average (1.412) exists at 6-8 grade in SEL Integrated into Instructional Content. Compared to Classroom Instruction, Classroom Environment’s highest elemental average score (3.510) exists at 3-5 grade in Classroom Procedures and the lowest elemental average (1.917) exists at 6-8 grade in Student Work Displayed. Moreover, there were 2 scores above 3.3 in the Classroom Instruction domain and 6 scores were above 3.3 in Classroom Environment.

Research Question Four

To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in comparison among districts? Table 9 and Figure 6 are utilized to answer research question four. The 483 observations were from 19 schools across a total of five school districts. A table with demographic data has been created but not shared in this dissertation in order to protect the identity of the schools that were a part of this research. All schools and districts were located in the same geographical area of South Cook, yet the demographics of each school varied. For example, the number of students in a school ranged from \( \approx 200 \) to \( \approx 1000 \) students. All schools had over \( \approx 55\% \) low-income students with two schools at \( \approx 100\% \). Schools varied in the percentage of white students in the school with five schools having \( \approx \text{less than} 5\% \) white whereas three schools had \( \approx 60\% \) white. The rest ranged between \( \approx 20\%-45\% \) white. There were six schools that had grades 6-8, seven schools that were K-6, two that served K-8, and other variations of grades. Within subject matters taught, the sets of data for each observation were coded by subject matter, grade level, and grade band. Table 9 shows a comparison of schools in which the
Table 9

Elements by Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>20%+ White</th>
<th>5% or Less than</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2a. Expectation and Learning Objectives</td>
<td>2.566</td>
<td>2.518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b. Explicit Teaching of SEL Skills</td>
<td>1.797</td>
<td>2.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c. SEL Integrated into Instructional Content</td>
<td>1.692</td>
<td>1.752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d. Use of Interactive Pedagogies</td>
<td>3.003</td>
<td>2.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2e. Teacher feedback &amp; Monitoring</td>
<td>2.933</td>
<td>2.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2f. Student Engagement</td>
<td>3.319</td>
<td>3.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2g. Student Collaboration</td>
<td>2.329</td>
<td>2.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2h. Teacher as a Facilitator</td>
<td>3.173</td>
<td>2.874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2i. Student Reflection</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.279</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.189</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a. Classroom Atmosphere</td>
<td>3.016</td>
<td>2.685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b. Classroom Rules</td>
<td>2.639</td>
<td>2.495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c. Student Behavior</td>
<td>3.337</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d. Behavior Management</td>
<td>3.205</td>
<td>2.874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3e. Teacher Interaction and Communication</td>
<td>3.282</td>
<td>2.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3f. Student Voice</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.660</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.536</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3g. Student Work Displayed</td>
<td>2.134</td>
<td>2.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3h. Classroom Procedures</td>
<td>3.443</td>
<td>3.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Score</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.756</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.580</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6. Comparison of demographics by element.
demographics of schools from the MNPS walkthrough tool with 20+% white versus less than 5% white. For the comparison, 5 schools were included in the less than 5% white which consisted of 113 observations. These observations were from 2 districts and took place before 2019 and after 2022. The other 14 schools had a range of about 20%-60% white, and there were 370 observations. Highlighted in Table 9, the only elements that had a higher elemental average for the schools with less than 5% white were Explicit Teaching of SEL Skills and SEL Integrated into Instructional Content. Student Work Displayed was consistent in score with only a difference of .006. There was an overall average score difference between the two categories of demographics of .176. Figure 5 depicts the difference between the schools with less than 5% and schools with more than 20% white.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The purpose of the dissertation was to analyze the extant data from the MNPS walkthrough tool for purposes of finding valuable information which could be useful to schools implementing SEL. I set out to discover which elements were important for schools to work on at each grade level, grade band and content area as well as provide context to the use of an SEL walkthrough tool utilized as a gauge for SEL implementation. A specific focus on the elements of Student Voice and Student Reflection was a part of the literature review in which to connect to the findings within the four research questions. Lastly, the discussion and finding provide context into adjustments to the MNPS rubric, opportunities for growth in clusters of elements and a suggested process for the use of the MNPS SEL walkthrough tool. In both the literature review and analysis of data for this dissertation, I found multiple key topics to report out.

Review of Findings

The first research question was, “To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in the educational space?”

Overall, the findings within the data set used for this dissertation indicate that elements assessed on the NMPS tool are implemented to varying degrees within the South Cook region depending on overall element. Differences by grade level and subject are addressed in research questions two and three below. Specific findings related to this research question indicated that Explicit Teaching of SEL, SEL Integration into Instructional Content, Student Reflection and
Student Work Displayed had the lowest average implementation scores within the data set used for this dissertation.

It is possible that the explicit teaching of SEL was not visible or referenced by the teacher during the observation interval. Secondarily, the use of a stand-alone SEL curriculum is in and of itself evidence of SEL. However, the practices of displaying student work or the use of learning expectations such as “I can” statements are not as commonly used in SEL instructional practices whereas they tend to be used more in other subject areas such as Math or ELA. For example, during an observation I may have observed “I can” statements listed in the classroom as it related to math learning targets but there may not have been “I can” statements related to SEL, which transcends the subject area.

It is not until the 2022 observations from the data set that evidence of SEL usage was more intentional in the classroom and artifacts such as the posters or displayed student/class work made it clear which part of the SEL curriculum the class was working on. A reason for this may be the result of an SEL focus after the 2020 pandemic and/or the planning time that was allotted during the period of remote learning. There was eight billion dollars of federal funding provided to the state of Illinois as a result of the pandemic. ISBE’s Learning Renewal program received 10% of funds from a federal grant as a result of learning loss from the 2020 pandemic. One of the programs, SEL Hub, focused specifically on implementation of SEL, trauma informed practices, mental health and safety in order to attempt to make-up for missed in person classroom time from remote learning (ISBE, 2023).

Researchers agree that SEL needs to be explicitly taught, integrated, and acquired through the education setting (Durlak et al., 2011; Kurdi et al., 2022; NC-SEAD, 2019, Olive et al., 2021). In fact, AIR (2021) indicates that SEL integration seems to be dependent on the
explicit teaching of SEL; they tend to go hand in hand. This was the case in my data set. With respect to Classroom Instruction, the two elements of Explicit Teaching of SEL and SEL Integration into Instructional Content had similar scores, with SEL Integration being a little lower. It is certainly possible that explicit teaching of an SEL subcompetency, such as growth mindset, may have occurred prior to the observation. Chu and DeArmond (2021) also discussed in their study of two charter schools the need to embed in practices but there needed to be intentionality to construct SEL within the schools’ system-wide structures. In my opinion during the walkthroughs, an SEL skill was not integrated simply because it happened but rather there was some evidence of intentionality. Intentionality could include references to a previous SEL lesson, learning targets, or structures in the class such as curriculum posters. A simple reference could include, “We make mistakes and we are not there YET, but we will practice to get better.” Furthermore, in the class, there may have been a bulletin board on the SEL concept of Growth Mindset.

Lastly, the use of either student work displayed or student reflection with the usage of SEL seemed to be highly dependent on explicit teaching of SEL and the integration of SEL. Still, it was not as common to see reflective practices. Guo (2022) suggests that there are many reflective practices that can be utilized within the classroom such as journaling, role-playing, open-ended questions, and think time to name a few. It is much easier to display the product targets of SEL such as goal setting worksheets or a self-awareness activity like drawing a picture of themselves, especially in the older grades where the students are not so dependent on the teacher to create a product.

As referenced in the beginning of the dissertation, the use of the MNPS SEL walkthrough tool was for a needs assessment of SEL within the Nashville Public School System. As so, the
use of this tool in the dissertation is the result of schools in South Cook who were looking for their level of implementation by an external rater. Overall, any element that has a specific reference to SEL in the description had a trend toward a lower performance score on the MNPS rubric. With this in mind, it makes sense that a school implementing or looking to implement SEL would have lower scores in elements that specifically contained a SEL descriptor. Therefore, an element in Classroom Instruction has the lowest scores on the SEL walkthrough rubric makes sense and this is why it is important to have categorical averages to reference to.

Lastly, in answering question 1, Teacher Feedback and Monitoring and Student Engagement have the highest scores on the rubric. These are emphasized practices within Danielson’s Framework from the previously mentioned GTL training (ISBE, 2012) as well as Hattie’s work (Visible Learning, n.d.). One of the reasons is Teacher Feedback and Monitoring and Student Engagement do not have SEL in the descriptor. If an element’s description does have SEL in it, on average those scores were lower in my dataset. The data does not let you know if Teacher Feedback and Monitoring included SEL language by educators or whether educators were monitoring SEL. If the MNPS rubric levels of performance stated the use of SEL feedback to students, the scores in Teacher Feedback and Monitoring would have substantially decreased. In effect, the data does not tell the story of feedback and monitoring in the context of SEL. Even though the average score is high for Teacher Feedback and Monitoring is high, it would benefit a district to guide staff in being reflective in their coaching of utilizing SEL language that encourages, progresses, or informs a student of their targeted SEL skill.

Research question two asked, “To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in content and grade levels?” Kindergarten, 3rd, and 5th grade had the highest average scores and grades in the middle school had lower scores across the rubric.
The most commonly observed content area was ELA and Math. ELA and Other/Specials had the highest average score. It is important to note that Other/Specials included the content matter of an explicit SEL lesson being taught. PE/Health had the lower number of observations.

Additionally, PE/Health and Social Studies had the lowest scores for content. To my knowledge, this is the first research study that investigated SEL by grade level utilizing an SEL walkthrough tool. After conducting a literature search, I was not able to find any studies that compare the elements of SEL at grade bands and content area. There are multiple studies that focus on SEL and the populations at different grade levels such as Ura et al. (2019). Ura and colleagues examined 111 SEL Intervention studies with the population having a variety of grades and demographics but not documented as the comparison between grade levels. Recently, Cipriano et al. (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of 424 studies with the breakdown of K-5, 6-8 and High School in reviewing SEL programming. In Cipriano et al.’s study of universal school-based interventions, over 50% of the studies were elementary (K-5). Cipriano et al.’s study does not make a comparison of grade levels but only provides a record of the number of studies per group and a focus on the sequencing of SEL interventions within multiple SEL frameworks being utilized up to 2023. SEL will look different at different grade levels as benchmarks and descriptors from the state of Illinois change per grade level (ISBE, 2023). Additionally, the use of the MNPS SEL walkthrough tool is designed for K-12, but there isn’t published collective data such as in this dissertation. With this in mind, it is possible that elementary schools naturally focus on SEL more as those students are with the same teacher most of the day. While these findings are unique and interesting, more research is needed in this area.

My research also found higher scores in classroom procedures and student engagement. One reason for higher scores in classroom procedures and student engagement could be the focus
on practices such as CHAMPS, an evidence-based behavior framework, which was seen in many of the higher performing classrooms. Wilson’s (2017) research on classroom management tools found the importance of relationships but further the need to have students establish behavior expectation, and the CHAMPS behavioral framework provides clear expectations for all activities (Sprick & Baldwin, 2009). Also in my opinion, the focus on building relationships has been highly promoted through professional development within our South Cook districts and programs in order for students to learn best. In 5th grade, the scores for Student Voice were highest. One reason may have been, the 5th graders which are the oldest grade at the K-5 building were provided leadership opportunities to support lower-level grades. Many of the schools in the study were K-5 buildings. Additionally, a practice that was more seen in the 3-5 grade classroom was the use of classroom norms for rules, grouping, and communication with student input. In McClain’s (2019) research, the author states that there are clear benefits to infusing leadership as an SEL concept into the school. It could be possible that the 6-8 grade embedded leadership within the school that an observer may not catch in the classroom or be aware of with some many opportunities offered outside the classroom. Students need to have the opportunities to have roles and enhance their own agency (Duchesneau, 2020; Dusenbury et al., 2015). Another point to bring up was the practice of educators posting the opportunities to increase student voice with leadership roles and promoting within the classroom not being utilized but these were offered in other forums not caught by the external rater.

As far as subject matter, there is concern that Social Studies has the lowest scores in overall score, Classroom Instruction, and those elements with SEL descriptors. The topic of Social Studies has so many opportunities to utilize all 17 elements and integrate SEL into the content. For example, the core competencies of Social Awareness and Responsible Decision-
Making are infused into the Social Science Standards in which ISBE (2017) states, “The vision supporting this design is to produce Illinois graduates who are civically engaged, socially responsible, culturally aware, and financially literate. Teachers can facilitate this process by giving students opportunities to work collaboratively as well as individually” (p. 2). From my observations, Social Sciences are still being taught with a focus on content covered rather than relevant application for the learner.

Research question three asked, “To what degree are elements that promote social and emotional learning being used in comparison between the classroom environment and classroom instruction?” The practices and structures of the MNPS walkthrough are most commonly used and scored highest in Domain 2: Classroom Instruction. The majority of elements with SEL in the description are in Classroom Instruction. This distinction of the MNPS rubric is most related to Yoder (2014) work in which he identified social and instructional practices. In Yoder’s (2014) work, he provides research on the social and instructional practices that promote SEL. There is not a distinction between most commonly used or to what degree these two domains are implemented into grade bands, content, or within schools. It is important to notice that practices such as defining learning expectations, incorporating student collaboration, student voice, choice, and leadership, and feedback and monitoring are all well utilized in the school data. However, there is not sufficient evidence that these are being incorporated for the intentional purpose of teaching SEL. Also, in referring to Classroom Environment where the overall score was higher than Classroom Instruction, Student Reflection had a lower overall score. Durlak (2015) and Guo (2022) address self-reflection to promote self-awareness; but when looking at the data, the descriptor most commonly scored does not include the practice of self-reflection towards SEL but rather academics or behavior. When using the MNPS rubric, I believe it to be important to
make distinctions between those elements that have SEL in the description as well as to look at
the domain averages and overall average to provide the best gauge of SEL implementation. The
elements in the domains without an SEL description such as Student Collaboration may cause an
overall above average score. If a school/district has already explicitly and intentionally integrated
SEL, it is best to refer to multiple averages.

Research question four asked, “To what degree are elements that promote social and
emotional learning being used in comparison among districts?” The scores from the schools
varied by the year that the observations were conducted, practices and structures already in place
as a general best practice, and the level of SEL implementation that already existed. In an
exploratory analysis, data was compared for schools observed prior to the pandemic from 2018-
2019 and after in 2022. These results will be utilized for future research rather published in this
study.

The schools were compared by the demographic of low income and percentage of
students that were not white. As Guo et al. (2019) discussed, the evidence that high achieving
schools, specifically having less low-income students, use more self-regulation strategies. The
data from my dissertation provides the story in which the schools with less than 5% white
students and low income were teaching SEL at a higher rate than schools with 20% white and
less low-income students. The specific SEL concept being taught in the schools with less than
5% white was emotional regulation. From Cipriano et al. (2023), the research points out how
emotional regulation is being taught more proportionately with students of color and minorities.
General Discussion

Elements with Opportunities for Growth

These are three clusters of elements that can be tied to each other for growth with unifying practices and structures. The elements of Student Voice, Student Collaboration, Student Rules can have practices and structures that when implemented would increase all three elements. For example, during the SEL walkthroughs, one could witness the implementation of the classroom including teacher and students creating shared norms or agreements which are utilized for classroom rules. These developed shared or classroom norms will involve the highest level on the MNPS rubric and can be inclusive of how we use a restorative approach to mend harmed relationships. Moreover, students have opportunities to include their voice into how the norms will be implemented and what the corresponding outcomes would be if the rules are not followed. As a leadership function of Student Voice, students would have opportunities to refer to the rules if the rules are not being implemented to their best ability and then the student(s) could collectively address the situation. There can even be an individual that has newcomers or guests informed of the rules and signs that corresponding shared agreement document of the rules. The described scenario includes the voice and leadership component from Student Voice, the student created rules increase the Student Rules level of performance and the collaboration of peers collectively to develop shared norms with utilization of practices by students will increase the Student Collaboration.

As a second cluster, Explicit Teaching, Integration of SEL, Student Reflection, Student Work Displayed can have practices and structures that when implemented would increase all three elements. For example, the use of an SEL lesson or concept explicitly taught previously
would be integrated in current content with a product, knowledge, reasoning visuals. Within the lesson, the practice of an optimistic closure, exit ticket, think time, journaling, etc. (Guo, 2022) provides the ability to reflect on the SEL concept being integrated at the end of the class or during the class. Additionally, depending on the learning target, a product can be either collectively or individually created as a source of understanding. Even the journal reflections can be collected digitally and condensed into a product to show class understanding of the SEL lesson and put in the hallway or class in which others can witness to increase their knowledge with a label that identifies student intended learning targets. As discussed by Duchesneau (2020), the teacher setting goals and monitoring goals would promote explicit teaching of SEL and further integrate the SEL skill of setting goals into content areas as well as SEL. In my observations, there was the practice of setting SMART goals but they were not geared towards any explicit SEL competency or skill. Furthermore, the monitoring of these goals is a practice to cause self-reflection towards progression.

This section is not exhaustive of all clusters but additionally, Teacher Interaction & Communication, Student Behavior, and Behavior Management can all be connected. Wilson (2017) connects teacher interaction with regards to relationships and classroom management that is a combination of Classroom Procedures and Behavior Management. A process from the Flippen Group, LLC has a program called Capturing Kids Hearts, which uses 4 questions to support students in their behavioral framework and this practice would increase multiple elements (CKH1, n.d.). This practice provides students with an opportunity for a teacher to provide feedback on the students’ response to the four questions and additionally a chance to provide or reference to skills taught that would help improve the behavior or lacking SEL skill that caused student behavior to not be at its best ability. The questions are open ended questions
to the student about their behavior and provide time for students to address their next steps. This could also be tied to Student Reflection and Student Voice depending on the quality of use by the educator. The structure of posting the 4 questions in the hallway, desk or in the classroom provides behavior management in which students are encouraged to provide their thoughts from reflecting and identify what they can do in conjunction with teacher support. In Summary, the focus on individual elements can be interrelated with multiple elements to increase improvement of promoting elements that support SEL.

**Utilization of Key Data Points**

One of the issues I was curious about was what made the scores relative so I could provide context to support districts in making future plans. For a district utilizing a SEL walkthrough tool, the scores need to be further analyzed in making strategic decisions for implementation. The lowest score is not always the area to focus. In prioritizing the data from the walkthrough, a district would benefit from analyzing their scores by looking at overall average, domain average, elements with SEL descriptors and non-SEL descriptors. For example, the results of this dissertation demonstrated that Student Reflection may have a score under the category of overall average but the element could be higher than the domain average. The implementation would not necessarily be on how to do student reflection but more on how to focus the staff to include SEL in a more embedded way in all subjects through the use of journaling activities, exit tickets, and reflective practices geared towards their SEL teachings. Scores from each element should have context which is provided by the categorical averages. Conversely, a district may be celebrating high scores based on the overall average in the domain of Classroom Environment not knowing that the average score in Classroom Environment is
categorically high. The district would instead recognize a need for possible improvement as this is really an average score. The Student Voice in Classroom Environment might have a high score, but they may overlook and not know without referring to the notes that there was a lack of either voice, choice, or leadership. The data from this section needs to be supported with context for future planning and outcomes.

In priority mapping, an organization will look at needs, wants, resources and barriers to make decisions. In addition, as discussed in the previous section, a team of educators diving into elements which have practices and structures in multiple elements could be the most beneficial decision to increase the fostering of SEL. Recall that in this dissertation, I found that as student involvement in the development of class rules increased, the scores in Student Collaboration, Student Voice and Student Rules increased. In addition, the Explicit Teaching of SEL has the potential to increase scores in Integration of SEL, Student Reflection, and Student Work Displayed. It is important to note, when looking at elements with SEL descriptors, if a district was not intentionally implementing explicit SEL and had not provided expert professional learning beyond how to teach a curriculum, then scores that are at or above the SEL descriptor average would be more appropriate to compare to. As always multiple points of data should be used from other source points to make the most informed decisions.

**Suggestion for Rubric Usage**

Based on the 483 observations used in the dissertation as well as the others that were not utilized due to not having listed the content area, there are multiple suggestions in the usage of the MNPS SEL walkthrough rubric. The development and utilization of a list of structures and practices per element to build capacity of team members who will utilize the SEL walkthrough
tool would increase reliability and validity. The detail of the complexity of each level of performance will provide individual experts with more consistency and the ability to have better inter-rater reliability to further implement the SEL elements. A report should be created which includes noted practices and structures of each element in which can be referenced back in understanding strengths and opportunities of growth for SEL implementation. Additionally, the MNPS SEL walkthrough tool has been utilized in this dissertation as baseline data, but as a tool for continued improvement, the tool could be targeted towards a set of elements in which coaches and administration could better improve in the interim. To build capacity of team members, an external rater could do the baseline data and then coach on the use of the tool as an interim assessment which then would narrow the focus as there are many elements to observe especially for those that have limited time to observe and their SEL expertise is still developing. Another suggestion is the use of other known frameworks that have walkthrough tools or processes for measuring success in the elements of Behavior Management and Student Engagement. For example, CHAMPS, an evidence-based behavior framework has tools utilized for measuring student behavior and student engagement in *Coaching CHAMPS: Building a System of Support for All Teachers* (Skyles et al., 2022). Training in these practices would develop more consistency in the use of the tool and more accurately.

**Adjustments to the Rubric**

In using this rubric for over 500 observations across 20 schools in South Cook, I recognize the need to suggest future adjustments to the tool itself. For one major reason is the progression of SEL, the increased use of technology, and providing further clarification for other users. The SEL walkthrough tool was created for the Nashville Public school system and not the
mass to adopt as a tool within their schools. In reading this section of the dissertation, Appendix B (Classroom Instruction) and C (Classroom Environment, Management, Discipline) are useful to refer to.

I think one of the most challenging elements to observe and accurately score is (2c) SEL Integration into Academics. From the framework of CASEL (2023), SEL is within the community, home and school. In the rubric, the focus is on academics but SEL integration into academics, home, and/or community can be viewed during a SEL lesson rather than academics. A teacher would suggest during an explicit lesson how they can use it in social situations during passing periods, on the bus or in the home. This should be a goal of SEL implementation as not all SEL skills are best tied to academic content. In the example provided, a practice like providing next steps outside of the classroom should be defined as a level 4 in the MNPS rubric. Otherwise, there are also situations in which there are structures which a expert might not recognize as SEL integration due to lack of knowledge of certain modalities within the school system and the educator doesn’t recognize the SEL skill purposely embedded by the school. Within the levels of performance, the words of intentional integration or explicit integration should be applied because the observation is at the classroom level, and the tool is helping recognize at what level does the class implement SEL rather than did the school just have the educator use the structure in compliance in which they don’t have any understanding. Cipriano et al. (2023) refer to the most recent meta-analysis of their 424 studies with the phrasing of explicit integration; this would be in contrast to organic or unintentional integration. Lastly, when SEL was being explicitly taught, SEL Integrated into Academic Content may not come later in the day or week. The suggestion would be to put NA during an explicit SEL lesson unless it is referenced, connected, or evidence is visible that it will be included into future content. The SEL
Integrated into Academic Content would only apply when teaching content besides SEL. An alternative would be adjusting Explicit Teaching of SEL instead of Integration of SEL to include references to the environments that SEL is used. Explicit SEL section of the rubric uses references and artifacts that gave evidence to scoring on the rubric. However, in many observations, the practice of intentionally referencing how the skill can be utilized in the school, community, or home fits to the idea of CASEL’s framework which includes those layers in which the 5 core competencies need to be taught (CASEL, 2023). In Explicit Teaching of SEL, level 2 evidence of SEL being taught displayed learning targets or class created structures such as specific SEL posters to recognize learning that did or will take place in class.

In the element of Interactive Pedagogies, I believe there should be a checkbox or section that identifies the core competency being addressed for future data points by the district. This could also be a practice by the rater to collect data on which sub or core competencies are most noticed being learned by students either integrated into the content or explicitly taught. Further in Behavior Management there should include descriptions that are inclusive of encouraging independent reflective practices for students to make adjustments or improve their behavior. Many schools used reflective practices and restorative approaches to improve behavior. Within the element of Student Behavior, as a rater, I thought it was crucial to measure student behavior based off of the expectation and rules as each class as they are different. There should be an asterisk in this section which states *** the teacher must show enforcement of the rules to be considered poor student behavior. There were many cases in which the behavior was not corrected, enforced based on school rules and/or poorly modeled by staff. The observer may not personally like the behavior of the students, but this should be on the classroom management and
expectations. It is hard to rate the misuse of cell phones when an educator is also engrossed in their cell phone.

In the element of Classroom Atmosphere, the use of trauma sensitive structures for a welcoming environment such as calm corners, stress management frameworks (zones of regulation, mood check-in, etc.) and practices (wall push, brain breaks) need to be addressed in the rubric as the focus on SEL concepts to support mental health and trauma continued to be of importance. In the element of Student Work Displayed, language should be included in the level 2 descriptor of a collective classroom use of a modality such as a bulletin board or exemplars geared towards SEL. The Student Reflection element, in level 2 utilizing visible structures to promote thinking and/or self-reflection should be included. Referring back to a previous example from the subtitle in the dissertation, Opportunities for Growth, the use of the 4 Questions by the program Capturing Kids Hearts being posted in the hallways or on the students’ desks promotes reflection. The element of Student Reflection would be better described with the terminology of meta cognitive practices which includes open ended questions, think time, metacognitive strategies or journaling through writing, artistic modalities or video recording as Guo (2022) meta-analysis highlighted.

The last element in which I see room for improvement in the MNPS rubric is Learning Expectations. From 2017 to 2023, the increased use of computer-based programs teaching our students has largely increased. I believe the description should note or include evidence of a computer-based program that identifies the learning targets or utilizes learning targets. A practice prior to the visit should include at least a conversation or series of questions asked that includes information around the Computer Based Programs in which the external rater might observe in classrooms. A suggested question includes, Is SEL integrated into the computer program? Are
there reflective practices in resources? Are learning targets and objectives prevalent in all
computer-based lessons?

In the Future Outcomes section, I will discuss how Domain 1 which is Appendix A
(Schoolwide Environment) could be shifted to combine with another tool created by Attendance
Works called the SEAT tool in order to improve the SEL environment and our current national
issue of chronic absenteeism (Attendance Works, 2023).

Future Directions

In working with multiple districts in the South Cook region, the focus for some has been
redirected towards the reduction of chronic absenteeism. The current average per school in
Illinois is 28.3% per the Illinois Report Card (ISBE, 2022). This number is 10% above 2019’s
reported average before the COVID pandemic of 2020. I believe the focus on providing the
literature of SEL and its connection to attendance would further support the importance of
implementing SEL and the elements that foster SEL. Merrill et al. (2022) study of specific
subcompetencies improving attendance is crucial but there needs to be further work as the study
revealed that not all subcompetencies increase attendance. The connection of each element and
specifically SEL would provide valuable context about the use of tools such as the MNPS
walkthrough in implementing SEL systemwide. A tool such as Scan of Environment and
Attendance (SEAT) from Attendance Works focusing on a welcoming environment would
possibly be of better use than Domain I of the MNPS (Attendance Works, 2023). This tool
covers the elements listed in Domain 1 but it additionally focuses on Teaching & Learning,
Relationships, Environment and Safety with 21 observable items. Moreover, the study of those
districts that utilized the MNPS in its full capacity and the decrease in chronic absenteeism
and/or discipline would yield future conversation as a tool. When referencing full capacity, I would be speaking of a baseline walkthrough, a rubric with practices and structures to implement as guidance, professional learning on the elements that are in need of improvement, an interim assessment on focused elements, and future enrichment as a year process.

**Suggested Process for Utilization**

1. Complete a Pre-Assessment of key programs, practices, and policies to provide an external rater with baseline information
2. Develop capacity of Administration and SEL Team through an Admin Academy called 1374: Implementing SEL Systemwide
3. Develop staff capacity of SEL with What is SEL??
4. Notify staff of a schedule SEL walkthrough
5. Complete SEL Walkthrough over a week’s period on diversified days
6. Each day provide positive feedback about noticings and guided support
7. Compile a report of findings for each element and graphical display for better statistical findings
8. Share results with SEL Team and Administration
9. Decide on focus elements to present to staff
10. Provide professional learning on selected elements and share a modified version of the report to staff with a reflective tool on each element
11. Utilize the SEL team, Instructional Coaches, and Reflective Guide for Elements that promote SEL
12. Conduct in an interim focused walkthrough with individual coaching after each session with immediate feedback

Limitations

In the use of extant data in the dissertation, there were limitations. One of the most glaring issues is the lack of use of a second external rater which can create examiner error. The collection of data was mostly done by one individual that had done some inter-rater reliability in the 2018 data, but the collection of data with two knowledgeable external raters would provide more reliability to the MNPS SEL rubric use with a second external rater. More validity would come from the MNPS SEL walkthrough tool being tested to provide evidence of its effectiveness to measure SEL Implementation. Another limitation is the fact that this study is using the tool as baseline data without any previous coaching or variations in coachings depending on the school or district. As a reader, we are not sure of the historical background of each school and their previous efforts to implement SEL.

One reason why these particular areas may have been scored lower overall is that the observations were conducted in 15-minute segments, which may not have been enough time to observe the explicit teaching of SEL or other practices. The recommendation is to have the 15-minute segment as baseline data followed by more intensive support with a focus on smaller sets of elements.

Conclusion

The use of the SEL walkthrough rubric is intended to be utilized as a data source for future implementation of practices and structures that promote social emotional learnings. The
components of a SEL walkthrough, an external rater, and a process for walkthroughs provides data that gives insight into SEL implementation in 17 elements, Classroom Instruction versus Classroom Environment, grade level, grade band, content, and demographics of schools. This tool in conjunction with an SEL screener, behavioral data, formal lessons outcomes, CASEL’s TOA needs assessment, survey results from students can be coupled together for best implementation. This tool should be seen as part of the larger picture in making decisions for SEL implementation, but it does provide the data for which structures and practices should be implemented in a school or district. Student Voice, Student Collaboration, Student Reflection are areas of concern across schools in Southern Cook, Illinois highlighted in the statistics of this dissertation. The elements of Explicit Teaching of SEL, Integration of SEL into Instructional Content and Student Work Displayed go hand in hand with the process to implement SEL and have low performance scores. Kindergarten, third, fourth, and fifth grades have the highest scores on average for each element, and there is more work to be done with the grade band of 6-8. Implementation levels of subject areas vary with opportunities to be the elements to be utilized more in Social Studies and PE/Health. One major element is the practice and structures of student reflection is limited in the classroom especially in regards to SEL. Also from the literature review, we can see the use of reflective practices as crucial to multiple competencies and interconnected with other elements. Professional learning on the SEL walkthrough elements with a focus on key elements would benefit districts in their journey to implement SEL as well as providing more in-depth training on SEL rather than a resource or curriculum.
CHAPTER 6
IN-SERVICE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL EDUCATORS

This chapter provides information about an in-service professional development targeted to school educators. The professional development has two parts: the first part provides information about student as well as adult SEL and tackles misconceptions or misunderstandings. The second part is a look into the elements that foster SEL and targeted professional learning around those elements from the dissertation that have a large opportunity for growth. The second part is quite versatile based on celebrating strengths or improving on opportunities for growth. The second part is created for districts who took part in an SEL walkthrough with focused elements or a district that did not take part with a focus on those opportunities for growth from the results of this dissertation. The professional development is designed to take approximately six hours and would best be delivered over two half-day sessions. Through the sessions a note catching guide is provided for engagement and reflection based on the SEL learnings.

The first part of the professional development will include a presentation on “What is SEL??” in which the outcomes include an understanding SEL and dealing with misconceptions or misunderstandings; developing a” why” to utilizing SEL within a participants’ role in schools; navigating the SEL descriptors; and avenues for implementing SEL system wide such as the elements that foster SEL from this dissertation. The first part of the presentation also focuses on best practices of integrating adult SEL competencies, collaborative practices, staff voice and self-reflection which tie to the second part of the presentation. The first part of the presentation will
take approximately a half day to complete. Integrated into the day’s presentation are Welcoming Inclusive Activities, Engaging Activities and Optimistic Closures to model a daily practice known as signature practices by CASEL (2023).

One of the main purposes of the presentation besides the content is to include levels of all the elements that are observed in the SEL walkthroughs. For example, the session starts off with learning targets that are unpacked, rules of engagements/norms for the day, and staff select valuable roles while engaging in the SEL content. There are engaging activities throughout the presentation with using staff participating in an elevator speech for why SEL is important. Participants next do a sorting activity to rid of misconceptions of what is SEL and what is not SEL. Next the professional learning focuses on adult competencies and connects this to where students are through a humorous video coupled with questions to cause deep reflection in which adults find challenging just like our students would in becoming self-aware. Additionally, adult practices and specific adult competencies that adults commonly discuss in other professional developments are referenced in the upper or lower right corner of slides to make further connections. After we spend time defining the 5 core competencies from CASEL and subcompetencies, the participants fill out a google form in which they choose subcompetencies that our students need and one subcompetency in which they could shift, improve, or learn more about to help their kiddos. Further, participants collaborate on this topic using a poster to recognize strengths and opportunities for growth of students/adults and time is provided to discuss, digest and reflect on the information individually and collectively.

In the second hour of the professional learning, we continue to bring outside sources on why SEL is important and clarify misunderstandings. As a group, participants are surveyed on the SEL sub competencies and then later see the results as what are the initial areas they feel
their students need and as an adult need more support. The purpose of this is it provides the
district or school with data on perception data to utilize in planning for implementation and
models the use of staff voice which in class we want to include student voice. To keep
participants engaged during the presentation, we focus on optimism and stress management by
providing explicit skills in the form of brain breaks. I also focus on making it clear that we need
to be explicit in our teachings with SEL skills so students can understand how to have agency or
self-efficacy with skills that they can apply because they know the purpose of why they were
used in the class.

In the last hour of our first session, we focus more specifically on what SEL consists of
by going past standards to deep dives into the sub competencies, benchmark, grade level
descriptors, and resources that support the planning of teaching SEL in the classroom. The
activity that supports the learning is a large tabloid document that has them choose a core
competency, sub competency, why they would teach the subject based on learning, relationships,
and improving the climate of the building, and finding descriptors that their students need more
support or they want to enrich. In this activity, they have to use social emotional learning
performance descriptors and diagrams of SEL sub competencies. At the end of the session, I
present on how we teach SEL with fidelity so staff can see the different avenues of how SEL is
learned. The note catching guide that participants use through the entire presentation has them
hear about the avenues of SEL being learned and then they reflect their level of individual
implementation. I provide examples of daily practices, explicit teaching of SEL, core content
embedment, adult modeling and role modeling, and instructional and environmental structures
and practices as seen in the MNPS SEL walkthrough tool. As a closing activity, I end with a
video which displays the SEL practices and structures to be promoted in the classroom. As they
end the 1st day training, they form a circle. We use the Optimistic Closure and they reflect on what they are practices they want to affirm as a practice they do and then a learning they want to share with the group. In the next presentation, we will look deeper and become more specific about promoting elements that foster SEL.

On day two of the professional development, I plan to cover SEL Walkthroughs: Elements that foster Social Emotional Learning which includes current research, SEL walkthrough data from the 483 observations; highlighted practices and structures from the SEL walkthroughs, and focused elements that are based on the opportunities for growth from the data. Also participants identify enhancements to current practices, affirm current practices, and collaborate on other practices that support the needed elements. The second part of the presentation will take approximately a half day to complete and depending on the district’s needs can be modified using the same format. When working with a district who has done a walkthrough, there is a portion in the beginning to differentiate by sharing celebrations and great practices and/or structures in their school relative to the findings from the statistics of this dissertation.

The focus elements in this presentation include Student Voice, Student Collaboration, Student Reflection, Student Work displayed. If a district took part in the SEL walkthrough, the SEL team and outside expert would come to a consensus about those elements in which to focus on for the professional learning. Lastly the presentation incorporates how to explicitly teach SEL and integrate SEL into content and outside of the classroom setting. Within the presentations, there is a resource called self-Assessment Scale for Practices that Promote SEL to reflect on all of the elements. This document is crosswalked with research from Yoder (2014) and uses resources from multiple sources in combination with the MNPS walkthrough tool and trauma
informed practices. Participants will be encouraged to engage in the self-Assessment Scale based on their own practices and use of structures to increase staff voice as we try to encourage student voice.

The format for presentation follows a very similar format for each element. The format includes reflecting on their focused elements to identify strengths and weaknesses. Second, for each element, participants will engage in research relative to the element to provide them with some future depth of knowledge that they can couple with their own tacit knowledge. The goal is to provide participants with knowledge so they can affirm, learn, and collaborate to improve in the element. Third, participants are provided questions to define the use of the element such as how often should students collaborate or what roles in groups do you have and what roles in the class do you have that have a defined value? For some elements such as Student Voice, participants are asked to define their understanding of student voice. However, for the element of Student Work Displayed, I do not have them define it so it depends on the elements if we need to clarify the definition. However, for each element, we go beyond a definition to make some clear goals of what we are looking for in the classroom based off of the walkthrough tool to improve on practices and collaborate on sharing great structures and practices in the school environment or classroom. The goals for each element support in defining what they can do as educators to increase the use, frequency, and performance. For example, Goal 3 for Student Voices states provides opportunities for student leadership (valued roles in the class: guest greeter; technology director; learning target champion; attendance coordinator). These goals are a reflection of the research, observations from the SEL walkthroughs, and learnings from my experience as an educator teaching SEL. In the last two steps to the format, I share if applicable visual examples from observations and/or describe examples witnessed in observation that should/could be
spread through the building. Additionally, how certain structures or practices that are currently used can be enhanced to improve performance. To make the last connection to the focus elements and practices to being promoted to foster SEL, I have participants refer back to the CASEL wheel with sub competencies and identify if they were to improve the element of focus, which sub competencies would they see being improved. For example, Student Voice would lead to the opportunity to communicate clearly and resolve conflicts when provided with leadership positions and voice. It is important to make this last step of connecting the elements to the practices and structures to the SEL framework as participants need to see these as interconnected.

To end the presentation, I bring them back to the video from the first day of “What is SEL?” The goal is to remember what they witness in the video and recognize that the educator is utilizing the elements to foster SEL. The second presentation is recommended after the SEL walkthrough when working with a district. If a district is already implementing SEL at a high level and has not done an SEL walkthrough, this second part provides awareness of the data from the South Cook walkthroughs to increase the fostering of elements and become reflective on their next steps of implementation.

Professional Development Outcomes

The professional development outcomes for sessions are as follows:

What is SEL?
- Understanding SEL and ridding of misconceptions or misunderstandings
- Developing a “why” to utilizing SEL within a participants’ role in schools
- Navigating the SEL descriptors, and
Understanding as well as assessing avenues for implementing SEL system wide

Promoting Elements that Foster SEL

• Self-assess the practices to support the elements of SEL within the classroom instruction and environment

• Identify enhancements to current practices, affirm current practices, and collaborate on other practices that support the needed elements,

• Share celebrations and great practices from the South Cook Region or their district/school.

Slide Deck

The slide deck is attached as a supplemental PowerPoint file.
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**Area 1. School-Wide Environment (school entry, main office, and common areas)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Component Score/Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1a. Atmosphere in Common Areas</strong></td>
<td>School entry, main office, and common areas are welcoming, well maintained, easily navigated, and promote a sense of community that represents the diversity in the school.</td>
<td>School entry, main office, and common areas are functioning smoothly and efficiently.</td>
<td>School entry, main office, and common areas are functioning with evidence of some disorder.</td>
<td>School entry, main office, or common areas are impersonal, evidence of disorder or lack of proper upkeep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1b. Vision/ Mission/ Values Statements Displayed</strong></td>
<td>Statements that reflect commitment to SEL and creating community are clearly displayed multiple times throughout common areas (vision, mission, values statements).</td>
<td>At least one vision/mission/values statement that reflects commitment to SEL or creating community is displayed in a common area.</td>
<td>At least one vision/mission/values statement is displayed but it doesn’t align with SEL or creating community.</td>
<td>No vision/mission/values statements are displayed in common areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1c. Student Work Displayed</strong></td>
<td>A variety of meaningful, creative, and recent student work (SEL and/or academic) is prominently displayed in more than one area, and is clearly tied to learning goals/objectsives.</td>
<td>Student work (either SEL or academic) is displayed in at least one common area.</td>
<td>Student work (either SEL or academic) may be displayed in one area but it has not been updated or it is displayed in an area that is easily overlooked.</td>
<td>Student work is either not displayed in common areas, or the work displayed is at a very basic level and/or generic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1d. Student Attitudes</strong></td>
<td>Students are friendly, orderly, and respectful to each other &amp; all adults in common areas.</td>
<td>Students are generally orderly and polite to adults and other students in common areas.</td>
<td>Students are generally respectful to other students but not to adults OR respectful to adults but not to other students.</td>
<td>Evidence of student misconduct in common areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1e. Adult Attitudes</strong></td>
<td>Adults are friendly, orderly, and respectful to each other &amp; all students in common areas. School staff is friendly and welcoming.</td>
<td>Adults are generally polite and respectful to students and other adults in common areas.</td>
<td>Adults are generally polite and respectful to other adults but not to students OR to students but not to other adults.</td>
<td>Evidence of disrespect from adults in common areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common areas observed (check all that apply):
- School Office
- Lunchroom
- Hallways
- Playground
- School Grounds
- Bathrooms
- Auditorium/Gymnasium
- Other
APPENDIX B

AREA 2: CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION
## Area 2. Classroom Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2a. Expectations and Learning Goals</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher effectively engages students about purpose, expectations, and SEL I Can statements throughout the entire lesson. Both the teacher &amp; students clearly connect lesson to prior learning and personal experience.</td>
<td>Teacher communicates purpose, expectations, or SEL I Can statements for the lesson. Teacher effectively connects lesson to either prior learning or personal experience.</td>
<td>Expectations for lesson could be inferred from teacher. Teacher may attempt to connect lesson to prior learning or personal experience.</td>
<td>Teacher does not clearly communicate expectations of lesson. No evidence of lesson connecting to prior learning or personal experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2b. Explicit Teaching of SEL Skills</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEL skills are directly taught with explicit reference to their value and when/how to apply them. Teacher explicitly models, discusses and reinforces SEL I Can Statements, competencies and skills. Evidence that most students are receptive.</td>
<td>Evidence that some SEL I Can Statements and competencies have been taught or communicated; Teacher encourages students to practice SEL skills with one another and some are receptive.</td>
<td>Limited evidence that some SEL I Can Statements and competencies have been taught or communicated. Teacher may encourage students to practice SEL skills but few students are receptive.</td>
<td>No evidence that SEL I Can Statements and competencies have been explicitly taught or teacher is unsuccessful in engaging students to develop and practice SEL skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2c. SEL Integrated into Instructional Content</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear evidence that SEL is effectively embedded into content of academic lessons; relevance of SEL to that content is highlighted and discussed.</td>
<td>Some evidence that teacher teaches or has taught SEL skills development in academic lessons.</td>
<td>Limited evidence of integration of SEL with academic content.</td>
<td>No integration of SEL into academic content.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2d. Use of Interactive Pedagogies</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher uses lesson-appropriate interactive or collaborative pedagogies that enable students to develop &amp; practice SEL skills.</td>
<td>Some evidence that teacher uses interactive or collaborative pedagogies that enable students to develop SEL skills.</td>
<td>Limited evidence that teacher uses interactive pedagogies that enable students to develop SEL skills.</td>
<td>Interactive pedagogies are not effectively and appropriately introduced or supported.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2f. Teacher Feedback and Monitoring</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher teaches for conceptual understanding and provides tailored feedback. Teacher actively monitors students' engagement and understanding throughout lesson.</td>
<td>Teacher provides generalized feedback to most students; attempts to monitor students' engagement and understanding throughout lesson.</td>
<td>Teacher provides generalized feedback to a few students; makes at least one attempt to monitor student engagement or understanding.</td>
<td>Teacher provides minimal or no feedback to students; does not monitor student engagement or understanding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2i. Student Engagement</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most students are engaged in the lesson with interest, curiosity, motivation and passion. Electronic devices are only used for classwork (if applicable).</td>
<td>Some students are engaged in the lesson with interest, curiosity, motivation and passion. Electronic devices are mostly used for classwork (if applicable).</td>
<td>Few students are engaged in the lesson with interest, curiosity, motivation or passion; some are easily distracted. Electronic devices are used for something other than classwork (if applicable).</td>
<td>Students are not engaged with interest, curiosity, motivation or passion or are distracting/disruptive during the lesson. Electronic devices are distracting and not used appropriately (if applicable).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2g. Student Collaboration</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students collaborate efficiently &amp; respectfully with each other throughout most of the lesson.</td>
<td>Students collaborate with efficiency.</td>
<td>Students may be collaborating but with little efficiency.</td>
<td>No evidence of student collaboration.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2h. Teacher as a Facilitator</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher is highly effective in facilitating student learning; uses open-ended questioning &amp; “wait time” lesson is student-centered while teacher acts as a guide; all students participate in the learning environment.</td>
<td>Teacher uses strategies to encourage learning and most students participate; teacher prompts students to join in discussion.</td>
<td>Teacher encourages learning and some students participate; majority of the lesson is teacher directed.</td>
<td>Teacher is unsuccessful in facilitating learning. Teacher talk time highly outweighs student talk time; few students participate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2j. Student Reflection</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher allows time for individual and collective student reflection by encouraging critical thinking to debrief academic &amp; social-emotional learning.</td>
<td>Teacher alerts some time for either individual or collective student reflection by encouraging critical thinking to debrief academic &amp; social-emotional learning.</td>
<td>Teacher may encourage students to reflect on the lesson but doesn’t allow time for it during class or the reflection does not encourage critical thinking.</td>
<td>Teacher does not engage student reflection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

AREA 3: CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT, MANAGEMENT, DISCIPLINE
### Area 3. Classroom Environment, Management, Discipline

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3a. Classroom Atmosphere</td>
<td>Classroom atmosphere is cheerful, welcoming, and organized. Seating arrangements enable students to talk/work directly with one another.</td>
<td>Classroom atmosphere is neutral. Seating may not be conducive for interaction/collaboration.</td>
<td>Classroom atmosphere is neutral. Seating may not be conducive for interaction/collaboration among students.</td>
<td>Evidence of some disorder in the classroom atmosphere. Seating arrangements are not conducive to student interaction or collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b. Classroom Rules</td>
<td>Classroom rules for safety and respect are visibly posted, reflect student input and restorative language. No evidence of a public student behavior tracking system.</td>
<td>Classroom rules are posted but may not include student input or restorative language. No evidence of public student behavior tracking system.</td>
<td>Classroom rules may not be visible, may include punitive language, or are written as proceduresgoals. Student behavior tracking system may be visible.</td>
<td>Classroom rules are not displayed. Student behavior tracking system is visible and actively used in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c. Student Behavior</td>
<td>All students willingly follow class rules and procedures. Students treat teacher(s) and peers with respect. Students are responsive to teacher feedback and are not disrupting the learning environment.</td>
<td>Most students appear to follow class rules and procedures and treat teacher(s) and peers with respect. Most students are appropriately responsive to teacher feedback and there are minimal disruptions to the learning environment.</td>
<td>Some students are compliant to class rules and procedures and show adequate respect. Students are somewhat responsive to teacher feedback but may be disrupting the learning environment.</td>
<td>Most students do not appear to know and/or follow class rules and procedures. Some students are disruptive and/or disrespectful in response to teacher guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d. Behavior Management</td>
<td>Teacher handles individual behavior problems quietly, discretely, respectfully, and with cultural sensitivity; promotes a learning environment for self-regulation; uses students verbally &amp; non-verbally as expected behaviors. Teacher consistently follows through until resolved. No evidence of disruption to the learning environment.</td>
<td>Teacher attempts to redirect behavior problems respectfully, discretely, and consistently. Teacher makes more than one attempt to redirect behavior with minimal disruption to the learning environment.</td>
<td>Teacher response to behavior appears to be consistent, but is conspicuous and disrupts the learning environment. After first attempt, teacher does not follow through.</td>
<td>Teacher does not attempt or is unsuccessful in the attempt to efficiently redirect behavior. Considerable time is taken away from instruction to address student behavior OR teacher simply ignores behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3e. Teacher Interaction and Communication</td>
<td>Teacher interacts warmly, respectfully, and equitably; actively engages the majority of students; affirms students contributions, and uses students names. Teacher language is encouraging, effective, and culturally responsive.</td>
<td>Teacher interactions with students are pleasant overall. Teacher invites participation from most students and engages some students. Teacher language is mostly effective and sometimes encourages.</td>
<td>Teacher interactions with students are neutral. Teacher engages few students. Minimal evidence of teacher affirming student contributions. Teacher language is somewhat affective.</td>
<td>Teacher interactions with students are poor and/or inconsistent. Teacher is unsuccessful in engaging all students or soliciting student participation/contribution. Teacher language is harsh and/or reflective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3f. Student Voice</td>
<td>Students have developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant voice, choice, and leadership opportunities. Teacher encourages students to share their ideas and many students contribute.</td>
<td>Evidence of some opportunities for students to develop their voice and leadership skills. Students are invited to share ideas and some contribute.</td>
<td>Evidence or artifacts which show students have some opportunities to develop their voice or leadership. Teacher offers some encouragement for students to share but few contribute.</td>
<td>Students have no opportunities to develop their voice and/or teacher does not invite students to share ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3g. Student Work Displayed</td>
<td>A variety of meaningful, creative, and recent student work is prominently displayed and clearly tied to academic standards, objectives, and SEL competencies</td>
<td>Some recent student work is visibly displayed in at least one area of the room and tied to academic standards, objectives, or SEL competencies.</td>
<td>Student work may be displayed but not easily visible and/or current; or student work is not tied to any standards.</td>
<td>Student work is not noticeably displayed, or the work displayed is at a very basic level and/or generic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3h. Classroom Procedures</td>
<td>Procedures are clear and it’s obvious the teacher has explained and demonstrated them; students understand and practice procedures.</td>
<td>Procedures are clear and there’s evidence the teacher has explained or demonstrated them; most students know the procedures.</td>
<td>Procedures are not clear and there is limited evidence that they have been explained or demonstrated. Few students appear to know the procedures.</td>
<td>Procedures are not present and most students do not appear to know or practice procedures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>