TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF ADMINISTRATORS ON THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL CLIMATE: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Affiliated Faculty of
The College of Graduate and Professional Studies
at the University of New England

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

This intrinsic, qualitative single case study took place at a suburban, public elementary school in Massachusetts with teachers from second through fifth grade. The study addressed the importance of administrative support and engagement on teachers’ social and emotional health and sustaining a positive school climate. The study aimed to help stakeholders understand the perceptions of teachers regarding the perceived impact of administrators’ support and engagement on teachers’ health and well-being. The online survey used convenience sampling that included seven topics from a pre-existing instrument. The semi-structured interviews were based on purposive sampling and included open-ended questions. A total of 16 participants responded to the online survey and eight participants engaged in semi-structured interviews. Transcripts were checked by participants for accuracy after thematic analysis was completed using open, axial, and selective coding. When reporting the results of the study, the online survey was used to support the themes that were identified based on the qualitative interviews. Previous researchers have found that schools are more successful when there is high quality leadership. Additionally, strong leadership leads to collective teacher efficacy and positive school outcomes and climate. Results of this study show that districts must look to engage administrators in leadership training, utilize teacher and staff input during decision making, adopt schedules that prioritize teacher and student health and opportunities for collaboration, and form committees to select and implement vertically and horizontally aligned, evidence based SEL programs.

Keywords: social and emotional learning (SEL), social and emotional competencies (SEC), school climate, teacher health and well-being
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the participants in the study. Thank you for your participation and openness. I appreciate you sharing your opinions and perceptions. This study truly would not have been possible without you.

To my family. Thank you for loving me endlessly even when I had to miss events, cancel plans, or work during family time. I hope this work has made you proud!

To my partner, Ashley. Thank you for your ongoing support, determination to keep dogs quiet, and willingness to have my beautiful mind on display in the kitchen. I appreciate you letting me think out loud and run ideas by you on a regular basis.

To my friends, Danielle and Amanda (and their families). Thank you for your sacrifices and support throughout this process. Knowing that you are on my team has been a driving factor in my ability to finish this study.

To my colleague and friend, Jen. Thank you for understanding my continuous need for personal growth. I appreciate your willingness to listen to my venting and ability to challenge my thinking in a productive way.

To my lead advisor, Dr. Audrey Rabas. Thank you for your ongoing support, willingness to read numerous drafts, and patience throughout this entire process.

To my secondary advisor, Dr. Jennifer Scott. Thank you for your support from the initial drafts and confidence in my initial research idea to the final submissions.

To my affiliate advisor, Dr. Amy Rickett. Thank you for your insight, time, and positive attitude throughout this entire process.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has been an increasing focus in the field of education throughout recent years. Students’ academic achievement and ability to adjust to social and emotional situations are impacted by how they understand and negotiate relationships and conflicts with others (Schonfeld et al., 2015). The SEL of students’ is greatly impacted by the Social and Emotional Competencies (SEC) of teachers and the environment the students are learning in; therefore, it is important to focus on making improvements in teaching and school climate (Jones et al., 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). When the school’s culture is healthy, people will be more willing to work (Perna, 2022).

The case for including SEL in the classroom for students as well as focusing on the Social and Emotional Competencies (SEC) of teachers is backed by a plethora of resources. Oliveira et al. (2021) argued that teacher burnout impacts their own mental health and well-being as well as their performance, the climate of their classroom, and student mental health. Even though teachers may not discuss their stress levels with students, children are able to observe manifestations of teacher stress (Perna, 2022). Additionally, researchers have found that teachers who reported higher levels of stress had an increased number of students with mental health problems (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Researchers have found that high quality leadership can lead to successful schools, and more specifically, can improve student engagement and achievement (Shapiro et al., 2019). Additionally, strong leadership leads to collective teacher efficacy and positive school outcomes and climate. It is important for administrators to build connections with teachers and commit to earning their trust (Perna, 2022). Teachers who do not believe they are effective or feel they lack adequate support are less likely to implement SEL programs with fidelity, which has proven to
have less successful outcomes (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Relying on teachers to practice self-care means adding more to their plate. Instead, Perna (2022) argued that there is a need to take work off the plate of teachers to lighten their load, providing them with more time to form connections with their students. This care from others can be essential for teachers (Perna, 2022).

**Definition of Key Terms**

The following terms are conceptually defined in this study as:

**Burnout:** A psychological state resulting from extended interpersonal stressors including exhaustion, cynicism and detachment from work, and feelings of ineffectiveness (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

**Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL):** A U.S. organization that developed informed SEL frameworks and focused on integrating SEL that is evidence-based into state-wide education systems while promoting SEL on a national level (Williamson, 2021).

**Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):** An act that mandates states record a non-academic measure of learning, encourages states to highlight learning opportunities that allow students to demonstrate mastery, and funds districts who are supporting growth in SEL (Williamson, 2021).

**Evidence-Based SEL Program:** Includes the five competency areas as outlined by CASEL, opportunities for regular practice, programming that spans multiple years, has support available for training and implementation, and has documented evidence of a positive impact (Lawson et al., 2018).

**Intrapersonal Competencies:** Awareness, thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and skills that one prefers to address and apply inwardly (Taylor et al., 2018).
**Interpersonal Competencies:** The tendency to direct knowledge, skills, and attitudes outward with other people or institutions (Taylor et al., 2018).

**Job Stress:** A physical and emotional response resulting from resources and worker needs not aligning with the requirements of a job. This can lead to poor psychological and physiological health and potential injury (Greenberg et al., 2016).

**Mindfulness:** Being actively present in the current moment by observing thoughts and feelings one is experiencing without judgement (Greenberg et al., 2016).

**Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS):** A program that uses universal, targeted, and intensive supports to address varying needs of the most at-risk students, including social, emotional, behavior, and academic needs (Eklund et al., 2018).

**Positive Youth Development (PYD):** Building relationships with youth that provide support, constructive interactions, and focus on enhancing their strengths (Taylor et al., 2017).

**Relationship Skills:** The ability to navigate interactions with diverse people and groups, and to establish and maintain healthy, supportive relationships (CASEL, 2021).

**Responsible Decision-Making:** Making caring, constructive choices about individual behavior and interactions within diverse instances (CASEL, 2021).

**School Climate:** The environment (physical, academic, social, and disciplinary) of an institution that is defined by its culture, practices, objectives, beliefs, procedures, characteristics of interactions, and organizational constructs (Osher & Berg, 2017).

**School Theory of Action (School ToA):** A framework for providing tools and resources intended to build and maintain a school-wide approach to SEL (Goldberg et al., 2018).

**Self-Awareness:** Understanding internal thoughts, emotions, and values and how they influence actions in different contexts (CASEL, 2021).
**Self-Management:** The ability to achieve goals and to effectively manage emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in unique situations (CASEL, 2021).

**Social and Emotional Learning (SEL):** The process of acquiring and applying knowledge, skills, and attitudes to manage emotions, achieve personal or collective goals, build and maintain supportive relationships, feel and show empathy, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2021).

**Social and Emotional Competencies (SEC):** Skills, knowledge, attitudes, and mindsets needed to succeed in life (Taylor et al., 2018).

**Social Awareness:** The ability to understand perspectives of diverse groups of people and to empathize with others (CASEL, 2021).

**Standards:** Expectations and guidelines of what students should learn in school and as a result what should be taught and assessed (Eklund et al., 2018).

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem that was addressed in this study is the importance of administrative support and engagement in teachers’ social and emotional health and sustaining a positive school climate. Lower stress and burnout are related to high trust between teachers, their colleagues and leadership (Greenberg et al., 2016). Furthermore, if the relationships between teachers and their administrators, colleagues, or students are unsatisfactory, teachers may experience increased stress as well as lower job satisfaction and commitment to students. Further research was needed to determine how the actions administrators take have an influence, positive or negative, on the social and emotional health and well-being of elementary school general education teachers. Evidence has shown that strong leadership improves school climate and increases positive school outcomes through collective teacher efficacy (Shapiro et al., 2019). Additionally, teachers feel
empowered and experience greater job satisfaction if leaders provide opportunities for collaboration (Greenberg et al., 2016). If administrative support for teachers is lacking, teachers may be less likely to practice and model healthy social and emotional behaviors.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding the perceived impact of administrators’ support and engagement on teacher health and well-being in a public elementary school located in a suburban Massachusetts town. This study aimed to discover the strengths and weaknesses as they relate to administrators’ role in educators’ social and emotional wellness. I remained open to investigating other themes identified through the data collection if applicable (i.e., the impact of administrator actions on student SEL and potential suggestions for improving teachers’ social and emotional competencies and well-being).

**Research Question(s) and Design**

In seeking to evaluate administrative involvement in the social and emotional wellness of teachers, the research was guided by the following questions:

**RQ1:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ support influences teachers’ social and emotional health?

**RQ2:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ engagement influences teachers’ social and emotional health?

**RQ3:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding the social and emotional supports needed to sustain a positive school climate?
This study used an intrinsic, qualitative single case study design. A case study design was the best fit for this study because it enhances credibility by using more than one data source and allowing for a holistic analysis of the data. The intended outcome of this case study was to provide stakeholders a better understanding of general education teacher perceptions related to how administrators influence teachers’ social and emotional health and the supports needed to sustain a positive school climate. Based on my personal interest and desire to describe the perceptions of teachers, an intrinsic focus best defines the purpose of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Additionally, the research focused on a single site and did not look to draw comparisons between more than one case.

The study took place at a suburban, public elementary school in Massachusetts. Second through fifth grade students attend this school after a recent merger between the two previous schools. The focus of this study was on teachers currently working as general education practitioners. Data collection started with an online survey made available to all general education teachers in the building. The survey was used in conjunction with interviews that consisted primarily of open-ended questions administered to individual teachers. While the interview had an initial structure, I remained open to an unstructured interview if the participant wished to respond outside of the intended questions.

**Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

The definition of a conceptual framework varies depending on the source; however, Ravitch and Riggan (2017) stated that “a conceptual framework is an argument about why the topic one wishes to study matters, and why the means proposed to study it are appropriate and rigorous” (p. 5). The conceptual framework for this study was developed using my personal
interests and goals, my identity and personality, three theoretical frameworks, and various relevant topical research.

**Personal Interests, Goals, and Identity**

I have worked as a fifth-grade math and science teacher in the same suburban Massachusetts town for the past ten years. I frequently work with students that have diverse needs including, but not limited to, specialized learning disabilities in reading and math, social pragmatic disorders, autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit disorder, and generalized anxiety. At times, I have worked with teachers to include students who are primarily enrolled in a substantially separate classroom as their least restrictive environment for most of their school day into the mainstream classroom for morning meeting. Additionally, I believe that students of all abilities benefit from strong relationships with their teachers and peers. I highlight non-academic lessons in the classroom to strengthen academic learning. Although I agree with current trends in education that stress the importance of SEL for students, I believe that there is a relative weakness in schools related to SEC for teachers. This is especially true as it relates to administrative support for teachers’ social and emotional health and well-being.

I have been diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder and seasonal affective disorder. Through conversations with colleagues, several individuals have shared similar mental health diagnoses and the requirement of some form of medical treatment for their diagnoses. This realization highlighted the need for further research on the social and emotional health and well-being of teachers. School administrators and personnel can often be heard encouraging teachers to engage in self-care, but it is my belief that this is not a strong enough approach to improving teachers’ social and emotional health. This study further examined how teachers perceive the
current administrative support for their social and emotional health and how adequately prepared teachers feel to support the needs of their students.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

Several theoretical frameworks were considered when developing the conceptual framework for this study. However, this study focuses on two theories. First, Maslach’s theory of burnout supports the need to proactively prepare teachers to handle the stress of the profession and potential conflicts that may impact their classroom communities. Administrators can assist with this theory by working to reduce the stressors that can lead to teacher burnout. Additionally, Bandura’s (1989) social cognitive theory outlines the impact of administrators on the teachers that work for them stating, “Humans have evolved an advanced capacity for observational learning that enables them to expand their knowledge and skills on the basis of information conveyed by modeling influences” (p. 21). While each of these theoretical frameworks helped paint the picture of how various factors influence teachers’ social and emotional health and well-being, it was important for this study to focus on how administrative support and engagement influenced the teachers they lead.

**Relevant Topical Research**

When reviewing the literature related to SEL, several themes emerged that can be linked to the current study. The review of relevant literature starts by examining educational policies and state standards with a focus on current regulations, continuing needs at the federal and state levels, and opportunities for funding SEL initiatives. With the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, the federal government acknowledged the need for instruction and accountability in non-academic areas of education such as attendance and SEL (Corcoran et al., 2018; Williamson, 2021). An increasing number of states have
developed age-specific standards and a greater number of resources for the adoption of evidence-based SEL interventions have become available (Goldberg et al., 2019). Systemic change is becoming more feasible for districts as federal and state policies are helping to prioritize self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

The literature review then addresses a school wide approach to SEL implementation with an emphasis on utilizing evidence-based programs and practices. School wide approaches can lead to improved partnerships with families and community members as well as coordinated efforts to combine curriculum, teaching, and learning within the school environment (Goldberg et al., 2018). Involving teachers in the process of SEL program implementation allows them to share best practices and effective approaches with their co-workers (Martinez, 2016). The School Theory of Action (School ToA) developed by CASEL provides a framework for implementing whole school SEL that outlines tools and resources necessary for creating a sustainable program (Goldberg et al., 2018). If the school’s staff and students are all well versed in the same high expectations and reinforcements, continuity and consistency can be achieved (Goldberg et al., 2018; Martinez, 2016).

It then moves into a discussion of maximizing SEL success using knowledge of the mental health of students, school climate, and best practices for SEL interventions including MTSS. When students’ mental health needs are not met, they are less likely to be able to access academics at school (Panayiotou et al., 2019). Furthermore, teachers who believe in the benefits of SEL instruction are more likely to implement SEL programs with fidelity (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Providing teachers with appropriate training, developing staff self-efficacy, and improving teacher confidence and motivation can all lead to increased SEL
program success (Goldberg et al., 2019; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Creating and maintaining schools that have a positive climate is another key element to effective SEL instruction (Main, 2018; Reeves & Le Mare, 2017). SEL programs can be strengthened using various levels of intervention, universal screenings, regular student progress monitoring, and informed decision making (Anthony et al., 2021).

The literature review concludes with an examination of the impact of teachers’ social and emotional health on students while concentrating on pressures facing teachers, risks of poor teacher SECs and the impact of relationships between teachers and students. Standardized tests as a form of accountability can lead to SEL instruction being placed on the back burner even though teachers and administrators may be aware of the benefits that SEL instruction can have (Martinez, 2016). If job demands and resources to meet the demands are not balanced, teachers may experience greater levels of stress (Oliveira et al., 2021; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Administrators and policy makers should take care to maintain healthy expectations of teachers and work to provide teachers with appropriate supports if they want to decrease teacher burnout and increase teacher attrition (Flushman et al., 2021). By proactively preparing teachers to build quality relationships with students and increase their own SECs, teachers will be more equipped to have positive impacts on their students and decrease behavioral challenges in the classroom (Jones et al., 2021; Poulou, 2017). Well-structured and implemented teacher communities can lead to improved student learning and teacher practices by allowing teachers to reflect on personal practices with others that have shared interests (Flushman et al., 2021).
Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

This study was built on several assumptions. I assumed that teachers and administrators alike value the social and emotional health and well-being of educators. Furthermore, it was also assumed that teachers’ own social and emotional health has an impact on their students. Currently, it is unknown what specific impact teacher health and well-being has on students. When reading the results of this study, it is important to consider the assumption of participant honesty in their responses to the survey and interview questions.

Limitations existed within the study that were outside of my control. When considering the responses of the participants, it is important to note that I was reliant on the self-reporting of the participants in the survey and interview portions of the study. Participants were encouraged to respond honestly; however, it is possible that information may have been withheld when responding to survey or interview questions. Furthermore, this study did not allow for causality to be established. Participant responses were intended to provide a description of teacher perceptions but were not intended to determine a cause-and-effect relationship. Additionally, I could not control which teachers responded to the survey or agreed to participate in the interviews. Availability, fear of identification, and lack of understanding are factors that may have influenced teachers’ willingness to participate in the study.

The scope of this study was determined based on several factors that impacted the feasibility of the study. First, I limited participants to the school at which I am currently employed. In doing so, this also restricted the study to teachers in second through fifth grade. Furthermore, I included only teachers currently working in general education classrooms, although some of the educators interviewed are dual certified in other areas. The intention of this delimitation was to allow for a more thorough understanding of a specific set of teachers rather
than a broad picture through the lens of multiple types of positions within the school. This also
allowed for further protection of participants because individuals who do not share a position
with another staff member would not be easily identifiable based on their responses. The
delimitations applied to the scope of the research were essential to guaranteeing that the study
could be completed as planned.

**Rationale and Significance**

In education, it is widely accepted that teachers play an important role in SEL skill
development. Preservice training encourages students working toward becoming an educator to
regularly embed SEL into their daily practice and can support proactive versus reactive
responses to misbehavior (Main, 2018). Additionally, professional development is essential for
teachers who are preparing to implement SEL programs and lessons into their classroom
curriculum (Goldberg et al., 2018).

It is also important for teachers to be well versed in Social and Emotional Competencies
(SEC) to keep their own minds and bodies healthy (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). This can positively
impact relationships with students, reduce teacher burnout, and help teachers to manage the
increasing demands placed on them. Teacher’s own emotional intelligence and SEL can be
beneficial for establishing positive relationships which can reduce behavioral difficulties in the
classroom (Poulou, 2017). By focusing on improving educator’s own skills related to SEL, it is
likely that student outcomes can be increased.

It is easy to encourage teachers to engage in an increased amount of self-care, however
that expectation can be unrealistic within the current confines of their work responsibilities.
Investigating how administrators currently impact the social and emotional health and well-being
of educators will provide insight into areas of relative strength and weakness. I hope that by
bringing to light the perceptions of teachers as they relate to the role administrators play in their social and emotional wellness, administrators and educators will gain insight into how to continue improving educators’ mental health, reduce burnout symptoms, and increase teacher retention.

**Summary**

Chapter 1 of this study began with an introduction of SEL for students and teachers. It also begins to set the stage for the argument that teacher health and well-being and SEC have an impact on students. Additionally, chapter 1 defined key terms, introduced the problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions and design, provided an overview of the conceptual framework, identified the assumptions, limitations, and scope of the study, and concluded with the rationale and significance of the study. Chapter 2 will provide a more in-depth evaluation of the theoretical frameworks on which this study is based and a review of relevant literature. Chapter 3 will examine the methodology utilized for this study including a detailed look at the study participants, methods used for data collection, a brief description of the data analysis process, and a focused look at potential ethical impacts. Chapter 4 will provide an in-depth analysis of the data and presentation of the study’s findings. Finally, Chapter 5 will interpret the findings and their importance. It will also examine the study’s implications and recommend action steps as well as areas for future research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Within education, the topic of social and emotional learning (SEL) has become a well-known phrase throughout recent years. The passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is one factor that has led to an increase in state and local school district SEL initiatives for students (ESSA, 2015). While not all states have standards for SEL, or may only have standards for specific grade levels, an increasing number of states are introducing these standards. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a U.S. organization that developed informed SEL frameworks and focused on integrating SEL that is evidence-based into state-wide education systems while promoting SEL on a national level (Williamson, 2021). They also evaluate programs, conduct research, advise legislation, and partner with districts on implementation (CASEL, 2021). Regardless of state standards, CASEL has outlined five core competence areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Furthermore, schools can utilize a variety of SEL assessments, free or for purchase, to determine where students’ strengths and weaknesses lie and evaluate their progress within the core competencies as instruction and intervention is delivered. Educators widely accept that SEL is an important component of student success in and out of the classroom, and researchers have found that when teachers lack social and emotional competencies (SEC) or experience burnout, student outcomes are negatively impacted (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Although a myriad of research on SEL exists, little has focused on the perceived role of administrators on teachers’ health and well-being.

This chapter begins by providing an overview of SEL with a focus on CASEL and educational policies and standards. Then, the chapter reviews research related to assessing SECs
which includes using a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), the Student Success Rating System (SRSS), and the limitations of assessments. It subsequently examines school wide approaches to SEL implementation based on programs and practices that are evidence-based, utilizing staff input, the impact of school climate, and involving parents and the community in the decision making and problem-solving process. Additionally, the chapter examines how SEL success can be maximized with a review of professional development, the mental health of students, and best practices of SEL interventions. Then, the chapter delves into the pressures facing teachers, related risk factors of poor teacher SECs, relationships between teachers and students, and the potential benefits of an increased focus on teachers’ social emotional health and well-being. Finally, a summary of the literature review findings concludes the chapter.

**Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

I have worked with fifth-grade students of various abilities in a suburban Massachusetts town for the past ten years. Throughout that time, I was diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder and seasonal affective disorder. The health and well-being of educators is only one component to successful implementation of district wide social and emotional learning (SEL) initiatives (CASEL Districtwide SEL Action Planning Workbook, 2020). Administrators and school personnel can encourage educators to participate in self-care, however I believe more can be done to better support teachers in the development of positive coping strategies. Researchers have found that as teachers prepare to implement SEL, educators themselves must be able to demonstrate strong social and emotional competencies (SEC; Jones et al., 2017).

Upon review of the relevant literature, I found that there are educational policies and state standards in place related to SEL in schools. The relevant research, which will be reviewed in this chapter, also demonstrates the impact of teachers’ social and emotional health on their
students. Furthermore, an analysis of assessment methods for SEC is included. Additionally, research on school wide approaches to SEL and the needs of teachers related to social and emotional health and well-being supports the need for further study on administrative support for teachers’ SEC.

The theoretical framework for this study is supported by two theories: Maslach’s theory of burnout and Bandura’s social cognitive theory. This study examined the stress of the teaching profession and potential risk factors as well as the influence of administrators’ support and engagement on teachers’ social and emotional health and well-being. First, Maslach’s theory of burnout argues that excessive job demands and chronic stressors in teaching can lead to teacher burnout. A second theory, Bandura’s social cognitive theory (1989), argues that individuals learn by watching others. In this instance, teachers learn by watching the school and district administrators that they work for. The combination of these theories helped develop the basis for inclusion of relevant research in the literature review. Together with my personal background, the conceptual framework was developed.

**Maslach’s Theory of Burnout**

While teaching can be a rewarding profession, it is frequently stressful. Maslach and Leiter (2016) described individuals working in professions requiring intense ongoing emotional contact as being at increased risk for burnout. Oliveira et al. (2021) argued that burnout is driven by chronic stressors in teaching and the perception that job demands are excessive. They also believed that many of the demands placed on teachers are specific to the profession. These pressures can be difficult for those not in the profession to conceptualize.

According to Maslach and Leiter (2016), burnout can be conceptualized as a form of job stress with a focus on organizational contexts rather than physical characteristics. However, they
also outlined a variety of symptoms related to exhaustion including headaches, chronic fatigue, gastrointestinal disorders, muscle tension, hypertension, cold/flu, and sleep disturbances. To reduce the likelihood of teachers experiencing burnout symptoms, administrators can work to manage student behaviors that can be disruptive, improve teachers’ self-efficacy, and increase enthusiasm within the school.

Interventions for burnout can be focused on individuals, small groups, or entire schools. Maslach and Leiter (2016) provide recommendations for decreasing the potential for teacher burnout. They suggested that individuals change their work patterns, increase coping skills, receive support from others, participate in relaxation strategies, improve health and fitness, and improve their self-understanding. Personal conflicts and a disruption of job tasks could lead to negative peer relationships among teachers. Therefore, Maslach and Leiter (2016) argued that burnout, “should be considered as a characteristic of workgroups rather than simply an individual syndrome” (p. 106). It can be argued that administrators can help to reduce symptoms of burnout among members of their workgroup by being supportive and engaged members of their school community.

**Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory**

Bandura’s social cognitive theory supports the need for further focus on teachers’ social and emotional health and well-being. Bandura’s social cognitive theory suggests that social experiences influence behaviors. In this case, teachers are going to learn from their administrators. Bandura (1989) argued that individuals learn from the most knowledgeable and proficient peers; which one can argue are school and district administrators. Additionally, Bandura asserted that positive models lead to positive outcomes. If administrators demonstrate
strong social and emotional health and well-being, the teachers that work for them are more likely to demonstrate similar behaviors.

Bandura (1989) also wrote that vicarious affective learning impacts others because, “when individuals are in good spirits they treat others amiably, which produces positive affect…Conversely, when individuals are dejected, ailing, distressed, or angry, the people around them are likely to suffer as well in one way or another” (p. 30-31). In essence, administrators need to support teachers by showing positivity and kindness.

**Review of Relevant Literature**

An increasingly popular initiative in education is social and emotional learning (SEL). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is one of the most widely known organizations that works with a network of multidisciplinary experts throughout the country to advocate for equitable access to SEL instruction (2021). CASEL, an experienced advisory group, defines SEL as the process of acquiring and applying knowledge, skills, and attitudes to manage emotions, achieve personal or collective goals, build, and maintain supportive relationships, feel and show empathy, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2021). The need for skills often attributed to SEL instruction goes beyond the four walls of a classroom and is rising on the list of skills needed for many jobs in the workforce (Williamson, 2021). Poor SEL skills could negatively impact the ability of an individual to be hired for jobs and maintain their positions after starting them.

**Educational Policies and State Standards**

Federal and state policies have sparked social and emotional learning (SEL) initiatives and mandates across the country (Corcoran et al., 2018; Williamson, 2021). A scientifically informed SEL Framework was developed using extensive research, funding from philanthropists,
and support from CASEL (Williamson, 2021). The framework from CASEL (2020) outlines five core competence areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Implementation of the frameworks begins with classroom instruction and climate, but also reaches to culture, practices, and policies at the schoolwide level and can be supported by federal and state guidelines.

**Current Regulations and Initiatives**

The federal government acknowledged the need for instruction and accountability in non-academic areas of education such as attendance and SEL with the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, which supports the need to educate the whole child (Corcoran et al., 2018; Williamson, 2021). The ESSA replaced portions of the No Child Left Behind law allowing districts to focus on areas like school readiness, mental and behavioral health, and the inclusion of SEL in school improvement plans (CASEL, 2021). Furthermore, SEL standards and assessment implementation could provide the necessary data to focus on school-wide and individual improvement of related skills (Eklund et al., 2018). This data would provide evidence of the districts’ focus on non-academic areas of education and student learning, making them eligible for funding to further support their efforts (Williamson, 2021).

Increased awareness of the benefits of early intervention has led to all 50 states adopting preschool (Pre-K) SEC that were considered freestanding (CASEL, 2021; Corcoran et al., 2018; Eklund et al., 2018). Policy makers who wish to guide pedagogy and increase accountability are being encouraged to develop SEL standards and benchmarks for kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) at the state level in addition to the previously established Pre-K competencies (Williamson, 2021). In 2018, only 11 states had separate and specific SEL standards, while most
states included SEL skills within health education standards (Eklund et al., 2018). More recent data shows that SEC have been adopted at the K-12 level in more than 20 States (CASEL, 2021).

The increasing number of states adopting competencies for SEL is supported by CASEL’s Collaborating States Initiative (CSI) which advocates for creating systemic, high-quality SEL through collaborative relationships between various state education agencies (2021). Partner states work as a community, while receiving technical assistance, to establish a foundation of support, improve the competencies and capacity of adults, and look to continuously develop SEL instruction for students using data (CASEL, 2021).

**Continuing Needs at the Federal and State Levels**

When systemic change is spearheaded by governmental policies and officials, the importance of related initiatives is brought to the forefront of local decision making (Goldberg et al., 2018). Moreover, the development of age-specific standards, resources for the adoption of evidence-based SEL interventions, and national support of whole school SEL could lead to the systemic change needed for states and districts to prioritize self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Federal and state policies can enhance the implementation of positive youth development (PYD) using SEL (Taylor et al., 2017).

Williamson et al. (2021) emphasized that before new policies can be enacted at the federal or state levels, a foundation needs to be laid by involving a variety of stakeholders. Additionally, data that is policy-ready must be collected and provided to support the need for change. Involving scientists, businesses, investors, philanthropists, technology experts, and government officials in the discussion will create the organizational structure needed to build a widespread infrastructure that prioritizes SEL in education. In the meantime, schools should
continue to implement SEL programs and interventions at the local level while new policies are
in the works. If individual states are looking to increase their accountability of SEL in schools,
developing standards and benchmarks would be an appropriate next step while additional data is
collected to support the need for federal policies.

**Funding for Social and Emotional Learning Initiatives**

Researchers have suggested that analyzing the cost and benefits of interventions intended
for whole schools would provide deeper understanding of the economic returns that can be a
result of an investment in SEL programs (Goldberg et al., 2018). Some schools may face
difficulty financing the adoption of SEL programs and providing the necessary training to
effectively implement them (Lawson et al., 2018). By advocating for policies at the national
level, required resources are more likely to be allocated to districts to support SEL program
implementation (Goldberg et al., 2018). Furthermore, policies that highlight the benefits that
SEL can have on the future success of students are more likely to demonstrate the need to invest
in resources for teaching social and emotional competencies (SEC).

**Assessing Social and Emotional Competencies**

To maximize the effectiveness of social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools,
teachers and students must participate in assessment of their current skills to identify what their
areas of relative strength and weakness are. A variety of assessments are available for this
purpose. However, identifying which assessments best meet the needs of a school or district
based on their limitations can be a challenge.

**Multi-Tiered System of Supports**

Teaching SEL in schools should use various levels of interventions to be most effective
(Anthony et al., 2021). Therefore, assessments will be most useful in the context of a Multi-
Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) if different formats are available. At the tier I level, assessments should allow for universal screenings that are brief and can be used for all students. They should also be intended for monitoring student progress and making instructional decisions for class or school wide instruction. At the other end of the spectrum, comprehensive assessments should be available to determine individual SEL interventions at the tier III level.

**Student Success Rating System**

One of the most widely researched assessments for SEC is the Student Success Rating System (Anthony et al., 2021). The original teacher rating scale utilizes a three-point frequency scale using *never (0), sometimes (1), or very often (2)*. Multiple raters assess student social skills and problem behaviors when completing this scale. Anthony et al. (2021) and Gresham et al. (2020) describe a more recent adjustment to the form that was renamed the Social Skills Improvement System – SEL Edition (SSIS-SEL). This assessment still allows for multiple raters (i.e., teachers and school staff, parents and caregivers, and the student) and is intended for individuals from age three to 18. The SSIS-SEL is a 51-item assessment that is nationally normed (Anthony et al., 2021). This form of assessment involves a four-point Likert scale ranging from *never (0) to almost always (3)*. While the data collected utilizing this scale might help to determine next steps for students at tiers II or III, it would be too time consuming for use as a tier I assessment for all students.

One of the benefits to the SSIS-SEL is its alignment to the CASEL framework (Gresham et al., 2020). The assessment looks to identify student skills, evaluate potential outcomes, and includes academic competence on the teacher version. Most recently, researchers created a brief form of the SSIS-SEL assessment (SSIS-SELb-T Scale) that is limited to 20 items and reduced the completion time from approximately ten minutes to under five minutes. Anthony et al. (2021)
suggest that further research is needed on the self-awareness portion of this rating scale, however they assert that it can be used for universal screening and progress monitoring. Contradictory to the original SSIS-SEL assessment tool, this format would be less beneficial for determining specific interventions at the tier II or III levels.

**Limitations of Assessments**

When determining which tool to implement for assessing SEC, it is important to consider how various assessments align with the needs of the school or district (Crowder et al., 2019). While assessments like the Behavior Assessment System for Children – Second Edition (BASC-2) are norm-referenced and intended for ages two through 25, they also require specialized training. Most often these types of assessments require both the time from teachers to complete the 16 primary scales and five composite scales and a counselor or clinician who is properly trained to interpret these ratings. Using these types of assessments is time consuming and requires extensive costs that may be prohibitive for many schools, especially if the number of individuals trained to administer the assessment is limited.

In addition to the specialized nature of some SEL assessments, most assessments rely on teacher observations (Crowder et al., 2019). For schools that wish to use the CASEL framework when implementing SEL instruction or intervention, it is important to consider if assessments are aligned to those competencies outlined by the framework. Some of the SEL assessments available limit the ability to use the rating scales for determining the impact of instruction because they have a maximum score that prohibits this use.

**School Wide Approach to Social and Emotional Learning**

School wide approaches to social and emotional learning (SEL) promote an interrelated and coordinated action combining curriculum, teaching, and learning with school environment
Martinez asserts that SEL should be a school wide project (2016). This is supported by the argument that reduced feelings of isolation in staff and the promotion of student growth are both outcomes of a school wide approach (Reeves & Le Mare, 2017). Teachers want to be a part of the process to implement SEL programs and interventions (Martinez, 2016). They are generally eager to observe their co-workers and to share best practices that are effective in their classroom environments.

CASEL developed the School Theory of Action (School ToA) as a framework for implementing whole school SEL (Goldberg et al., 2018). The framework outlines tools and resources that are necessary for a sustainable program. Schools must consider what their priorities are for SEL instruction when identifying a program they plan to adopt because the approaches and outcomes vary among them (Jones et al., 2017). Many evidence-based programs exist that can be reviewed by committee members when considering how to best meet the needs of the school.

Goldberg et al. (2018) provides a list of benefits to implementing programs at a school wide level. Continuity and consistency in classroom and school systems is best achieved when all staff members and students are well versed in the same high expectations and reinforcements. Additionally, school wide approaches can reduce time pressure by utilizing an interdependency of academics and SEL. Building students’ relationships with their teachers and peers helps to provide context in a social environment for building social and emotional competencies (SEC).

**Evidence-Based Programs and Practices**

To create learning conditions that are equitable, policies, resources, and actions should be aligned to support systemic SEL (Mahoney et al., 2021). Various universal, evidence-based
programs are available to support the SEL of students. When using SEL interventions that are universal, students’ social skills, academic performance, overall attitude, and behavior can be improved (Lawson et al., 2019). Positive SEL outcomes and high-quality implementation referred to as ‘SAFE’ practices is described by CASEL to include sequenced, active, focused, and explicit instruction (Dobia et al., 2020). Furthermore, the implementation of evidence-based programs can be strengthened by planning and building foundational supports, strengthening adult SECs, coordinating approaches that promote student SEL, and using data to reflect and practice constant progress (Mahoney et al., 2021). Coordinated efforts allow for SEL to be integrated with academic subjects by providing universal access to a learning process. This also provides a more cost-effective approach to SEL instruction and reduces the chance of students being singled out.

**Utilizing Staff Input**

The development of a strong infrastructure in SEL interventions at a school wide level requires planning and support from stakeholders beyond the classroom (Goldberg et al., 2018). For programs or interventions to be most impactful, a committee should be established for planning and implementing new initiatives. Involving teachers in the decision-making process helps empower educators and encourage them to embrace change (Martinez, 2016). Another part of the process for developing a strong network of SEL support involves utilizing specified staff meetings and professional development opportunities for committee members to progress monitor the implementation of any new programs or initiatives (Goldberg et al., 2018).

The implementation and ongoing support are also strengthened by establishing school wide expectations and rules, creating a common system for encouragement, and hanging posters that reinforce skills or competencies that are taught to students throughout the building
Goldberg et al., 2018). School wide expectations and culture can encourage educators to continue implementing and supporting SEL instruction (Martinez, 2016). This allows SEC to increasingly become more obvious, and eventually academics will become complimentary.

**School Climate**

Researchers have suggested that prioritizing classroom and school climate is essential (Reeves & Le Mare, 2017). If there is a strong school climate, other aspects of the day will run more smoothly, and overtime will feel less burdensome. Main (2018) also argues that skills and drills are less effective for students than a strong classroom and school climate combined with a focus on student mindsets. SEL interventions will be most impactful if all staff members are engaged in the daily practice and reinforcement of skills throughout the entire building as positive school culture is strengthened (Goldberg et al., 2018).

**Parent and Community Involvement**

In addition to involving the entire school community, research suggests that parent and community involvement are beneficial to the success of SEL instruction (Goldberg et al., 2018). When community components were implemented that included support from parents and local agencies, a significantly higher effect size was found on social and emotional adjustment. Schools can start by sending out letters with the key principles of SEL interventions. It would also be valuable for parents and community members to be invited to meetings or workshops that outline risks and protective factors for when students are at home or otherwise outside of the school building.

**Maximizing Social and Emotional Learning Success**

Effective curriculum in academics and SEC involves the alignment between content and the expected sequence of SEL skill development in students (Jones et al., 2017). Programs
should outline what the most important components are so that those implementing the program are aware of which elements are building blocks for future skills. Furthermore, programs that are evidence-based and include modeling and ongoing practice of real-life experiences will provide the greatest benefit to students (Goldberg et al., 2018).

If educators want students to experience academic success, it is essential that there is first a focus on meeting the basic needs of the student. This includes placing a focus on preventing mental health challenges. To meet this need, social and emotional learning (SEL) can be utilized as a tier I intervention for all students with further tiered supports utilized as needed. Understanding the impact of SEL on students’ mental health and best practices for interventions is a helpful tool for teachers.

**Professional Development**

According to Schonert-Reichl (2017), one of the driving factors in the success of a student SEL program is the teachers delivering the instruction. If the teachers do not believe in, or “buy in” to, the benefits of SEL instruction, the fidelity with which a program is implemented could be at risk. Adequate training, high self-efficacy in staff, teacher attitudes, confidence, and motivation are all helpful tools for increasing buy in and in turn determining the success of a new program (Goldberg et al., 2018; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Interventions that incorporate teacher SEC and well-being increase the efficacy of the program implementation (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

It is important for school leaders to remember that knowledge does not always equal practice (Reeves & Le Mare, 2017). Ample training for all staff is important for effective SEL instruction (Goldberg et al., 2018). Application of strategies, interactive teaching, cooperative learning, and problem-solving methods are areas where training is necessary. Additionally, staff
should be trained in positive communication and parent collaboration strategies. Furthermore, the involvement of parents and development of community partnerships will help provide the best SEL intervention outcomes.

Continuation of SEL programs requires that professional development for staff is ongoing and time for continued assessment and evaluation is provided (Goldberg et al., 2018). Integrating SEL throughout the school’s infrastructure and providing opportunities for frequent communication will also increase a program’s impact. Without this, staff members are more likely to abandon best practices (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Research has found that outcomes were increased when there was a positive school culture, adequate support from principals, and higher levels of training for all staff members.

**Mental Health of Students**

Understanding the impact of SEL on students’ mental health and best practices for interventions is a helpful tool for teachers. The quality of students’ mental health is an important factor in determining their ability to access academics at school (Panayiotou et al., 2019). Additionally, students who are experiencing difficulty at home, trouble sleeping, lack access to basic needs (i.e., food, water, or shelter), have experienced trauma, or a myriad of other factors, their mental health is likely to be negatively impacted. Increasing SEC can reduce mental health challenges which would otherwise put academic achievement at risk.

**Best Practices of Social Emotional Learning Interventions**

To increase the positive impacts of SEL interventions, Taylor et al. (2017) asserted that scientifically proven school wide SEL programs should be sequenced, active, focused, and explicit. Building competencies using activities and opportunities to practice skills in a coordinated manner allows educators to deliver the content in a meaningful progression.
Likewise, including active learning components in lessons that allow students to be engaged participants is a beneficial program element. Furthermore, when elements of a program have a systematic alignment of learning activities with the SEC, and those competency alignments are included in the program, they conform to the suggested best practices for SEL instruction.

Taylor et al. (2017) outlined another best practice related to instruction which involves a focus on positive youth development (PYD). Social and emotional learning is one form of PYD that focuses on outcomes at school, in careers, and in life. The concept of PYD encompasses the enhancement of student skills as a way of predicting long term success through promotion and preventative impact. The theoretical frameworks of SEL align with the 15 core objectives outlined in PYD. Other forms of PYD include service learning and mental health promotion. Awareness of PYD in conjunction with SEL instruction could help to maximize student outcomes.

**Meeting the Social and Emotional Needs of Teachers**

When boarding a plane, adults are reminded to put on their own oxygen masks before assisting others. The same principle can be applied when considering social and emotional learning (SEL) in a school setting. If the teachers have not had their social and emotional needs met, they will be unable to provide meaningful support to the students they are working with.

**Pressures Facing Teachers**

Teachers face several pressures daily. Even though administrators and teachers may be aware of the value that SEL instruction can have, the focus on standardized tests as a form of accountability related to cognitive development often puts SEL on the back burner (Martinez, 2016). Many teachers want to support the development of competencies in SEL, but fitting SEL lessons into an already overwhelming workload can be daunting and can lead to resistance as one
more thing being added to their plate (Main, 2018). It takes time and consideration to determine how to best incorporate SEL into the current curriculum. Without proper time to determine what and how to teach SEC, teachers lack confidence in how to best implement balanced SEL and academic instruction.

Flushman et al. (2021) explained the importance of maintaining healthy expectations of teachers and providing educators with appropriate supports to encourage their success and the success of their students. The authors argue that focusing on how to improve SEL for teachers in their initial years as educators could help to decrease teacher burnout and increase attrition in the profession. Kim et al. (2021) asserted that discipline problems can trigger emotional exhaustion in teachers; these disruptions can lead to lower job satisfaction and increase educators’ chances of leaving the profession. The authors argue that implementing mindfulness-based SEL interventions with a focus on trauma-sensitive attitudes is one method for reducing teacher burnout.

**Risks of Poor Teacher Social and Emotional Competencies**

One of the greatest stressors for teachers is the imbalance between their job requirement demands and the resources needed to capably meet those demands (Oliveira et al., 2021; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). When people feel like a situation is out of their control, and are therefore threatened, their stress level is increased (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). High levels of teacher stress combined with decreased satisfaction in their job negatively impacts instruction and student outcomes such as graduation, continuation into higher education, and future employment. Researchers have found that when teachers are experiencing stress, students are also stressed. Oliveira et al. (2021) claimed that the impact of job-related stress can lead to poor mental health, lack of positive school climate, and decreased teacher performance.
Commonly referred to as teacher burnout, this stress is considered a three-dimensional syndrome involving emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, or cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment or feelings of efficacy (Oliveira et al., 2021). Nagoski and Nagoski (2019) described “human givers” as individuals who continue returning to stressful jobs day in and day out. They added that when humans, such as teachers, are confronted with people in need as a part of a “helping profession,” they often get stuck offering their assets to others. This component of burnout can lead to decreased health, difficulty developing and maintaining relationships, and reduced productivity at work. Moderately high to high levels of burnout have been seen in 20 to 30 percent of America’s teachers.

When educators are unable to provide a positive model of what we expect from students when asking them to practice social-emotional competencies, positive student outcomes are put at an increased risk (Flushman et al., 2021). As a result, challenging student behaviors could negatively impact teacher health and well-being as well as student success. Teachers can be equipped with tools for developing a trauma-informed classroom using mindfulness-based SEL programs (Kim et al., 2021). When working with students impacted by trauma, this can be helpful in reducing stress for teachers. Focusing on preparing teachers to face adversely affected students can help ensure students are met with proactive classroom management strategies.

The current focus of SEL interventions for teachers most frequently utilizes an individualized approach (Oliveira et al., 2021). This may include things like cognitive-behavioral practices and mindfulness training. On the other hand, an organizational approach would focus on reducing workload and encouraging teamwork among staff members. Schonert-Reichl (2017) asserted that lack of support from colleagues and basic resources required for teaching leads to increased externalizing, interpersonal, and internalizing behaviors in students. Shifting the focus
of teacher SEL to an organizational approach could help to alleviate some of the negative factors associated with teacher burnout (Reeves & Le Mare, 2017). Stress and fatigue in teachers can reduce tolerance for poor student behavior and become a barrier for relationship building between staff and students.

**Relationships Matter**

The quality of relationships between students and teachers impacts school experiences for children (Jones et al., 2021). However, relationship building is challenging if there is a high level of behavior incidences (Poulou, 2017). Positive interactions between teachers and students that encourage healthy social and emotional development are more likely when teachers have higher SEC and/or experience lower stress levels (Jones et al., 2017). Increasing the personal and professional social-emotional competencies and skills of teachers can prevent behavioral challenges in students (Poulou, 2017).

Improved teacher health and well-being has a positive impact on their relationships with students. This focus can increase student SEL, teachers’ feelings of competence, and the development of supportive classrooms; all of which can lead to improved academic achievement (Schonfeld et al., 2015). Poulou (2017) asserted that teacher and student relationships also benefit from strong teacher emotional intelligence (EI). When relationship challenges exist due to lack of teacher EI and SEL, a greater incidence rate of emotional and behavioral difficulties is witnessed in students. Alternatively, increasing student SEL competence through relationship building can encourage healthy interactions among peers.

The relationships that teachers have with students impact both their social and academic performance in the classroom. Schonert-Reichl (2017) wrote that the Prosocial Classroom Model developed by Jennings and Greenberg suggested that the ability of teachers to successfully
implement SEL programs and practices, develop relationships with students, and effectively manage their classroom is impacted by their well-being and personal SECs. Kim et al. (2021) suggested that:

Mindfulness-based SEL provides teachers with the skills needed to respond to disruptive classroom behavior that is likely related to past trauma...[and] trauma-informed training encourages teachers to repair adversity-affected students’ deficient self-regulatory capacities and attachment difficulties through engaging in co-regulation of emotions and establishing secure teacher-student attachment. (p. 2)

The combination of mindfulness-based SEL programs with trauma-informed approaches provides the framework for reducing behavioral consequences and prepares teachers to defuse defiant behaviors. In turn, teachers are less likely to experience symptoms of burnout related to problem behaviors in the classroom.

**The Benefits of Improving Teacher Health and Well-Being**

Strong teacher health and well-being promotes the development of meaningful relationships with students (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Additionally, strengthening SEC in teachers increases their ability to promote those skills for students. Personal skills and personality combined with professional skills and effective classroom management are part of being considered an expert teacher (Poulou, 2017). If teachers are feeling burnt out due to chronic exposure of workplace stressors, their ability to demonstrate expert teaching skills could be prohibited (Oliveira et al., 2021).

Flushman, Guise, and Hegg (2021) focused on the development of New Teacher Learning Communities (NTLC) as a strategy for supporting the SEL of teachers in their first years. These programs can encourage community building, build on reflective practices, and
allow for collective problem solving. To support new teachers and reduce the challenges they face in their initial year of teaching, teacher preparation programs can work in conjunction with school districts that utilize NTLC (Flushman et al., 2021). Teachers who critically reflect are most likely to make changes based on knowledge. Furthermore, professional practices can be improved through participation in learning communities that offer time for reflection with others that have similar needs and interests (Flushman et al., 2021). These opportunities are more beneficial than traditional professional development opportunities. Well-structured and implemented teacher communities can lead to improved student learning and teaching practices.

Providing teachers with opportunities to increase coping strategies can help teachers feel a sense of accomplishment and protection from day-to-day challenges. One way to improve teacher well-being is to incorporate mindfulness (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). This strategy can lead to increased job satisfaction, empathy, and ability to regulate emotions. By preparing teachers to manage behavioral challenges in the classroom, it is more likely that teachers will be able to break the stress cycle (Kim et al., 2021). This can result in lower levels of teacher burnout and increased feelings of self-efficacy. Furthermore, when teachers have a strong understanding of trauma, student behavior is likely to improve, and disruptions to the learning environment can be reduced. In turn, this improvement in classroom management can positively impact teachers’ job satisfaction and reduce their emotional exhaustion. When teachers build their own SECs, they are more well-equipped to promote SEL in their students and maximize the impact of their teaching (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

**Summary**

This literature review demonstrates the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) in classrooms and what is already known about effective SEL implementation. However,
there are gaps in the research related to how the health and well-being of teachers impacts high quality SEL instruction for students. It can be argued that student SEL will not be effective if the teacher delivering the instruction is not able to demonstrate the competencies being taught. The Covid-19 pandemic has led to increased initiatives in schools for a focus on student SEL. It is important for educational leaders to recognize that teachers cannot meet the needs of students if their own needs are not met.

Currently, most teacher focused SEL interventions utilize individual approaches rather than looking to implement organizational changes. While the individual needs of teachers should be prioritized, it is equally important that educational leaders focus on making changes to organizational approaches as a method for reducing teacher workload. This study focused on teacher health and well-being as a driving factor for improving student outcomes.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The problem that was addressed in this study is the importance of administrative support and engagement in teachers’ social and emotional health and sustaining a positive school climate. Lower stress and burnout are related to high trust between teachers, their colleagues and leadership (Greenberg et al., 2016). Furthermore, if the relationships between teachers and their administrators, colleagues, or students are unsatisfactory, teachers may experience increased stress as well as lower job satisfaction and commitment to students. Further research was needed to determine how the actions administrators take have an influence, positive or negative, on the social and emotional health and well-being of elementary school general education teachers. Researchers have provided evidence that strong leadership improves school climate and increases positive school outcomes through collective teacher efficacy (Shapiro et al., 2019). Additionally, teachers feel empowered and experience greater job satisfaction if leaders provide opportunities for collaboration (Greenberg et al., 2016). If administrative support for teachers is lacking, teachers may be less likely to practice and model healthy social and emotional behaviors.

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding the perceived impact of administrators’ support and engagement on teacher health and well-being in a public elementary school located in a suburban Massachusetts town. This study aimed to discover the strengths and weaknesses as they relate to administrators’ role in educators’ social and emotional wellness. I remained open to investigating other themes identified through the data collection if applicable (i.e., the impact of administrator actions on student SEL and potential suggestions for improving teachers’ social and emotional competencies and well-being).
In seeking to evaluate administrative involvement in the social and emotional wellness of teachers, the research was guided by the following questions:

**RQ1:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ support influences teachers’ social and emotional health?

**RQ2:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ engagement influences teachers’ social and emotional health?

**RQ3:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding the social and emotional supports needed to sustain a positive school climate?

This study used an intrinsic, qualitative single case study design. A case study design was the best fit for this study because it enhances credibility by using more than one data source and allowing for a holistic analysis of the data. The intended outcome of this case study was to provide stakeholders a better understanding of general education teacher perceptions related to how administrators influence teachers’ social and emotional health and the supports needed to sustain a positive school climate. Based on my personal interest and desire to describe the perceptions of teachers, an intrinsic focus best defined the purpose of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Additionally, the research focused on a single site and did not look to draw comparisons between more than one case.

This qualitative single case study was based on two theoretical frameworks: Maslach’s theory of burnout and Bandura’s social cognitive theory. Maslach’s theory of burnout is characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). They argue that changing work patterns, increasing coping skills, being the recipient of support, participating in relaxation strategies, improving health, fitness, and self-understanding can help to reduce the
potential for teacher burnout. The impact that administrators have on the teachers that work for them is further supported by Bandura’s social cognitive theory. Bandura (1989) argued that individuals learn by watching the actions of those around them. If the individuals in administrative roles are not adequately addressing, proactively or reactively, the needs of teachers through preparation, ongoing support for creating a positive school climate, and recognition of the impact of their actions have on teachers, the social and emotional health and well-being of teachers will be at increased risk.

As teachers prepare to implement Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs into their classroom curriculum, professional development is essential (Goldberg et al., 2018). Schonert-Reichl (2017) also argues that teachers must be well versed in Social and Emotional Competencies (SEC) to keep their own minds and bodies healthy. Poulou (2017) wrote that establishing positive relationships with students, in turn reducing behavior difficulties in the classroom, is strengthened by stronger teacher emotional intelligence. When administrators support the need for teachers to participate in self-care, decrease the risk of burnout related to increased demands, and encourage the development of stronger relationships with peers and students, improved student outcomes are more likely.

**Site Information and Demographics**

The study took place at a suburban, public elementary school in Massachusetts that serves second through fifth grade. The school opened in the 2021-2022 school year after previously educating students at two different schools which each housed two of the four grade levels. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) reported that in 2022-2023, the study site was serving 167 second graders, 155 third graders, 152 fourth graders, and 168 fifth graders. With 303 females and 339 males, the school had a total of
642 students. The study site had seven general education teachers in second, third, and fourth grade with eight teachers in fifth grade. Second and third grade classrooms were self-contained while content specific teaching (ELA & Social Studies, Math & Science) occurred in three teams of fourth grade classrooms and four teams of fifth grade classrooms. Enrollment data from MA DESE lists 1.7% of students as African American, 1.2% of students as Asian, 15.3% of students as Hispanic, 4.4% of students as Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic, and 77.4% of students as White. Additionally, 52% of students were identified as “high needs” while 17.8% of students were identified as “students with disabilities.” The school had 39.9% of students identified as “low-income,” 9% of students identified as “English Language Learner,” and 16% of students identified as “First Language not English” (MA DESE). As can be expected, the enrollment data of the school may have fluctuated as students transferred in and out of the district.

Participants and Sampling Method

Participants for this study were selected based on convenience sampling (online survey) and purposive sampling (semi-structured interview). If administrators want to create a positive school climate, it is crucial that they support teacher and staff social and emotional well-being (Kaiser Permanente, 2021). Creating a culture of staff well-being relies on active leadership from administrators, opportunities for teacher and staff involvement, and acknowledging potential challenges. Moreover, in the United States burnout leads to approximately half of new teachers leaving the profession within their first five years (Kim et al., 2021). Disruptive student behavior can trigger emotional exhaustion which in turn threatens school functioning. Administrative support and engagement in reducing risk factors that lead to burnout is essential for the health and well-being of teachers. While these risk factors apply to staff members throughout the school community, this study focused on teachers currently working as general education practitioners.
because they made up the greatest percentage of staff at the study site. Additionally, general education teachers spent the greatest amount of time with consistent students during the school day. Human brain function is shaped by relationships with others; therefore, general education teachers must develop and maintain relationships with students that promote safe and connected classrooms (Arseneaux & Remington, 2019). Based on the study site, all participants were teaching in grades two through five at the time of the study. The school had 29 general education teachers. The survey remained open for 10 days and a minimum of 16 responses were collected. Semi-structured interviews were conducted until the saturation point was reached. Eight individuals were chosen as participants for this portion of the study. The sampling methods and participants for each portion of the study are described in further detail in the sections that follow.

**Online Survey**

Convenience sampling was used to collect the online survey data used in this study. This sampling method is based on the ease of access to the individuals at the study site and their willingness to complete the online survey (Kumar, 2019). At the time of the study, the school had 29 general education teachers who were eligible to participate in the online survey portion of the study. While not all eligible teachers were required to submit responses, it was made available to any general education teacher at the study site who wished to complete the survey. The survey remained open for 10 days and 16 responses were collected.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

The interview portion of this study was based on purposive sampling. This was the ideal sampling method for this study because it allowed discretion as to which eligible individuals were most likely to share information with me and would possess the information required to
achieve the purpose of the study (Kumar, 2019). Throughout the course of the study, participants were added to the study until reaching the saturation point which was identified when minimal new information was discovered through additional semi-structured interviews. At the time of the study, the school had 29 general education teachers. The focus on SEL at the district level was initiated during the fall of 2017 at the study site. To gather the most comprehensive information possible during the semi-structured interviews, individuals were considered eligible if they had worked in the district for a minimum of five years (28 eligible general education teachers). This ensured that individuals who participated in the study had experience with the phenomenon being studied. Eight individuals were chosen as participants for the study which meant that about one third of all eligible participants were included in the semi-structured interview portion of the study.

**Instrumentation and Data Collection**

This study collected data using an online survey and semi-structured interviews to gather information for further analysis. When selecting the topics to be included in the online survey and semi-structured interviews, I considered what topics would appropriately assess the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ support and engagement influences teachers’ social and emotional health. Furthermore, I selected questions that would assess the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding the social and emotional supports needed to sustain a positive school climate.

Data collection started with an online survey based on a pre-existing instrument that was made available to all general education teachers at the site of the study. Additionally, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews to collect data from participants. The sections below describe in depth the instrumentation and data collection process for each portion.
Online Survey

The survey was introduced to staff via email with a letter of introduction to the study and explanation of the consent process (Appendix A). Panorama Education’s “Teacher and Staff Survey” was used to collect information on the following topics: well-being, belonging, teacher self-reflection, professional learning about SEL, school climate, staff-leadership relationships, and school leadership. Panorama Education’s survey is intended to reveal the perceptions of students, teachers, and staff in relation to how socially and emotionally supported they feel and how strong they feel their own SEL skills are (Moulton & Gehlbach, n.d.). Student growth can be improved through social, environmental, and educational supports. This survey has a variety of measures but suggested using between four and seven topics that are specific to the needs of the district. Student GPA, test scores, behavior, and attendance were found to be positively correlated to the use of the SEL measures developed by Moulton and Gehlbach and published by Panorama Education. The surveys are available for use by educators at no charge.

Each topic consisted of varying numbers of selected response questions with five response options for each question. While some topics also include free-response questions, those questions were reserved for the interview portion of this study. The well-being survey consisted of 14 questions. It is intended to assess the perceptions that faculty and staff have of their professional well-being. For example, the survey asked, “During the past week, how often did you feel ________ at work?” and had a range of emotions including engaged, excited, exhausted, frustrated, happy, hopeful, overwhelmed, safe, stressed out, and worried (Moulton & Gehlbach, n.d., p. 37). I chose to include this topic in the survey because it provided information about how the teachers at the site considered their own mental health at the time of the study.
To gain background information about the school climate, I used the belonging and school climate topics. The belonging topic consisted of five questions, while the school climate topic had nine questions. The belonging topic was used to determine how valued faculty and staff felt they were in relation to the school community. For example, this survey asked, “How well do your colleagues at school understand you as a person?” (Moulton & Gehlbach, n.d., p. 38). The school climate topic was used to assess how teachers felt about the social and learning climate at the site. One question from this topic read, “Overall, how positive is the working environment at your school?” (Moulton & Gehlbach, n.d., p. 46).

The teacher self-reflection and professional learning about SEL topics was used to gather information about the teachers’ opinions on their ability to teach students and the opportunities to improve their ability to teach SEL specifically. The teacher self-reflection topic consisted of eight questions, five of which had an option for teachers to select if they did not understand the competency the question was asking about. This topic focused on teaching SEL to students and asked teachers to rate their strengths and areas for improvement. For instance, the topic asked, “Thinking about social awareness in particular, how confident are you that you can support your students’ growth and development?” (Moulton & Gehlbach, n.d., p. 39). Respondents had the option to select, “I am not sure what we mean by ‘social awareness’” if they were not clear on what the question was asking. The professional learning about SEL topic had seven questions. The topic asked teachers to rate the amount and quality of opportunities for professional growth and learning that had been made available to them related to SEL. An example of one of the questions from this topic read, “In terms of social-emotional learning (SEL) in particular, how supportive has the school been of your growth as a teacher?” (Moulton & Gehlbach, n.d., p. 40).
To assess how leaders at the school interact with faculty and staff and the effectiveness of the leaders, participants completed the staff-leadership relationships and school leadership topics. Both topics had nine questions each. The staff-leadership topic was intended to focus on how teachers perceived the relationships between school leaders and faculty and staff at the site. For example, the topic asked, “How friendly are your school leaders toward you?” (Moulton & Gehlbach, n.d., p. 50). The school leadership topic aimed to determine to what degree teachers feel the site’s leadership is effective. One question from this topic read, “Overall, how positive is the influence of school leaders on the quality of your teaching?” (Moulton & Gehlbach, n.d., p. 51).

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

The interviews that were conducted for this study were primarily open-ended and were considered semi-structured. If the participant wished to respond outside of the intended question, I allowed them to speak freely. Free-response questions from the sections of Panorama Education’s “Teacher and Staff Survey” that were used in the online survey were used as the initial basis for the semi-structured interviews. Additionally, I developed questions as a supplement to those developed by Moulton and Gehlbach. In all, participants were asked a total of 23 questions.

When conducting the interviews, I made sure to follow the scripts and read the questions from the Semi-Structured Interview Protocol/Questions (Appendix C) verbatim. Participants were asked about their understanding of SEL. These questions were used to determine the background that the participant had in relation to the topic of SEL. Furthermore, teachers were asked about their own well-being. This portion of the interview included questions like, “What can your school or district leaders do to better support your well-being?” Then, participants were
asked questions about how administrators model SEC for teachers. One example of a question from this portion of the interview was, “How would you describe the level of support from school or district leaders regarding your own social and emotional health and well-being?”

The next portion of the interview focused on sharing the responsibility of teaching SEL to students. An example of a question from this section was, “How can teachers at your school benefit from shared responsibility in teaching SEL to students?” The next portion of the interview focused on school climate. Teachers were asked questions such as, “If you could change anything about working at your school, what would you change?” Another interview topic that participants were asked to answer questions about is their thoughts about teacher self-reflection and professional learning about SEL. Participants answered questions such as, “What professional development topics should your administrators focus on to better support teachers’ social-emotional growth and improve school climate?” Before concluding the interview, I asked the participants if they had any concluding thoughts and reminded them how they could contact me if they wished to change any of their responses or withdraw from the study.

Data Analysis

I used thematic analysis as the foundation for this research. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) described case studies as a complex examination of a bounded phenomenon based on multiple perspectives. In this case study, I gathered data from multiple general education teachers at the study site to gain insight into the perceptions of educators as it related to SEL at the school.

Online Survey

I used the online survey to further support the categories and major themes that were developed through qualitative data analysis. The focus of the online survey was to reveal the opinions and feelings of the teachers who responded. When the online survey closed, I
completed a thematic analysis based on trends from the survey. This thematic analysis was then used in conjunction with the semi-structured interview data to address the research questions presented in the study. The raw survey data is reported throughout the results section of this study and can be found in Appendix F. No quantitative analysis of the data took place.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

At the conclusion of the semi-structured interviews, I provided participants with transcripts for their approval and further comments or clarification if desired. Furthermore, participants were engaged in member checking as themes were generated from the initial analysis. The constant comparative method of data analysis was used to openly code interviews at the conclusion of each through examining, naming, and categorizing the interview data. Axial coding was utilized to develop concepts and look for relationships within the categories identified. Finally, I used selective coding to determine the significance of data and build a storyline. This type of research allowed for some control within the study which helped provide more relevant and worthwhile insight into the specific phenomenon as it related to the study site (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

**Limitations, Delimitations and Ethical Issues**

Research studies should carefully consider any limitations, delimitations, and ethical issues that may be present in the study. Within a case study, limitations exist that could lead to weaknesses. By discussing the potential problems, readers are equipped to determine whether the findings are transferable to other cases that are similar in nature. Based on the restricted nature of the study, it may be helpful for readers to be aware that the findings of this study could be specific to the site and may not be transferrable to other schools and/or districts.
Limitations

Responses to the online survey and semi-structured interviews were reliant on the self-reporting of the participants. It is possible that participants may have withheld information even though they were encouraged to respond honestly. No effort was made throughout the study to determine a cause-and-effect relationship. Eligible participants may have chosen not to participate for various reasons including availability, fear of identification, or lack of understanding.

Delimitations

The study delimitations are an essential component of ensuring the research can be completed as planned. While it is not possible to guarantee anonymity, every effort was made to maintain the confidentiality of the participants by protecting their identities. Pseudonyms were used to help maintain confidentiality for the participants of this study when analyzing and reporting data. However, it is possible that some responses may unintentionally provide clues as to the names of the participants. Eligible participants were limited to those working as second through fifth grade general education teachers in the school at which I am currently employed. Selecting only general education teachers was intended to provide understanding from a specific lens rather than a broad picture from various positions throughout the study site. Participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

Ethical Issues

Communications, recorded interviews, and school/district documents were converted to electronic files and stored on a password protected computer. Interview recordings were transcribed using fathom, an add-on to Zoom, and the data was hand coded. Ink signed consent forms were secured in a locked container in my home. Any field notes and reflections that were
handwritten were locked in a location separate from the consent forms. Upon conclusion of the study, any hard or paper copies were destroyed with a crosscut shredder and all recordings of interviews were erased/destroyed.

I believe that teachers and administrators within the site agree that the social and emotional health and well-being of educators is essential. Based on the research presented in the review of relevant research, I assumed that teachers’ own social and emotional health has an impact on their students. I also assumed that participants in the study provided honest responses to the online survey and semi-structured interview questions.

As an employee of the school the study took place at, it is possible that personal biases may have influenced the types of questions included in the semi-structured interviews, interpretation of responses from participants, and themes that were coded during analysis of the data. Every effort was made to disclose these potential biases, acknowledge their potential impact, and account for them throughout the study. One conflict of interest that may have impacted the study was the connection between the study participants and the administrators. I chose carefully worded interview questions that were intended to provoke constructive rather than critical responses from the participants. The goal of the research study was clearly communicated to potential participants as well as administrators and other stakeholders to ensure that no negative judgement was presented in a manner that might be construed as a personal attack.

**Trustworthiness**

This section describes the credibility of the research(er), potential for transferability, dependability of the results, and confirmability of the perceived outcomes. Kumar (2019) writes that, “trustworthiness in a qualitative study is determined by four indicators closely related to
validity and reliability: credibility (paralleling internal validity), transferability (paralleling external validity), dependability (paralleling reliability), and confirmability (paralleling objectivity)” (p. 276). This section outlines how each of these indicators of trustworthiness is evident in this study.

Credibility

One method of data collection for this study is an online survey. The survey was used to gather raw data related to the perceptions of teachers at the study site. Semi-structured interviews were conducted until I felt that the saturation point had been reached. This ensured that interviewing additional participants would not lead to new themes. The semi-structured interviews were checked by participants to ensure that the results of the study were credible. In doing so, participants determined whether the final report, specific descriptions, and themes were accurate rather than examining the raw interview transcripts. They were also given the opportunity to provide comments on the findings. I was in frequent communication with interview participants to make certain they agreed with the codes and themes that I identified. This process ensured that participants agreed with, and validated, the findings by giving their final approval. By collecting multiple sources of information through the online survey and semi-structured interviews, triangulation took place.

Transferability

It is possible that due to the single case study design of the study, relating findings to other schools, grade levels, or teaching assignments may be limited. The most likely sites to have comparable results if the study is replicated would be those schools in the same district as the study site. It is likely that teachers at various schools, even within the same district, would have differing opinions on the SEL implementation process, current instructional practices, and areas
of focus for improvement. These perceptions could differ based on the age of the students, buy-in of the teachers within the school, leadership at the school, and overall school climate.

**Dependability**

To increase the dependability of the study, I used an existing online survey from Panorama Education. This survey was already proven to be well-aligned with the frameworks established from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) and was designed to impact students’ social relationships, motivation, and self-regulation (Moulton & Gahlbach, 2016). The semi-structured interview protocol was documented so that it could be repeated by another researcher. The protocol includes a specific script that was used during each of the individual interviews. Additionally, the interview participants completed member checks of the interview transcripts and verified the thematic analysis that was written using the interview data. These steps increased the dependability of the study.

**Confirmability**

While completing the study, it was important to provide evidence for how the interpretations were derived. I made every effort to remain objective and limit the impact of potential bias related to the case study. The online survey data was used to provide concrete evidence of the perceptions of teachers within the study site. When coding the semi-structured interviews, I took the same steps to code each of the interviews that were conducted. To ensure confirmability, the participants of the semi-structured interviews were also engaged in member checks. This allowed for the participants to challenge themes that I identified if they did not agree with them. If participants did not agree with the themes that I identified, they would have
been edited to reflect the feedback and members were consulted with again until they agreed with my findings. However, no participant reported any disagreements to the identified themes.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the purpose of the study as well as the theoretical framework that provides the basis for the study and the research questions. Additionally, the chapter discussed in detail the methodology used for the study. After describing the study site, I explained how participants were selected for the study. The online survey used convenience sampling while the semi-structured interviews were based on purposive sampling. The instrumentation and data collection section of this chapter described how the online survey and semi-structured interviews were executed. The online survey was based on a pre-existing instrument from Panorama Education. Seven topics were chosen for this portion of the study and all survey questions were selected response. For the semi-structured interviews, questions were open ended, and responses were recorded for transcription purposes.

Thematic analysis took place for this study. The online survey data is published using raw data and no quantitative analysis took place. The transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were checked by participants. When coding the data, I used a constant comparative method to openly code the interviews. Furthermore, I looked to develop concepts and identify relationships using axial coding. Finally, selective coding was used to determine the significance of the data and establish a story line.

This chapter also described in depth the limitations, delimitations, and possible ethical concerns related to the study. The results of this study were reliant on self-reporting from participants and eligible individuals could choose not to participate. While anonymity is not possible, pseudonyms were used when transcribing the interviews and reporting the results to
protect participant confidentiality. Additionally, the study was only open to general education teachers in second through fifth grade at the study site. For the purposes of the study, I assumed that administrators and teachers believe SEL is important, that the SECs of teachers impact the students, and that participants will answer questions on both the online survey and in the semi-structured interviews honestly. As a staff member of the study site, it is possible that my interpretation of the data may have been impacted by bias. However, every effort was made to report areas for potential biases, develop questions that will limit ethical concerns, and to engage in constructive rather than critical analysis of the responses to the online survey and semi-structured interviews.

The last section of this chapter explained the trustworthiness of the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted until the study reached its saturation point. Further credibility was established using member checks. Additionally, multiple sources of data were used for triangulation purposes. It is up to the reader to determine transferability; however, it may be helpful to note that transferability may be limited due to the single case study nature of the design. The perceptions of teachers may vary depending on the school or district. To increase dependability, I used a pre-existing instrument for the online survey. The Semi-Structured Interview Protocol/Questions (Appendix C) included specific scripts and the questions that were asked verbatim during interviews. To provide concrete evidence of teacher perceptions, an online survey was used. Coding for each of the interviews followed the same steps, which are outlined in the following chapter. Regular member checks took place throughout the semi-structured interview process and data analysis phases of the research. The upcoming chapter will discuss the results of the study.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study addressed the importance of administrative support and engagement in teachers’ social and emotional health and sustaining a positive school climate. Lower stress and burnout are related to high trust between teachers, their colleagues and leadership (Greenberg et al., 2016). Furthermore, if the relationships between teachers and their administrators, colleagues, or students are unsatisfactory, teachers may experience increased stress as well as lower job satisfaction and commitment to students (Greenberg et al., 2016). Further research was needed to determine how the actions administrators take influence, positive or negative, the social and emotional health and well-being of elementary school general education teachers. Evidence has shown that strong leadership improves school climate and increases positive school outcomes through collective teacher efficacy (Shapiro et al., 2019). Additionally, teachers feel empowered and experience greater job satisfaction if leaders provide opportunities for collaboration (Greenberg et al., 2016). If administrative support for teachers is lacking, teachers may be less likely to practice and model healthy social and emotional behaviors.

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding the perceived impact of administrators’ support and engagement on teacher health and well-being in a public elementary school located in a suburban Massachusetts town. The aim was to discover the strengths and weaknesses as they relate to administrators’ role in educators’ social and emotional wellness. I remained open to investigating other themes identified through the data collection if applicable (i.e., the impact of administrator actions on student SEL and potential suggestions for improving teachers’ social and emotional competencies and well-being).
In seeking to evaluate administrative involvement in the social and emotional wellness of teachers, the research was guided by the following questions:

**RQ1:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ support influences teachers’ social and emotional health?

**RQ2:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ engagement influences teachers’ social and emotional health?

**RQ3:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding the social and emotional supports needed to sustain a positive school climate?

This study used an intrinsic, qualitative single case study design. A case study design was the best fit for this study because it enhanced credibility by using more than one data source and allowing for a holistic analysis of the data. The intended outcome of this case was to provide stakeholders a better understanding of general education teacher perceptions related to how administrators influence teachers’ social and emotional health and the supports needed to sustain a positive school climate. Based on my personal interest and desire to describe the perceptions of teachers, an intrinsic focus best defines the purpose of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Additionally, the research focused on a single site and did not look to draw comparisons between more than one case.

This qualitative single case study was based on two theoretical frameworks: Maslach’s theory of burnout and Bandura’s social cognitive theory. Maslach’s theory of burnout is characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Maslach and Leiter argue that changing work patterns, increasing coping skills, being the recipient of support, participating in relaxation strategies, improving health, fitness, and self-understanding can help
to reduce the potential for teacher burnout. The impact that administrators have on the teachers that work for them is further supported by Bandura’s social cognitive theory. Bandura (1989) argued that individuals learn by watching the actions of those around them. If the individuals in administrative roles are not adequately addressing, proactively or reactively, the needs of teachers through preparation, ongoing support for creating a positive school climate, and recognition of the impact of their actions have on teachers, the social and emotional health and well-being of teachers will be at increased risk. When administrators support the need for teachers to participate in self-care, decrease the risk of burnout related to increased demands, and encourage the development of stronger relationships with peers and students, improved student outcomes are more likely.

**Analysis Method**

Interviews were conducted via Zoom using the interview protocol (Appendix C) and transcribed using fathom, an add-on to Zoom. Once I checked the transcription for grammatical errors and used the recordings to verify any errors, the transcript was emailed to the interview participant for member checking. If I had not received a confirmation email for accuracy or a request for edits within three days, I followed up with the participant to request an email response. All participants confirmed the transcripts of their interviews. No participants requested any changes or deletions to the interview transcripts. Once all transcripts had been checked, the recordings of interviews were deleted.

After member checking was completed, I began coding the interview transcripts manually. Initially, I used a three-color system to highlight text from each interview transcript based on the research question that it was primarily addressing. The highlighting was then transferred to an electronic copy of the interview transcript. Afterwards, I further analyzed the
data by looking for big ideas that had appeared repeatedly throughout the interviews. Additionally, I reorganized the data by combining the questions from each of the qualitative interview transcripts into one document so the responses from each participant were together. In all, 71 descriptors were used to code the data. The descriptors used to code were then organized into 18 categories that reflected commonalities between various coded data segments. From the categories, two or three major themes were identified for each of the research questions using categories that consisted of similarities. A range of two to four categories were used to support each of the seven major themes that were identified.

After identifying the themes, participants were again contacted to gather feedback and check for accuracy. If the participants did not respond within three days to check, adjust, and validate the themes, I sent a follow up email notifying participants that if I had not heard from them within four days (one week total), I would consider the themes that were identified as accurate. In all, five participants provided confirmation that they agreed with the themes that were identified. Three participants did not respond to the request for feedback.

The online survey collected data using Google forms. A summary of the results was then created by Google forms. The relevant data that was collected through the online survey was used to support each of the categories and themes outlined by the qualitative data analysis. The percentage of each response was broken down by question and is presented in the section that follows in conjunction with the qualitative results.

**Presentation of Results and Findings**

To maintain confidentiality of the participants in this study, the demographic information that was collected as a part of this study is not published in the findings of the study. The online survey consisted of a total of 62 questions broken down into seven sections. Topics included
well-being, belonging, school climate, teacher self-reflection, professional learning about SEL, staff-leadership relationships, and school leadership. Graphs depicting the participant responses are presented by topic in Appendix F. The study also consisted of eight semi-structured interviews. The interviews were intended to collect information from participants about their perception of the impact of administrators’ support and engagement on teacher health and well-being in a public elementary school located in a suburban Massachusetts town. After the transcripts were checked for accuracy, I looked to code the interviews based on common themes that arose. The results of the study will be presented in the sections that follow.

**Results for Research Question 1**

Based on the first research question, “What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ support influences teachers’ social and emotional health?” two themes were identified: the importance of personal connections and the impact of intentional planning. Categories used to develop the theme of the importance of personal connections included rapport, teacher perceptions, and facing challenges. The categories included in the development of the theme of the impact of intentional planning were workload, scheduling and resources, documentation, and proactive communication.

**The Importance of Personal Connections**

The online survey asked participants, “How friendly are your school leaders toward you?” Of the participants who responded, 0% said that school leaders are *not at all friendly* or *slightly friendly*, 31.3% of participants said that school leaders are *somewhat friendly*, 56.3% of participants said *quite friendly*, and 12.5% of participants said *extremely friendly*. Another survey question asked participants, “How much do your school leaders care about you as an individual?” When answering this question, 12.5% of participants reported that school leaders...
care a tremendous amount, 25% of participants said they care quite a bit, 31.3% of participants said they care somewhat, 31.3% said they care a little bit, and 0% of participants said they do not care at all. Two participants reported that they feel administrators need to get to know their staff better so that they can build a relationship and social emotional connection. One participant stated that they were not sure if the assistant principal knew their name (after having been called someone else’s name), while another said they wished their administrators would take more time to genuinely ask how they are. A third participant expressed the desire for administrators to know teachers on a more personal level rather than just at the building level. The individual gave the example that teachers on their team like frequent communication and need it.

When surveyed, participants were asked, “When challenges arise in your personal life, how understanding are your school leaders?” One participant chose not to respond to this question, while 40% reported that school leaders are extremely understanding, 33.3% reported that school leaders are quite understanding, 20% reported that school leaders are somewhat understanding, 6.7% reported that school leaders are slightly understanding, and 0% reported that school leaders are not at all understanding. When interviewing participants, one individual reported that administrators have probably tried supporting their social and emotional health but said, “I don’t know that they’re always successful.” Another participant noted that, “sometimes [administrators] do seem to care and other times they don’t.” Having faced challenges in their personal life previously, several participants commented on how important it has been for administrators to show a genuine interest in their personal lives. For instance, one person reported that, “staff was way more empathetic and sympathetic” when they experienced a difficult life event and added that, “it was April, so it’s MCAS time and I think that was the main focus…it’s all business at that time of year.” A participant also said, “I’ve gotten support, which
is nice…not everyone does.” The level of support that participants reported receiving was inconsistent from person to person and year to year.

Additionally, a participant stated that, “If there was more support for the students, I would feel more supported as well.” One participant added that, “people need to listen more and have a little more empathy for each other because everybody’s going through something and not just as adults, but the kids too.” Additionally, one of the individuals interviewed said that, “the administration getting involved in me being a new teacher there has really affected my relationship with the staff and how I felt about being in that building.” Two participants reported that the way administrators handled changes in their positions, the timing of the conversations that took place, and the lack of support when beginning a new role negatively impacted their social and emotional well-being.

Furthermore, participants were asked, “When you face challenges at work, how supportive are your school leaders?” While no participants responded that school leaders are extremely supportive or not at all supportive, 33.3% of participants who responded reported that school leaders are quite supportive, 53.3% reported that school leaders are only somewhat supportive, and 13.3% reported that school leaders are slightly supportive. One participant said, “I went to them in the past about an issue and was told to maybe just take a leave instead of [them] helping with the issue in the classroom.” Furthermore, one participant noted that teachers are, “constantly struggling with kids that have behavioral concerns.” The participant later added that, “the number one impact on [their] stress level [is] when I’ve tried everything.” They said that once they have reached the bottom of their theoretical toolbox, and they are asking their administrator for help, the outcomes are not working.
The online survey asked participants, “Overall, how positive is the influence of the school leaders on the quality of your teaching?” to which 0% of participants replied extremely positive, 25% of participants replied quite positive, 37.5% replied somewhat positive, 31.3% replied slightly positive, and 6.3% replied not at all positive. When interviewing participants at the study site, individuals reflected on their level of personal connection and communication with administrators from the district. Five of the eight participants were unable to name anything that the administrators from the study site do for self-care. Of the three participants who were able to share something about an administrator’s hobbies or self-care activities, one said they learned about the information when it was shared with students at a community meeting, “and we were there listening, so it’s not actually discussed for teachers,” and another said it was not something that was discussed regularly, but instead was “available in the inter web.” Participants seemed interested in getting to know the school and district leaders more personally to make connections and build relationships.

The Impact of Intentional Planning

The online survey asked participants, “During the past week, how often did you feel overwhelmed at work?” Of the participants who responded, 43.8% said almost always, 43.8% said frequently, 6.3% said sometimes, 0% said once in a while, and 6.3% said almost never. One participant mentioned that it would be helpful to have, “all of the staff needed every day to function.” They added that when you or a family member is sick and you are trying to think of your own health first, “knowing that you’re going to be leaving your co-teacher in that situation does not affect your social and emotional health in a good way.” The lack of adequate staff, including special education teachers and paraprofessionals, was mentioned by three participants.
Comments from participants who were interviewed ranged from the need to “provide a more organized and routinized environment with less last-minute things” to the importance of “actually having something prepared.” Moreover, one individual stated that, “the more [administrators] can keep things organized, predictable, and communicate clearly, the more supported [they] feel on a daily basis.” Furthermore, participants reported that at times information is presented to students at the same time as it is presented to teachers. Additionally, one participant stated that “those last-minute things can feel like they are adding to your plate” while another stated that “being told at the last minute about the changes is not good for their social and emotional well-being.” During one interview, a participant stated that, “it feels like there wasn’t anybody to pick that up” when referring to an open administrative position.

Participants who were surveyed were asked, “How effectively do school leaders communicate important information to teachers?” to which 0% of participants replied extremely effectively, 12.5% of participants replied quite effectively, 37.5% replied somewhat effectively, 37.5% replied slightly effectively, and 12.5% replied not at all effectively. Additionally, when responding to, “How clearly do your school leaders identify their goals for teachers?” 0% of participants said that school leaders are extremely clear, 25% of participants said that school leaders are quite clear, 31.3% of participants said school leaders are somewhat clear, 31.3% of participants said school leaders are slightly clear, and 12.5% of participants said school leaders are not at all clear. One participant stated that, “some administrators do have a big picture goal and some administrators are kind of piecing it together as we go.” Out of the eight participants that were interviewed for the study, five reported that a lack of preparation and communication were having a negative impact on their social and emotional well-being. One individual stated
during their interview that communication between them and the curriculum office was horrific, and they felt they were being told lies.

The participants at the study site were also asked, “During the past week, how often did you feel stressed out at work?” to which 50% of participants said *almost always*, 31.3% said *frequently*, 12.5% said *sometimes*, 6.3% said *once in a while*, and 0% said *almost never*. When interviewing participants, every participant expressed feelings that can be attributed to burnout. Some participants mentioned things like, “we’ve been stretched to the max,” “I’m just keeping my head above water,” “everyone is so spent,” “our climate isn’t good,” and “our district is drowning.” Additionally, interview participants made mention of how the little things that they are asked to do at an increasing rate pile up and get passed from the administrators to the teachers when they are not done at a higher level. Furthermore, two participants in the study felt that telling teachers to practice self-care felt like one more thing added to their plate because they weren’t given time to do that when additional responsibilities are added to their job.

A common thread among the responses from interview participants was that a designated time needs to be built into the school schedule when additional expectations are placed on educators. Interviewees seemed to agree that when time is not provided in the schedule to implement new initiatives, it feels like one more thing that is not manageable. Participants also mentioned that the resources to adequately address the additional expectations are essential to their successful implementation. For instance, participants expressed that providing age-appropriate lessons and read alouds that align with the superpowers of the month would be a helpful way to take something off the shoulders of teachers. One participant specifically mentioned that teachers are “being pushed so hard to get through the academics that [there is not] time to explicitly teach [SEL] and model it for students.” Two interview participants said they,
“just want [their] time,” and they wished administrators would, “make [their] job more manageable.” Additionally, two people mentioned that it would help their personal well-being if they were not expected to do as much, and their duties or responsibilities were decreased.

Participants who were interviewed commented on the amount of documentation that is required. While they agreed that there is a need to have documentation, multiple participants mentioned the amount of time it takes in their day to complete the documentation. One participant stated that they would rather be spending their time on grading assessments, creating lessons, and interacting with students. Two participants gave examples of how the documentation could be improved to reduce the workload on teachers. One mentioned making the process more streamlined and easier to access. Another participant suggested eliminating the need to start student support team from scratch year after year.

Results for Research Question 2

Based on the second research question, “What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ engagement influences teachers’ social and emotional health?” two themes were identified. The first theme, the significance of administrator involvement, consisted of data collected regarding approachability, administrator presence, and reflection. The second theme, teacher dependance on administrator facilitation, was comprised by data collected related to peer connections, collaboration, and professional development.

The Significance of Administrator Involvement

Interview participants reflected on their experiences communicating their needs to administrators at the study site. For instance, one participant reported that there are, “so many questions we have” while another said that “bringing up something else [feels like] more of a
bother than anything else.” The participant added that, “people don’t want to waste the stress and the effort to even bring any questions or concerns they have” because they do not feel like they always get an honest answer. Furthermore, another participant stated that people do not want to say anything at faculty meetings and, “even if [the administrator] asked and I had something great related to gratitude, I don’t know if I’m comfortable enough sharing that with this group of people that look like nobody wants to be there.” Additionally, one person reported asking for help because they, “don’t know what else to do and [they’re] kind of just left.” Finally, one participant reported that they felt faculty meetings could be made more effective by including staff in a professional conversation rather than having them listen to what is presented on the agenda.

One question from the online survey asked participants from the study site, “How responsive are school leaders to your feedback?” to which 0% of participants answered extremely responsive while 18.8% of participants answered quite responsive. Furthermore, somewhat responsive represented 50% of the responses, slightly responsive represented 25% of the responses, and 6.3% of the respondents selected not at all responsive. Additionally, a participant added that they felt administrators need to, “listen to the teachers more…not just listen to respond but listen to think about how we can work together to build a more positive school climate.” Furthermore, a participant commented that, “listening to teachers and making changes based on their feedback over what their personal beliefs might be” is one way to support teachers. When asking a participant about ways that school or district leaders could better support their social and emotional well-being, they said that leaders need to, “help brainstorm ideas to problem solve, to improve everything, and to take a good look at making things equal.”
At the time of the interview, the participant reported that they had not had an opportunity to talk with their administrator about these ideas feedback.

One person believed that community meetings do not always seem aware of student needs and said that a lack of proactive, two-way communication makes it difficult for teachers to provide constructive feedback regarding this concern to administrators. The participant stated that when the building administrator started discussing an award presented to a fifth-grade student at a grade level meeting, it was “hard as a teacher not knowing that the conversation was going to happen. I was very taken aback.” The person added that, “it was just kind of delivered poorly…and [they] seemed unaware of the population in front of them and how it might sit with kids.” Instead, the interview participant said that they wished a teacher was called up to discuss the award with students and that the teachers were made aware that the information would be shared with students ahead of time.

One participant suggested that the administrators ask teachers and staff members what would help them and work to find ways to help teachers to feel motivated. Furthermore, one participant reported that they think it would be helpful to have check-ins from administrators and another said they wanted administrators to listen to teachers and think about how they can work together. One participant noted that, “we’re not able to stop and take a break and pause and look at what we’ve done and then see how we can adjust.” Additionally, one participant suggested that the administrators could ask teachers questions like, “hey, do you guys have anything that is working in your classrooms around gratitude or has worked in the past that we can use in the building,” instead of presenting what they think would work without involving teachers in the discussion. Based on the semi-structured interviews, it was important to one participant that
administrators take the time to notice the positive things and give teachers the opportunity to feel heard.

One survey question asked participants, “How knowledgeable are your school leaders about what is going on in teachers’ classrooms?” While no participants responded that school leaders are extremely knowledgeable, 12.5% of participants reported that school leaders are quite knowledgeable, 31.3% reported that school leaders are only somewhat knowledgeable, 50% reported that school leaders are slightly knowledgeable, and 6.3% reported that school leaders are not knowledgeable at all. Most participants of the study agreed that they would like more administrative presence and involvement throughout the study site. One respondent said they felt the building administrator is, “almost untouchable because of what she has on her plate and how many people are going to her for things.” Additionally, the person felt that they had become more distanced from the administrators as they have become stretched thinner. Another participant added that they did not feel like principals are feeling supported, which can lead to staff feeling less supported as well.

Five people also reported that they would like to see more administrative check-ins in the classrooms and hallways. One added that if administrators were able to spend more time supporting in the classrooms, they would feel better equipped to do their job. A participant added that they, “haven’t felt like [the administrators] are totally hands on…[and] they kind of do their administrator thing and we do our teacher thing. There’s some sort of connection missing.”

Furthermore, one participant reported that if the administrators knew the kids better and were more present, they would be able to assist in solving problems more quickly. Moreover, one interviewee reported that they, “think it sets a more positive tone for the school in general” when administrators come into the classroom and interact with the students.
Teacher Dependence on Administrator Facilitation

Participants reported that they would like administrators to work towards facilitating connections between staff. Three participants agreed that they would like to engage in opportunities to build relationships with other staff members so that they at least know a little about each person, but also understood that doing so could feel like something added to their plate. One person reported that if administrators could find a way to increase team building opportunities in a way that was professional it would be helpful to staff. A survey question read, “How connected do you feel to the other adults at your school?” While 6.3% of respondents said they felt extremely connected, 37.5% of respondents said they felt quite connected. On the other hand, 18.8% of respondents said they felt somewhat connected, 37.5% of respondents said they felt slightly connected, and 6.3% said they felt not at all connected. When interviewing participants, four people reported that they do not know the people that work in the building by name. Additionally, they reported feeling farther apart from others now that two buildings have been combined into one school. Moreover, one person who was interviewed reported that having teachers engage in a single activity instead of ongoing conversations over time, “almost feels…not genuine, but forced.” They suggested that providing time for cross grade level conversations that are educationally focused could help to get people on the same page and in turn create more cohesion.

The survey also asked several questions about the teachers’ sense of belonging within the study site. One question asked participants, “How well do your colleagues at school understand you as a person?” Of the individuals who participated, 18.8% reported that their colleagues understand a little, 43.8% said their colleagues understand somewhat, 37.5% said their colleagues understand quite a bit, and 0% said their colleagues do not understand at all or that
their colleagues *completely understand*. Overall, it was clear that participants liked their co-workers and felt that their peers were supportive. All eight participants referenced ways in which they were supported by others in their role. Four of the individuals who were interviewed specifically referenced the relationship that they have within their grade level team.

One survey question asked participants, “When the school makes important decisions, how much input do teachers have?” When answering this question, 0% of participants reported that teachers have *a tremendous amount of input*, 6.3% of participants said teachers have *quite a bit of input*, 25% of participants said teachers have *some input*, 50% said teachers have *a little bit of input*, and 18.8% of participants said teachers have *almost no input*. Interview participants reported wanting to know more about what others are teaching and how they are delivering content to students. This was true in relation to both SEL classes and subjects like math and English language arts. For instance, one participant reported that currently, “different grade levels don’t even know what other grade levels are doing” and added that they wished administrators would give them more time to have “conversations to see what works…[and] get good ideas from others.” One participant reported that, “the building itself is designed in a way that really is not conducive to working together as a team…[and] I feel like we are all in our own separate worlds.” Additionally, one participant said that people are doing their own thing but that there might be a better way of running meetings so that people can share what is working to increase cohesion from one grade to another. Finally, one interviewee reported that having more time to work with their team and create a unified approach across grade levels would lead to them having more time at home with their family.
Results for Research Question 3

Based on the third and final research question, “What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding the social and emotional supports needed to sustain a positive school climate?” three themes were identified. The first theme, adapting to a school wide approach, entailed common expectations and common language. The second theme, the building blocks of school culture, consisted of data related to the tone of the building, teacher morale, and understanding of social and emotional learning and competencies. Finally, the urgency of professional development was developed from understanding of social and emotional learning, social and emotional competencies, and professional development.

The Urgency of Professional Development

When interviewing participants, individuals had a range of ways to describe their understanding of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Some participants referenced helping students to learn behaviors, skills, and strategies that will support their awareness of their own emotions and feelings, their ability to maintain positive relationships, work with others, and know what is safe and appropriate. Additionally, participants referenced students’ ability to maintain their own mental health and personal mental and emotional well-being. Three participants referenced students’ ability to perform their best in school if their social and emotional needs are met and they are feeling safe at school. Furthermore, one individual referenced the need for students to have SEL skills to help them be successful people. Participants also referenced relationships between peers, specifically, the ability to navigate social interactions with others, recognize how others are feeling, show empathy, and resolve conflicts. Finally, two individuals commented on the ability for adults to use strategies and things that they know to instruct students at their developmental level.
As participants were interviewed about the social and emotional competencies, three participants were unable to provide a response at all, two participants responded in the form of a question, and the final three participants identified one or two of the five competencies as outlined by CASEL (2021): self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Two of the participants who were not able to identify social and emotional competencies gave descriptions involving the ability of students to master different strategies and skills and the ability to transfer skills from the classroom to larger settings. The two individuals who answered in the form of a question both referred to whether students are in tune with their social and emotional well-being. One participant accurately identified that competencies are often seen in the form of a circle but was unaware of how many there are. This participant also referenced awareness of self and others in addition to the ability to navigate social situations. A different individual recalled an opportunity from “pre-pandemic” where the facilitator presented about “the wheel.” This individual was not able to identify what wheel they were referring to nor could they describe anything that was learned during that PD.

Two of the individuals interviewed for the study mentioned that responsive classroom is one factor that has led to their understanding of the social and emotional well-being of students. Other mentions of responsive classroom came when participants were asked questions related to what professional development topics administrators could focus on to build or sustain a positive school climate, what approaches participants had used in the past that were effective for students, and how school staff are currently reinforcing positive uses of SEL skills. Although one participant stated that they believe most teachers have morning meetings, they were not able to confirm that everyone in a role which would hold a morning meeting had been trained in responsive classroom.
During one interview, the participant argued that if administrators are going to expect teachers to be responsible for aiding in the instruction of social emotional competencies, then additional PD needs to take place so it can be done effectively and without feeling like an additional task added to their plates. Most participants agreed that it would be beneficial for administrators to highlight exactly what social emotional growth is and provide teachers with tools and suggestions of ways they can use it in their classrooms. One participant stated that they would like training in what types of lessons and activities they could do in the classroom. Another participant stated that while they, “feel like [they] have a pretty decent grasp on everything SEL, but [they] feel like it’s an ever-changing type of category in schools” and that they would like more training. The individual added that they have asked for training in things like executive functioning in the past but have yet to be offered that type of professional development. They added that they would also like to see professional development on “how to deal with certain things that we’re seeing more and more of.” Moreover, a participant mentioned that “there’s no curriculum to follow or anything like that” and that nobody is checking to see if teachers are intentionally including SEL lessons in their classrooms (i.e., during morning meeting).

During the interviews, participants were asked what professional development (PD) they had received related to SEL in the past. Participants reported that there did not seem to be a plan for professional development when they had asked days before in the past. Moreover, a participant stated that administrators, “haven’t done a lot in the building to help with how to teach SEL.” It was reported by one individual that they had not come across any PD being offered to staff around social emotional learning or understanding. When asked, “How often do your social-emotional learning (SEL) professional development opportunities help you explore
new ideas?” 33.3% of participants responded *almost never, once in a while, and sometimes* respectively. *Frequently* and *almost all the time* each received 0% of the responses. Another survey question asked participants, “At your school, how valuable are the social-emotional learning (SEL) professional development opportunities?” When answering, 18.8% of participants said *not at all valuable*, 37.5% of participants said *slightly valuable*, 25% of participants said *somewhat valuable*, 12.5% of participants said *quite valuable*, and 6.3% said *extremely valuable*.

One participant, who had been hired after the previously mentioned PD opportunity, stated that when they were hired, they were given a book as their training. Two people stated that their only training in SEL had come from overhearing information when school adjustment counselors were teaching SEL classes to their students. Another participant added that they would like to know more about what is happening in the SEL special so that they could piggyback off what the students were learning in class. An interviewee believed that if teachers had more training on social emotional competencies, they would be more apt to address those areas naturally throughout the school day. In another interview, a teacher reported wanting to support SEL, but they did not feel they had the right tools to do so.

Online survey participants were asked, “Thinking of social-emotional learning (SEL) in particular, how much input do you have into individualizing your own professional development opportunities?” to which *almost no input, a little bit of input, and some input* each received 33.3% of responses while *quite a bit of input and a tremendous amount of input* each received 0% of responses. Participants of the study also reported on types of PD that they felt could be helpful opportunities for administrators to provide. Two people responded that they did not know exactly what PD for teachers own social and emotional growth would look like but felt it would
be a helpful area to explore. A third interviewee said they would like to have some of the PD days focused on teacher social and emotional health. Three additional individuals agreed that training in stress management, time management, prioritization, and keeping boundaries between work and home would be helpful in their day-to-day work. One individual felt that they have struggled with classroom management in the past which has led to increased levels of personal and student stress. Finally, a participant stated that, “they were provided with PD in the curriculum they are teaching, they would feel better about teaching it which would in turn help them to feel better when teaching.” Overall, interview participants reported that the PD provided by the district needed to be meaningful to staff to feel beneficial instead of causing them to feel increasingly overwhelmed.

**Adapting to a School Wide Approach**

When responding about a school wide approach, participants had a variety of responses. Four study participants mentioned that they felt having a common language and common expectations would be beneficial to students and staff within the building. Additionally, two other participants made mention of each person in the building doing their own thing and the current acronym used throughout the building is a mantra but not one that is woven into anything within the building. Furthermore, one participant specifically mentioned that “everything looks very different in every grade level.” Another participant stated that, “there’s not good crossover from situation to situation or environment to environment.” The same person later added that having everyone on the same page would, in their opinion, be happier and that there would be, “less confusion among students and staff, and it would result in a better environment for everybody.” One individual reported that there, “used to [be] a lot more release, relax, refocus, take a breath, using the breathing ball [and] that used to be a lot more school wide [so it]
provided breaks for the kids.” This person added that they are still working to model what to do when someone feels overwhelmed but stated that not everybody knows the right way to do those things.

The online survey asked participants, “How effective are the school leaders at developing rules for students that facilitate learning?” No respondents reported that school leaders are *extremely effective*, 18.8% reported that school leaders are *quite effective*, 50% reported that school leaders are *somewhat effective*, 25% reported that school leaders are *slightly effective*, and 6.3% reported that school leaders are *not at all effective*. When asking participants questions about a positive school climate, a common thread was evident. Three participants shared that having a common school approach would be helpful in improving the climate and culture within the school. Furthermore, a different participant added that having common expectations and rewards would help foster a more positive environment within the school. When interviewing participants, one person said that they were, “just not sure everybody gets the same message and that it is consistent.” One participant said that “more words, rules, and follow through so that everyone is on the same page” is something that they would like to see change about their school in addition to better communication.

The participants at the study site were also asked, “How fairly does the school leadership treat staff?” to which 50% of participants answered quite fairly while 37.5% of participants answered somewhat fairly. Furthermore, slightly fairly and extremely fairly represented 6.3% of the responses while 0% of the respondents selected not at all fairly. Additionally, one participant believed that “the administrative team is going in different directions, and we are not getting one answer to anything…from evaluations to professional development…they are not on the same
page.” When teachers are not feeling like they are being treated fairly, nor are they receiving the same message as their peers, the morale of teachers is negatively impacted.

Interview participants shared that if everyone was using phrases like “calm body,” “expected or unexpected,” “whole body listening,” or “let’s be mindful” would be an effective way to improve the communication to students throughout the building. Another participant referenced responsive classroom and a “take a break type language” where students are taught that it is okay to step away from a situation and regain their composure before re-joining. The same individual was able to reference zones of regulation but was the only participant to do so in their interview. A participant said in their interview that, “if we all had the responsibility to learn a certain way to respond to kids and how to teach them things that would be helpful” in sharing the responsibility of teaching SEL to students. Finally, one participant added that, “if there was common expectations and rewards…the school as a whole could have a more positive environment.” Overall, participants presented themselves as eager to learn and provide consistency to students. They were seemingly in agreement that common language and expectations would also positively impact their social and emotional well-being.

The Building Blocks of School Culture

When responding about school climate, participants had a variety of responses. One individual reported that aspects of responsive classroom, “that were sort of embedded into our school culture have fallen by the wayside and…we are not really focused on that so much anymore.” Multiple participants mentioned that the administrators appear to be overwhelmed even if their intentions are good. One participant stated that while in their experience, the building principal has done the best that they can, “it feels like there are some inadequate, or incompetent possibly, administration above that. Then that gets piled on the principals, which in
then gets piled on us.” Another participant mentioned that people are feeling more distanced as the administrators have become stretched more. Furthermore, one participant mentioned that if the administrators are presenting as overwhelmed, the staff is more likely to feed off that.

When responding to, “How positive is the tone that school leaders set for the culture of the school?” 0% of participants said that school leaders set an extremely positive tone, 25% of participants said they set a tone that is quite positive, 56.3% of participants said they set a somewhat positive tone, 12.5% of participants said they set a slightly positive tone, and 6.3% of participants said they set a tone that is not at all positive. When talking with participants from the study site, two interviewees commented on the need for administrators to take care of teachers by creating and maintaining a healthy environment that is motivating and positive. One person felt that administrators encourage teachers to take care of themselves because, “if [teachers] are not okay then [they] can’t stand in front of students and do the best” they can do.

The participants at the study site were asked, “How confident are you that your school leaders have the best interests of the school in mind?” to which 12.5% of participants answered extremely confident while 43.8% of participants answered quite confident, 25% of participants answered somewhat confident, 18.8% of participants answered slightly confident, and 0% of participants answered not at all confident. During the semi-structured interviews, one participant stated that when the district was providing PD on responsive classroom, there was a more positive school climate. The participant explained that the climate, “is not as strong as it used to be” with changes in staff, the environment, and a lack of responsive classroom training.

The online survey asked participants to answer questions about their well-being. Participants were asked, “During the past week, how often did you feel exhausted at work?” to which 0% of participants replied almost never or once in a while, 25% of participants replied
sometimes, 37.5% replied frequently, and 37.5% replied almost always. Interviewees also made mention of the idea that there are not enough people to do what needs to be done and everyone is spread so thin. One participant hypothesized that this was due to the elimination of support staff and the need to hire more paraprofessionals. Additionally, when responding to, “During the past week, how often did you feel frustrated at work?” 0% of participants said almost never, 6.3% said once in a while, 25% of participants said sometimes, 62.5% of participants said frequently, and 6.3% of participants said almost always. Two participants who were interviewed commented on having noticed staff members staying in their car longer before entering the building in the morning. Additionally, two participants mentioned that people seem to be staying out of school more and calling in sick more often. The people who made comments about the presence of staff in school felt that it was because individuals are feeling worn out. One participant noted in their interview that, “lately the fun has been missing” which they implied led to increased frustration since they are not able to do exciting things in school with students.

In relation to school climate, the survey asked participants, “How positive are the attitudes of your colleagues?” Based on the survey responses, 18.8% of people felt their colleagues are not at all positive, 25% felt their colleagues are slightly positive, 43.8% felt their colleagues are somewhat positive, 12.5% felt their colleagues are quite positive, and 0% felt their colleagues are extremely positive. Another survey question asked participants, “Overall, how positive is the working environment at your school?” When answering this question, 0% of participants reported that the working environment is extremely positive, 31.3% of participants reported that the working environment is quite positive, 25% of participants reported that the working environment is somewhat positive, 43.8% of participants reported that the working environment is slightly positive, and 0% of participants reported that the working environment is
If teachers at the study site do not perceive the attitudes of their colleagues to be positive, and they do not believe the working environment at their school is positive, building and maintaining a positive school culture for staff and students is exponentially more challenging.

**Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding the perceived impact of administrators’ support and engagement on teacher health and well-being in a public elementary school located in a suburban Massachusetts town. This study included 16 participants in an online survey and eight participants in a semi-structured interview. While coding the interviews, I began to identify themes that were derived based on the responses from interview participants. While the study aimed to discover the strengths and weaknesses as they relate to administrators’ role in educators’ social and emotional wellness, I remained open to investigating other themes identified through the data collection if applicable (i.e., the impact of administrator actions on student SEL and potential suggestions for improving teachers’ social and emotional competencies and well-being).

Data collected during the study led to seven total themes with two for each of the first two research questions and three for the final research question. The themes identified for the first research question, “What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ support influences teachers’ social and emotional health?” were (a) the importance of personal connections and (b) the impact of intentional planning. The second research question, “What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ engagement influences teachers’ social and emotional health?” consisted of (c) the significance of administrator involvement and (d) teacher
dependance on administrator facilitation as the identified themes. Finally, (e) the urgency of professional development, (f) adapting to a school wide approach, and (g) the building blocks of school culture were the themes identified based on the third research question, “What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding the social and emotional supports needed to sustain a positive school climate?” The next chapter will outline conclusions that can be made from the study results and provide recommendations for next steps within the study site.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this study, I addressed the importance of administrative support and engagement in teachers’ social and emotional health and sustaining a positive school climate. According to Greenberg et al. (2016), when teachers, their colleagues, and leadership have a high level of trust among them, lower stress and burnout symptoms are present. On the other hand, increased stress and lower job satisfaction or commitment to students may be evident if teachers, their administration, colleagues, or students have unsatisfactory relationships (Greenberg et al., 2016).

In this study, I aimed to determine how the actions that administrators take influence, positively or negatively, the social and emotional health and well-being of elementary school general education teachers. Shapiro et al. (2019) argued that collective teacher efficacy is increased, and school climate and positive school outcomes can be improved when strong leadership is present. Furthermore, if leaders provide opportunities for collaboration, teachers feel empowered and experience greater job satisfaction (Greenberg et al., 2016). Finally, if administrative support for teachers is lacking, teachers may be less likely to practice and model healthy social and emotional behaviors.

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding the perceived impact of administrators’ support and engagement on teacher health and well-being in a public elementary school located in a suburban Massachusetts town. I aimed to discover the strengths and weaknesses as they relate to administrators’ role in educators’ social and emotional wellness. I remained open to investigating other themes identified through the data collection if applicable (i.e., the impact of administrator actions on student SEL and potential suggestions for improving teachers’ social and emotional competencies and well-being).
In seeking to evaluate administrative involvement in the social and emotional wellness of teachers, the research was guided by the following questions:

**RQ1:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ support influences teachers’ social and emotional health?

**RQ2:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ engagement influences teachers’ social and emotional health?

**RQ3:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding the social and emotional supports needed to sustain a positive school climate?

Two theoretical frameworks were the basis for this intrinsic, qualitative single case study: Maslach’s theory of burnout and Bandura’s social cognitive theory. Exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy characterize Maslach’s theory of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Maslach and Leiter argue that changing work patterns, increasing coping skills, being the recipient of support, participating in relaxation strategies, improving health, fitness, and self-understanding can help to reduce the potential for teacher burnout. Bandura’s social cognitive theory supports the theory that administrators have an impact on the teachers that work for them. Bandura (1989) argued that individuals learn by watching the actions of those around them. If the individuals in administrative roles are not adequately addressing, proactively or reactively, the needs of teachers through preparation, ongoing support for creating a positive school climate, and recognition of the impact of their actions have on teachers, the social and emotional health and well-being of teachers will be at increased risk. Improved student outcomes are more likely when administrators support the need for teachers to participate in self-care, decrease the risk of
burnout related to increase demands, and encourage the development of stronger relationships with peers and students.

A total of 16 participants completed an online survey consisting of 62 total questions which was presented via google forms using seven sections: well-being, belonging, school climate, teacher self-reflection, professional learning about Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), staff-leadership relationships, and school leadership. Additionally, a semi-structured interview format was used to collect qualitative data from eight participants about their perception of the impact of administrators’ support and engagement on teacher health and well-being in a public elementary school located in a suburban Massachusetts town. Based on the survey results and the results from the interviews, the first two research questions resulted in two major themes each with the final research question resulting in three major themes for a total of seven themes: (a) the importance of personal connections, (b) the impact of intentional planning, (c) the significance of administrator involvement, (d) teacher dependance on administrator facilitation, (e) the urgency of professional development, (f) adapting to a school side approach, and (g) the building blocks of school culture. Categories that supported each of the major themes ranged in number from two to four for each of the themes that were identified, with 18 total themes identified for the study. The categories were identified by grouping similar descriptors, 71 in all, together to create organized units of information. An interpretation of the results from the study and their importance is presented in the sections that follow.

**Interpretation and Importance of Findings**

The following sections outline the research questions that guided this study and relevant interpretations and the importance of the findings related to the respective research questions. Research questions were developed to evaluate administrative involvement in the social and
emotional wellness of teachers. It is important to note that for the purposes of this study, the term administrator was understood to include principals, assistant principals, the director of special education, special education supervisors, the director of curriculum and instruction, the health care coordinator, and the superintendent.

Research Question One

Research question 1, “What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ support influences teachers’ social and emotional health?” was intended to gather insight regarding how general education teachers felt they were being supported by administrators within the district at the time of the research study. The sections that follow will discuss what the insight gathered related to administrator support means and why it matters. A synthesis of data as it relates to the conceptual framework and review of relevant literature is also included.

The Importance of Personal Connections

Administrators need to support teachers by showing positivity and kindness. According to Bandura’s social cognitive theory, social experiences influence behaviors. Bandura (1989) wrote that vicarious affective learning impacts others because “when individuals are in good spirits they treat others amiably, which produces positive affect…Conversely, when individuals are dejected, ailing, distressed, or angry, the people around them are likely to suffer as well in one way or another” (p. 30-31). While administrators might be trying to support teachers, the focus on standardized tests as a form of accountability related to cognitive development often puts SEL on the back burner and may impact administrative support for teachers (Martinez, 2016). One participant noted that the time of school year (i.e., around MCAS), person involved, and the school year itself seemed to have an impact on how much support administrators showed
teachers. Furthermore, one participant noted that while they felt they had received adequate personal support, they did not believe that was the case for everyone. If administrators are demonstrating symptoms of burnout, the staff members that work for them are more likely to experience increased symptoms of burnout as well.

According to participants, administrators at the study site need to get to know their staff on a more personal level to improve their relationships. One participant reported that administrators do not always seem to show a genuine interest in their personal lives, but many agreed that it was important for them to improve their relationships with staff members. One example of this was making sure that the administrators, especially at the building level, know each person’s name and are aware of their needs (i.e., the need for frequent communication). If administrators are not able to connect with teachers in their building, teachers will not be as comfortable approaching administrators when they need help and morale is likely to decline.

If administrators demonstrate strong social and emotional health and well-being, the teachers that work for them are more likely to demonstrate similar behaviors. Bandura (1989) asserted that positive models lead to positive outcomes. Bandura added that individuals learn from the most knowledgeable and proficient peers; which one can argue are school and district administrators. Teachers who participated in the survey reported that the influence of school leaders on the quality of their teaching ranged from not at all positive to quite positive. General education teachers who were interviewed were unable to share something that administrators from the study site do to engage in self-care. Stakeholders must work to increase this transparency to model a focus on personal health and wellness for teachers.

Administrators can help to increase teacher EI and SEC to support teachers in proactively managing and working to decrease student behavioral challenges in their classrooms. Based on
the review of relevant research, positive interactions between teachers and students that encourage healthy social and emotional development are more likely when teachers have higher Social Emotional Competencies (SEC) and/or experience lower stress levels (Jones et al., 2017). Furthermore, when relationship challenges exist due to lack of teacher emotional intelligence (EI) and SEL, a greater incidence rate of emotional and behavioral difficulties is witnessed in students (Poulou, 2017). One teacher noted that by increasing student support, they would in turn also feel more supported. Moreover, a participant stated their greatest source of stress is when they feel as though they have tried everything for a student and are asking administrators for help but do not receive an outcome that works. If administrators are not able to proactively improve teacher EI and SECs, while also focusing on decreasing student behavioral challenges, teachers are more likely to experience symptoms of burnout.

**The Impact of Intentional Planning**

Administrators can arguably help to reduce symptoms of burnout by being supportive and engaged members of their school community. Of the general education teachers at the study site who participated in the online survey, 87.6% said that they felt frequently or almost always overwhelmed at work. Maslach and Leiter (2016) argued that burnout, “should be considered as a characteristic of workgroups rather than simply an individual syndrome” (p. 106). To decrease the potential for teacher burnout, Maslach and Leiter suggest that individuals change their work patterns, increase coping skills, receive support from others, participate in relaxation strategies, improve health and fitness, and improve their self-understanding. It is important for teachers to engage in opportunities to reduce their burnout symptoms in groups to decrease their chances of feeling overwhelmed.
To be most effective and impactful, SEL should be integrated throughout the school’s infrastructure and opportunities for frequent communication should be provided (Goldberg, 2018). Five participants reported that a lack of preparation and effective communication were having a negative impact on their social and emotional well-being. Another area of concern is the need to “provide a more organized and routinized environment with less last-minutes things.” Teachers felt that when information is shared with students at the same time as it is presented to staff, it can make supporting students more challenging. If administrators are not supporting a strong SEL infrastructure throughout the building and engaging in frequent, proactive communication with teachers, the students are likely to suffer.

Adequate staffing each day may help to increase the feeling of control and decrease stress for those who are present. Three interview participants noted that there is a lack of adequate staff including special education teachers and paraprofessionals to support students. Oliveira et al. (2021) claimed that the impact of job-related stress can lead to poor mental health, lack of positive school climate, and decreased teacher performance. Researchers have found that when people feel a situation is out of their control, and are therefore threatened, their stress level is increased (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Furthermore, when teachers are experiencing stress, students are also stressed. High levels of teacher stress combined with decreased satisfaction in their job negatively impacts instruction and student outcomes.

When additional responsibilities or new initiatives are expected of teachers, a scheduled time to receive training is essential. Moreover, the building schedule needs to have time built in for teachers to deliver the material to students. Many teachers want to support the development of competencies in SEL, but fitting SEL lessons into an already overwhelming workload can be daunting and can lead to resistance as one more thing being added to their plate (Main, 2018).
Flushman et al. (2021) explained the importance of maintaining healthy expectations of teachers and providing educators with appropriate supports to encourage their success and the successes of their students. One of the greatest stressors for teachers is the imbalance between their job requirement demands and the resources needed to capably meet those demands (Oliveira et al., 2021; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Study participants believed that administrators could supply resources such as age-appropriate lessons or read alouds to take something off the teachers’ shoulders. When teachers are lacking support from colleagues and basic resources required for teaching, it leads to increased externalizing, interpersonal, and internalizing behaviors in students (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

**Research Question Two**

Research question 2, “What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding how administrators’ engagement influences teachers’ social and emotional health?” was intended to collect the opinions of general education teachers regarding the impact that administrative engagement had on their social and emotional health at the time of the study. A discussion of what the opinions collected regarding administrative engagement means and why it matters can be found in the sections that follow. How the data relates to the conceptual framework and the review of relevant literature is also included.

*The Significance of Administrator Involvement*

Teachers should feel like the administrators are approachable so they can engage in respectful communication. Improved communication and collaboration would help to increase the social and emotional well-being of teachers. Participants reported wanting to be a part of the conversation with administrators and wanting to have the opportunity to feel heard. It seemed important to participants that school leaders take the time to not only listen to teachers, but also
take their feedback into consideration while working together to build a more positive school environment. Researchers have found evidence that involving teachers in the decision-making process helps empower educators and encourage them to embrace change (Martinez, 2016). Participants noted that they would like to have more involvement in professional conversations, but have not had the opportunity to do so, especially since two elementary schools merged into one larger school. When administrators seem unapproachable, teachers are not as likely to proactively share ideas that may benefit the school community.

It is important for teachers to feel comfortable asking questions. Likewise, administrators should be okay with admitting if they do not know the answer right away. It is important to note that one participant believed, “the administrative team is going in different directions, and we are not getting one answer to anything…from evaluations to professional development…they are not on the same page.” One participant reported that, “people don’t want to waste the stress and the effort to even bring any questions or concerns they have” because they do not feel like they always get an honest answer. Teacher morale is negatively impacted by a lack of consistency in communication from administrators to teachers.

The more administrators are aware of what is happening in the classroom, and the more engaged they are in modeling appropriate behaviors and responses for teachers and students, the greater their impact will be on improving student outcomes. One participant felt that if administrators knew the kids better and were more present, they would be able to assist in solving problems more quickly. Another participant stated that they, “think it sets a more positive tone for the school in general” when administrators come into the classroom and interact with the students. Social and emotional learning interventions will be most impactful if all staff members are engaged in the daily practice and reinforcement of skills throughout the entire
building as positive school culture is strengthened (Goldberg et al., 2018). By having productive
two-way communication between administrators and teachers, teachers are more likely to feel
involved in the community and will be more likely to take ownership of social and emotional
learning and student growth.

**Teacher Dependence on Administrator Facilitation**

Administrators must provide opportunities for increased collaboration among various
staff and deliberate efforts to build relationships among employees. This is important because it
can lead to increased buy-in, improved student outcomes, and decreased teacher burnout. An
overwhelming number of participants stated in their interviews that they did not know the names
of all the staff members that worked in their building. One participant reported that if
administrators could find a way to increase team building opportunities in a way that was
professional it would be helpful to staff. Three other participants echoed this sentiment, but also
understood that engaging in opportunities to build relationships with other staff might feel like
something else added to the plate of teachers. Providing time for cross grade level conversations
that are educationally focused could help to get people on the same page and in turn create more
cohesion.

Administrators can provide opportunities for members of different teams to work
together to align content and SEL skills to improve the impact program implementation.
Integrating SEL throughout the school’s infrastructure and providing opportunities for frequent
communication will increase a program’s impact (Goldberg et al., 2018). Without this, staff
members are more likely to abandon best practices (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). One participant said
that they would like to see cohesion from one grade to another increased so that people can share
what is working. Another participant added that if they had more time to work with their team
and there was a unified approach across grade levels, they would have more time at home with their family. For curriculum in academics and SEC to be effective, the content and expected sequence of SEL skill development for students must be aligned (Jones et al., 2017).

**Research Question Three**

Research question 3, “What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding the social and emotional supports needed to sustain a positive school climate?” was intended to gather insight from general education teachers regarding what supports they felt were essential for sustaining a positive school climate at the time of the study. The sections that follow will discuss what the insight gathered regarding the supports participants felt were essential means and why it matters. A synthesis of data as it relates to the conceptual framework and review of relevant literature is also included.

**The Urgency of Professional Development**

The more teachers can identify SECs, reflect on their own social and emotional well-being, and improve their personal and professional skills, the greater the impact they will make on their students. Researchers have found that when teachers build their own SECs, they are more well-equipped to promote SEL in their students and maximize the impact of their teaching (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Additionally, strengthening SEC in teachers increases their abilities to promote those skills for students. Only three of the eight participants who were interviewed could name any of the SECs that are outlined by CASEL (2021). By preparing teachers to manage behavioral challenges in the classroom, it is more likely that teachers will be able to break the stress cycle (Kim et al., 2021). This can result in lower levels of teacher burnout and increased feelings of self-efficacy. Teachers can also be equipped with tools for developing a trauma-informed classroom using mindfulness-based SEL programs (Kim et al., 2021). If
teachers are not able to demonstrate personal well-being and strong SECs, they are less likely to develop strong relationships with students, effectively manage their classroom, and successfully implement SEL programs and practices (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Administrators can support teachers by providing relevant and appropriate PD opportunities to assist teachers as they face challenges both inside and outside of the classroom. Participants reported wanting PD days focused on teacher social and emotional health, classroom management, stress management, time management, prioritization, and maintaining boundaries. Additionally, participants said that if they had PD in the curriculum and programs that they were using to teach, they would feel more confident in teaching the material to students. Meaningful PD that is relevant to teachers is an essential component in supporting students and teachers alike.

Application of strategies, interactive teaching, cooperative learning, and problem-solving methods are areas where training is necessary. Participants stated that if administrators expect teachers to be responsible for aiding in the instruction of SECs, then additional PD needs to take place so that it can be done effectively without feeling like an additional task added to their plates. Furthermore, it is important for school leaders to remember that knowledge does not always equal practice (Reeves & Le Mare, 2017). Ample training for all staff is important for effective SEL instruction (Goldberg et al., 2018).

Professional practices can be improved through participation in learning communities that offer time for reflection with others that have similar needs and interests. Continuation of SEL programs requires that PD for staff is ongoing and time for continued assessment and evaluation is provided (Goldberg et al., 2018). Researchers have also found evidence that outcomes were increased when there was a positive school culture, adequate support from
principals, and higher levels of training for all staff members. Additionally, teachers who critically reflect are most likely to make changes based on knowledge (Flushman et al., 2021). If administrators are not providing teachers with an opportunity to participate in reflection related to SEL initiatives, they are less likely to experience professional growth that positively impacts the teacher and students.

Adapting to a School Wide Approach

Continuity and consistency in the classroom and school systems is best achieved when all staff members and students are well versed in the same high expectations and reinforcements. The implementation and ongoing support are also strengthened by establishing school wide expectations and rules, creating a common system for encouragement, and hanging posters that reinforce skills or competencies that are taught to students throughout the building (Goldberg et al., 2018). Throughout the interviews, participants reported that if everyone was getting a consistent message and experiencing common expectations and rewards, the school would be a more positive environment for students and staff. School wide approaches to SEL promote an interrelated and coordinated action combining curriculum, teaching, and learning with school environment (Goldberg et al., 2018). To create learning conditions that are equitable, policies, resources, and actions should be aligned to support systemic SEL (Mahoney et al., 2021). By creating a common school approach that demonstrates continuity and consistency in high expectations and reinforcements, the school climate and culture can be improved.

Using common language throughout the study site is one way that administrators can work to support a positive school climate. One participant commented on how, “everything looks very different in every grade level” while another stated that, “there’s not good crossover from situation to situation or environment to environment.” Another participant believed that if people
were more on the same page and there was less confusion, the school would have a more positive environment. Furthermore, one participant said in their interview that, “if we all had the responsibility to learn a certain way to respond to kids and how to teach them things that would be helpful” in sharing the responsibility of teaching SEL to students. Other participants reported that using phrases like “take a break” from responsive classroom or zones of regulation would provide consistency for the students. Without a common language, schools are more likely to experience low teacher morale and increased confusion among staff members.

**The Building Blocks of School Culture**

To increase the likelihood of positive staff and student relationships, teacher health and well-being must be improved. This focus can increase student SEL, teachers’ feelings of competence, and the development of supportive classrooms; all of which can lead to improved academic achievement (Schonfeld et al., 2015). When talking to teachers from the study site, two interviewees commented on the need for administration to take care of teachers by creating and maintaining a healthy environment that is motivating and positive. One person felt that administrators encourage teachers to take care of themselves because, “if [teachers] are not okay then [they] can’t stand in front of students and do the best” they can do. Providing teachers with opportunities to increase coping strategies can help teachers feel a sense of accomplishment and protection from day-to-day challenges. One way to improve teacher well-being is to incorporate mindfulness (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). This strategy can lead to increased job satisfaction, empathy, and the ability to regulate emotions. It is important for administrators to consider these obstacles and find ways to address the frustrations of teachers.

Administrators need to decrease teacher exhaustion and frustration by reducing discipline problems and providing additional behavioral interventions. Of the teachers who participated in
the online survey 75% reported feeling exhausted frequently or almost always. Furthermore, 93.8% of participants said they felt frustrated sometimes, frequently, or almost always. One participant commented on one factor that has increased frustration noting that they are not able to do exciting things with students and added that “lately the fun has been missing.” Kim et al. (2021) asserted that discipline problems can trigger emotional exhaustion in teachers; these disruptions can lead to lower job satisfaction and increase educators’ chances of leaving the profession. The authors argue that implementing mindfulness-based SEL interventions with a focus on trauma-sensitive attitudes is one method for reducing teacher burnout. Providing additional behavioral interventions, faster response times to disciplinary problems, and fostering trauma-sensitive attitudes can lead to decreased teacher exhaustion and frustration.

Teachers should be provided with interventions to improve their own SEC and their outlook on the working environment. The current focus of SEL interventions for teachers most frequently utilizes an individualized approach (Oliveira et al., 2021). This may include things like cognitive-behavioral practices and mindfulness training. On the other hand, an organizational approach would focus on reducing workload and encouraging teamwork among staff members. Of the participants who responded to the survey, 87.6% said that the attitudes of their colleagues are not at all positive, slightly positive, or somewhat positive. If teachers at the study site do not perceive the attitudes of their colleagues to be positive, and they do not believe the working environment at their school is positive, building and maintaining a positive school culture for staff and students is exponentially more challenging.

Implications

Stakeholders in education often agree that teacher health and well-being is essential to the climate of a school, safety, and success of students. It is also important for teachers to be well
versed in Social and Emotional Competencies (SEC) to keep their own minds and bodies healthy (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Concentrating on improving educator’s own skills related to SEL, it is likely that student outcomes can be increased. Teacher’s own emotional intelligence and SEL can be beneficial for establishing positive relationships which can reduce behavioral difficulties in the classroom (Poulou, 2017). This can positively impact relationships with students, reduce teacher burnout, and help teachers to manage the increasing demands placed on them. It is easy to encourage teachers to engage in an increased amount of self-care, however that expectation can be unrealistic within the current confines of their work responsibilities. State and federal policies that highlight the benefits that SEL can have on the future success of students are more likely to demonstrate the need to invest in resources for teaching SEC. The same can be said for increasing the state and federal level focus for teachers’ SECs to positively impact their ability to implement SEL initiatives.

Preservice training encourages students working toward becoming an educator to regularly embed SEL into their daily practice and can support proactive versus reactive responses to misbehavior (Main, 2018). Additionally, professional development is essential for teachers who are preparing to implement SEL programs and lessons into their classroom curriculum (Goldberg et al., 2018). When systemic change is spearheaded by governmental policies and officials, the importance of related initiatives is brought to the forefront of local decision making (Goldberg et al., 2018). Researchers have suggested that analyzing the cost and benefits of interventions intended for whole schools would provide deeper understanding of the economic returns that can be a result of an investment in SEL programs (Goldberg et al., 2018). Some schools may face difficulty financing the adoption of SEL programs and providing the necessary training to effectively implement them (Lawson et al., 2018). By advocating for
policies at the national level, required resources are more likely to be allocated to districts to support SEL program implementation (Goldberg et al., 2018).

The need for skills often attributed to SEL instruction goes beyond the four walls of a classroom and is rising on the list of skills needed for many jobs in the workforce (Williamson, 2021). Poor SEL skills could negatively impact the ability of an individual to be hired for jobs and maintain their positions after starting them. The researcher provided general education teachers an opportunity to provide insight into the perceived areas of relative strength and weakness related to how administrators are currently impacting the social and emotional health and well-being of educators. Providing participants with a chance to share their perceptions about the role administrators play in their social and emotional wellness was intended to help provide awareness for administrators, educators, and other stakeholders. I hope that by bringing to light the opinions and experiences of study participants, administrators will continue working to improve educators’ mental health, looking to reduce burnout symptoms, and increasing the frequency of teacher retention.

**Recommendations for Action**

I plan to share the findings of this study with the superintendent of the study site. Initially, the superintendent will be provided with an electronic copy of the study. Then, a follow-up meeting will be scheduled between myself and the superintendent to answer any questions and provide an opportunity for further discussion. As this study was being concluded, I was also invited to serve on the Social Emotional Learning Committee and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee for the district the study took place in. This provided me an opportunity to proactively share my interpretation of the findings with stakeholders throughout the district.
**Recommendation One**

Based on the information received from participants in the study and the review of relevant literature, one recommendation for districts is to engage administrators in leadership training that focuses on building administrative understanding of social and emotional competencies in addition to developing and maintaining positive relationships with teachers. This recommendation is based on the data presented for the first theme in research question one, the importance of personal connections. Bandura’s social cognitive theory argued that individuals learn from the most knowledgeable and proficient peers; which one can argue are school and district administrators (1989). Additionally, Bandura asserted that positive models lead to positive outcomes. Moreover, Maslach’s theory of burnout supports the need to proactively prepare teachers to handle the stress of the profession and potential conflicts that may impact their classroom communities. Administrators can assist with this theory by working to reduce the stressors that can lead to teacher burnout. If administrators demonstrate strong social and emotional health and well-being and encourage the teachers they work with to do the same, the teachers that work for them are more likely to demonstrate similar behaviors. Furthermore, if administrators can show positivity and kindness to all members of the school community while also getting to know teachers on a more personal level and being aware of their needs, teachers are more likely to feel supported.

**Recommendation Two**

In this study, I found evidence that teachers want an opportunity to feel heard by the administrators in the district. Therefore, it is recommended that administrative teams look to utilize Panorama Education’s “Teacher and Staff Survey,” or a similar alternative, as an opportunity to involve additional participants in the feedback process. Participants in this study
agreed that school leaders should take the time to not only listen to teachers, but also take their feedback into consideration while working together to build a more positive school environment. Researchers have found that involving teachers in the decision-making process helps empower educators and encourage them to embrace change (Martinez, 2016).

Having respectful communication and approachable administrators who are willing to answer questions or admit when they do not know an answer but instead look to find out, can have a positive influence on the health and well-being of students and teachers alike. By having productive two-way communication between administrators and teachers, teachers are more likely to feel involved in the community and will be more likely to take ownership of social and emotional growth. Participants reported wanting to be a part of the conversation with administrators and wanting to have the opportunity to feel heard. Based on the data that was collected, it is likely that improved communication and collaboration would help to increase the social and emotional well-being of teachers.

**Recommendation Three**

Another recommendation, based on the data that was collected and the review of relevant literature, is for administrators to adapt a schedule for the school day that prioritizes teacher and student health and well-being, provides professional opportunities for collaboration across grade level and content teams, and allows teachers to be connected to the greater school community. According to Maslach and Leiter (2016), burnout can be conceptualized as a form of job stress with a focus on organizational contexts rather than physical characteristics. They suggested that individuals change their work patterns, increase coping skills, receive support from others, participate in relaxation strategies, improve health and fitness, and improve their self-understanding. It can be argued that administrators can help to reduce symptoms of burnout.
among members of their workgroup by being supportive and engaged members of their school community.

A common thread among the responses from interview participants was that a designated time needs to be built into the school schedule when additional expectations are placed on educators. Interviewees seemed to agree that when time is not provided in the schedule to implement new initiatives, it feels like one more thing that is not manageable. Interview participants believed that if additional responsibilities or new initiatives are going to be expected of teachers, they need a scheduled time to receive training as well as to deliver the material to students in their day. Many teachers want to support the development of competencies in SEL, but fitting SEL lessons into an already overwhelming workload can be daunting and can lead to resistance as one more thing being added to their plate (Main, 2018). Flushman et al. (2021) explained the importance of maintaining healthy expectations of teachers and providing educators with appropriate supports to encourage their success and the successes of their students. Additionally, Schonert-Reichl (2017) asserted that lack of support from colleagues and basic resources required for teaching leads to increased externalizing, interpersonal, and internalizing behaviors in students. If administrators can schedule appropriate time for teacher and students to engage in increased social and emotional learning opportunities throughout their school day, those in the school community will benefit.

**Recommendation Four**

Based on the data collected during this study and the review of relevant literature, the final recommendation is for administrators to develop committees to select and implement an evidence based SEL program that is appropriately aligned vertically and horizontally. Martinez asserted that SEL should be a school wide project (2016). Involving teachers in the process of
SEL program implementation allows them to share best practices and effective approaches with their co-workers (Martinez, 2016). The School Theory of Action (School ToA) developed by CASEL provides a framework for implementing whole school SEL that outlines tools and resources necessary for creating a sustainable program (Goldberg et al., 2018). If the school’s staff and students are all well versed in the same high expectations and reinforcements, continuity and consistency can be achieved (Goldberg et al., 2018; Martinez, 2016).

Furthermore, teachers who believe in the benefits of SEL instruction are more likely to implement SEL programs with fidelity (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Providing teachers with appropriate training, developing staff self-efficacy, and improving teacher confidence and motivation can all lead to increased SEL program success (Goldberg et al., 2019; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Creating and maintaining schools that have a positive climate is another key element to effective SEL instruction (Main, 2018; Reeves & Le Mare, 2017). SEL programs can be strengthened using various levels of intervention, universal screenings, regular student progress monitoring, and informed decision making (Anthony et al., 2021).

Educators widely accept that SEL is an important component of student success in and out of the classroom, and researchers have found that when teachers lack social and emotional competencies (SEC) or experience burnout, student outcomes are negatively impacted (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Currently, the focus on SEL interventions that are specific to teachers most often use an individualized approach (Oliveira et al., 2021). This may include things like cognitive-behavioral practices and mindfulness training. On the other hand, an organizational approach would focus on reducing workload and encouraging teamwork among staff members. While adopting a SEL program that
also provides intervention for teachers would be ideal, teacher SEC can be addressed using other approaches if a program is not available that fits the budgetary constraints of the district.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Based on the research that was completed, it is recommended that further study take place at a broader level. One way to accomplish this would be to use a larger sample size with an increased number of participants. Additionally, future studies should include other populations of staff (i.e., special education teachers, interventionists, specials teachers, school counselors or mental health professionals, paraprofessionals) that may provide additional insight. While the individual interviews were a helpful tool for initiating further discussion in this study, they were time consuming and may not be the best use of time to help provide further insight regarding the perceived impact of administrators’ support and engagement on teacher health and well-being. Alternatively, future researchers may want to consider the use of focus groups while still being conscious of maintaining confidentiality among participants. In the future, it may be helpful for researchers to perform a longitudinal study, specifically a panel study. This type of research, “involves sampling a cross-section of individuals at specific intervals for an extended period...[and] measures people’s behaviors over time, specifically their opinions, feelings, emotions, and thoughts” (Simkus, 2021). Finally, it may be helpful to the research base to revisit the study site in three to five years to determine whether the recommendations presented in this study have been implemented. If so, additional research on general education teachers’ perceptions at this site may provide further insight for the research base.

**Conclusion**

The social and emotional learning (SEL) of students is greatly impacted by the social and emotional competencies (SEC) of teachers and the environment the students are learning in;
therefore, it is important to focus on making improvements in teaching and school climate (Jones et al., 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Oliveira et al. (2021) argued that teacher burnout impacts their own mental health and well-being as well as their performance, the climate of their classroom, and student mental health. Furthermore, if the relationships between teachers and their administrators, colleagues, or students are unsatisfactory, teachers may experience increased stress as well as lower job satisfaction and commitment to students. Researchers have found that lower stress and burnout are related to high trust between teachers, their colleagues and leadership (Greenberg et al., 2016). Additionally, teachers feel empowered and experience greater job satisfaction if leaders provide opportunities for collaboration (Greenberg et al., 2016). Alternatively, if administrative support for teachers is lacking, teachers may be less likely to practice and model healthy social and emotional behaviors.

Researchers have found that high quality leadership can lead to successful schools, and more specifically, can improve student engagement and achievement (Shapiro et al., 2019). Additionally, strong leadership leads to collective teacher efficacy and positive school outcomes and climate. It is important for administrators to build connections with teachers and commit to earning their trust (Perna, 2022). Teachers who do not believe they are effective or feel they lack adequate support are less likely to implement SEL programs with fidelity, which has proven to have less successful outcomes (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

The conceptual framework for this study was based on my personal experiences in conjunction with two theories. First, Maslach’s theory of burnout supports the need to proactively prepare teachers to handle the stress of the profession and potential conflicts that may impact their classroom communities. Administrators can assist with this theory by working to reduce the stressors that can lead to teacher burnout. Additionally, Bandura’s
social cognitive theory outlines the impact of administrators on the teachers that work for
them stating, “Humans have evolved an advanced capacity for observational learning that
enables them to expand their knowledge and skills on the basis of information conveyed by
modeling influences” (1989, p. 21). While each of these theoretical frameworks helps paint
the picture of how various factors influence teachers’ social and emotional health and well-
being, it is important to focus on how administrative support and engagement influences the
teachers they lead.

The problem that was addressed in this study is the importance of administrative support
and engagement in teachers’ social and emotional health and sustaining a positive school
climate. Further research was needed to determine how the actions administrators take have an
influence, positive or negative, on the social and emotional health and well-being of elementary
school general education teachers. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to
understand the perceptions of teachers regarding the perceived impact of administrators’ support
and engagement on teacher health and well-being in a public elementary school located in a
suburban Massachusetts town. This study aimed to discover the strengths and weaknesses as they
relate to administrators’ role in educators’ social and emotional wellness.

In seeking to evaluate administrative involvement in the social and emotional wellness of
teachers, the research was guided by the following questions:

**RQ1:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers
regarding how administrators’ support influences teachers’ social and emotional health?

**RQ2:** What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers
regarding how administrators’ engagement influences teachers’ social and emotional
health?
RQ3: What are the perceptions of Massachusetts elementary education teachers regarding the social and emotional supports needed to sustain a positive school climate?

This study used an intrinsic, qualitative single case study design. A case study design was the best fit for this study because it enhances credibility by using more than one data source and allowing for a holistic analysis of the data. Based on my personal interest and desire to describe the perceptions of teachers, an intrinsic focus best defines the purpose of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Additionally, the research focused on a single site and did not look to draw comparisons between more than one case.

The study took place at a suburban, public elementary school in Massachusetts with teachers from second through fifth grade. The focus of this study was on teachers currently working as general education practitioners. Data collection started with an online survey made available to all general education teachers in the building; in all 16 participants completed the survey. The survey was used in conjunction with interviews that consisted primarily of open-ended questions administered to individual teachers; in all eight participants engaged in interviews. The online survey used convenience sampling while the semi-structured interviews were based on purposive sampling. The online survey was based on a pre-existing instrument from Panorama Education. Seven topics were chosen for this portion of the study and all survey questions were selected response. For the semi-structured interviews, questions were open ended, and responses were recorded for transcription purposes; in all eight participants engaged in semi-structured interviews.

Thematic analysis took place for this study. The transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were checked by participants. When coding the data, I used a constant comparative method to openly code the interviews. Furthermore, I looked to develop concepts and identify
relationships using axial coding. Finally, selective coding was used to determine the significance of the data and establish a story line. When reporting the results of the study, the online survey was used to support the themes that were identified based on the qualitative interviews.

I plan to share the insight I have gained from this study with the superintendent of the district the study site is in. In answering the research questions that were posed for this study, several recommendations can be made for the next steps the study site can take to improve teacher health and well-being. Based on the information received from participants in the study and the review of relevant literature, one recommendation for districts is to engage administrators in leadership training that focuses on building administrative understanding of social and emotional competencies in addition to developing and maintaining positive relationships with teachers. Additionally, it is recommended that administrative teams look to utilize Panorama Education’s “Teacher and Staff Survey,” or a similar alternative, as an opportunity to involve additional participants in the feedback process. Furthermore, it is recommended that administrators adapt a schedule for the school day that prioritizes teacher and student health and well-being, provides professional opportunities for collaboration across grade level and content teams, and allows teachers to be connected to the greater school community. The final recommendation is for administrators to develop committees to select and implement an evidence based SEL program that is appropriately aligned vertically and horizontally.
REFERENCES


CASEL districtwide action planning workbook. (2020). CASEL. drc.casel.org


https://tinyurl.com/2p9bccw7 (Supplemental)


*School and District Profiles*. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. https://tinyurl.com/28w9zpcu

https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000099

https://www.simplypsychology.org/longitudinal-study.html


Appendix A

EMAIL TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Dear Colleagues,

As many of you are aware, I am currently a doctoral student at the University of New England. I am working on a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) and have recently received approval to begin the data collection phase of my study. My study is titled “Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Administrators on the Social and Emotional Health of Teachers and School Climate: A Qualitative Case Study.”

I began in the Fall of 2021 by collecting and synthesizing relevant literature and have continued this process throughout the past 12 months. In the next phase of my research, I am collecting survey responses from participants. By completing the online survey, which will be completely confidential, respondents agree to have their responses included in the study. Participation in the online survey will be anonymous and neither I nor district administration will be able to identify who chooses to participate. The survey is expected to take, at most, 10-15 minutes.

After an initial review of the survey responses, I will be looking for eight to twelve volunteers to participate in the interview portion of the study. Participants will be asked to review the attached Participant Information Sheet prior to their participation in any interviews and their privacy and confidentiality will be maintained. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom, recorded, and transcribed using Fathom, an add on to Zoom. Participants will have the option to turn their camera off during the interview. Interviews are expected to last approximately one hour. At any time, you may choose to withdraw your participation from the interview and responses will be excluded from the study. Furthermore, you will have an opportunity to complete a “member check” verifying that the information you provided is a complete and accurate representation of your interview responses.

Participation in all portions of this research is optional. The identity of any individual who chooses to participate in the interview portion of this study will be kept confidential. At the conclusion of the study, the research will be published and made available to school leadership. Results will be de-identified and displayed in aggregate to minimize the risks to participants.

If you are interested in learning more about the interview process, please contact me at the email address or phone number listed below. Attached you will find a Participant Information Sheet for your review. Thank you for your time, consideration, and support of my study on the impact of administrators on the social and emotional health of teachers and school climate.

Sincerely,

Allison Breen
Doctoral Candidate
University of New England
(860) 803-7888
abreen6@mail.brightspace.une.edu

Version Date: 10/7/2022
## Appendix B

ONLINE SURVEY

### Well-Being

Faculty and staff perceptions of their own professional well-being.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>During the past week, how often did you feel _________ at work?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engaged</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excited</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exhausted</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frustrated</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost always</td>
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<tr>
<td>happy</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hopeful</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overwhelmed</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>safe</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stressed out</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worried</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How effective do you feel at your job right now?</td>
<td>Not at all effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much does your work matter to you?</td>
<td>Does not matter at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matters a little bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matters some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matters quite a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matters a tremendous amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How meaningful for you is the work that you do?</td>
<td>Not at all meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat meaningful</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how satisfied are you with your job right now?</td>
<td>Not at all satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Belonging

How much faculty and staff feel that they are valued members of the school community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How well do your colleagues at school understand you as a person?</td>
<td>Do not understand at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand a little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand quite a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How connected do you feel to other adults at your school?</td>
<td>Not at all connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much respect do colleagues in your school show you?</td>
<td>No respect at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A little bit of respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite a bit of respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A tremendous amount of respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you matter to others at this school?</td>
<td>Do not matter at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matter a little bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matter some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matter quite a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matter a tremendous amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?</td>
<td>Do not belong at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belong a little bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belong somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belong quite a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely belong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School Climate

Perceptions of the overall social and learning climate of the school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On most days, how enthusiastic are the students about being at school?</td>
<td>Not at all enthusiastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly enthusiastic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat enthusiastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite enthusiastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely enthusiastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent are teachers trusted to teach in the way they think is best?</td>
<td>Not at all trusted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trusted a little bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trusted somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trusted quite a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trusted a tremendous amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How positive are the attitudes of your colleagues?</td>
<td>Not at all positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How supportive are students in their interactions with each other?</td>
<td>Not at all supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat supportive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How respectful are the relationships between teachers and students?</td>
<td>Not at all respectful</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly respectful</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat respectful</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How optimistic are you that your school will improve in the future?</td>
<td>Not at all optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly optimistic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you see students helping each other without being prompted?</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost all the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When new initiatives to improve teaching are presented at your school, how supportive are your colleagues?</td>
<td>Not at all supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly supportive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how positive is the working environment at your school?</td>
<td>Not at all positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly positive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Somewhat positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite positive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Teacher Self-Reflection

Perceptions of professional strengths and areas for growth related to social-emotional learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How confident are you that you can engage students who typically are not motivated?</td>
<td>Not at all confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How confident are you that you can help your school's most challenging students to learn?</td>
<td>Not at all confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How thoroughly do you feel that you know all the content you need to teach?</td>
<td>Not thoroughly at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about grit in particular, how confident are you that you can support your students' growth and development?</td>
<td>Not at all confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about growth mindset in particular, how confident are you that you can support your students' growth and development?</td>
<td>Not at all confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about social awareness in particular, how confident are you that you can support your students' growth and development?</td>
<td>Not at all confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about self-management in particular, how confident are you that you can support your students' growth and development?</td>
<td>Not at all confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about self-efficacy in particular, how confident are you that you can support your students' growth and development?</td>
<td>Not at all confident</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To ask about additional competencies:

Thinking about (COMPETENCY) in particular, how confident are you that you can support your students' growth? | Not at all confident | Slightly confident | Somewhat confident | Quite confident | Extremely confident | I am not sure what we mean by [COMPETENCY]. |
Professional Learning about SEL

Perceptions of the amount and quality of professional growth and learning opportunities available to faculty related to social-emotional learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In terms of social-emotional learning (SEL) in your growth as a teacher?</td>
<td>Not at all supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly supportive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At your school, how valuable are the social-emotional learning (SEL) professional development opportunities?</td>
<td>Not at all valuable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly valuable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat valuable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Quite valuable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely valuable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When it comes to social-emotional learning (SEL), how helpful are your colleagues' ideas for improving your teaching?</td>
<td>Not at all helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly helpful</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat helpful</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do your social-emotional learning (SEL) professional development opportunities help you explore new ideas?</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost all the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How relevant have your social-emotional learning (SEL) professional development opportunities been to the content that you teach?</td>
<td>Not at all relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly relevant</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking of social-emotional learning (SEL) in particular, how much input do you have into individualizing your own professional development opportunities?</td>
<td>Almost no input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A little bit of input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite a bit of input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A tremendous amount of input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how much do you learn about supporting your students' social-emotional learning (SEL) from the leaders at your school?</td>
<td>Learn almost nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn a little bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn quite a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn a tremendous amount</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff-Leadership Relationships

Perceptions of faculty and staff relationships with school leaders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How friendly are your school leaders toward you?</td>
<td>Not at all friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At your school, how motivating do you find working with the leadership team?</td>
<td>Not at all motivating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly motivating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat motivating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite motivating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely motivating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much trust exists between school leaders and staff?</td>
<td>Almost no trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A little bit of trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite a bit of trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A tremendous amount of trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do your school leaders care about you as an individual?</td>
<td>Do not care at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care a little bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care quite a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care a tremendous amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How confident are you that your school leaders have the best interests of the school in mind?</td>
<td>Not at all confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely confident</td>
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<td>How fairly does the school leadership treat the staff?</td>
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<td>When you face challenges at work, how supportive are your school leaders?</td>
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<td>How respectful are your school leaders towards you?</td>
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<td>Extremely respectful</td>
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<td>When challenges arise in your personal life, how understanding are your school leaders?</td>
<td>Not at all understanding</td>
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<td>Slightly understanding</td>
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<td>Somewhat understanding</td>
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# School Leadership

Perceptions of the school leadership's effectiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How clearly do your school leaders identify their goals for teachers?</td>
<td>Not at all clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How positive is the tone that school leaders set for the culture of the school?</td>
<td>Not at all positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How effectively do school leaders communicate important information to teachers?</td>
<td>Not at all effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How knowledgeable are your school leaders about what is going on in teachers' classrooms?</td>
<td>Not knowledgeable at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How responsive are school leaders to your feedback?</td>
<td>Not at all responsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For your school leaders, how important is teacher satisfaction?</td>
<td>Not important at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the school makes important decisions, how much input do teachers have?</td>
<td>Almost no input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How effective are the school leaders at developing rules for students that facilitate their learning?</td>
<td>Not at all effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how positive is the influence of the school leaders on the quality of your teaching?</td>
<td>Not at all positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL/QUESTIONS

Date: ___________________________ Participant Code: ___________________________

Script to be read before each interview:

My name is Allison Breen and I am a student in the Doctor of Education program at the
University of New England. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about your
perceptions of the impact of administrators on the social and emotional health of teachers and
school climate. This research project is being done as part of a dissertation.

As part of this study, the study site and all participants involved will be kept strictly
confidential. The content collected throughout the data collection process, coding, analysis, and
subsequent writing will be kept within a password-protected file and laptop. Any hard copies of
content will be stored in a locked cabinet at my home. After all transcripts have been verified for
accuracy, the master list and audio/visual recordings will be destroyed. The remaining study
data will be retained for a minimum of three years after the project is completed prior to being
destroyed. Additionally, I will be the only individual to have access to this content. Lastly, with
your permission, you will be asked to choose a pseudonym and may turn off your camera during
the interview.

Throughout the interview, I will refer to Social Emotional Learning as SEL. The
interview should take no more than one hour. We will start with some background questions and
then continue to more open-ended questions in a conversation. At the end you will have a chance
to add any additional information and ask any questions you may have. All the information
 collected from the interview will be confidential and participation in the interview is voluntary.
After the interview, I will be transcribing the information that you share with me, but your name
and the name of your school will not be identified. I will be digitally recording the interview for

Version Date: 10/7/2022
transcription purposes. If at any point you would like me to turn off the recording device or stop
the interview, please let me know. Once the interview has been transcribed, you will have the
opportunity to complete a member check at which time you can review your responses and make
any additions or deletions.

I will now go over the Information Sheet for the study with you.

REVIEW INFORMATION SHEET

Do you have any questions or concerns?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Do you have a preferred pseudonym you would like me to use? ______________________

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Do you consent to participating in the interview?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Do I have your permission to record this interview using Zoom's recording feature? You have
the option to turn off your camera throughout the interview if you choose. This transcript will be
made available to you.

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Each of the following questions will be introduced, explained, repeated, re-phrased, or skipped
as requested.

Can you please state your name and current position for my reference purposes when
transcribing the interview?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Did you teach in any other districts or schools before this one?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE
How long have you been teaching at the school and in what capacity?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

General Questions about SEL

I’m going to start by asking some general questions about SEL.

How would you describe SEL?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

What background do you have related to SEL? What led to your understanding of what SEL is or what SEL means?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

How would you describe social and emotional competencies?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Teacher Well-Being

Now I’m going to ask you some questions about your own professional well-being.

Have administrators supported your social and emotional health in the past? In what ways?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Has the level of administrative support you have received been adequate to meet your needs?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

What can your school or district leaders do to better support your social and emotional well-being?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

In what ways has administrators’ engagement influenced your social and emotional health?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE
Modeling SEC for Teachers

The next few questions are going to focus on how administrators model social and emotional competencies for teachers.

Do your administrators engage in self-care that you are aware of? In what ways?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Have administrators engaged in strengthening teachers’ social and emotional competencies in your building? In what ways?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

School Climate

Now, I am going to ask you a few questions about your school climate.

What are the most positive aspects of working at your school?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

If you could change anything about working at your school, what would you change?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Shared Responsibility for Teaching SEL to Students

The upcoming questions are intended to get a sense of the level of involvement administrators have in the shared responsibility of teaching SEL to students. These questions will be used to determine the perceptions of teachers regarding the social and emotional supports needed to sustain a positive school climate.

In what ways are various school staff members responsible for modeling and teaching SEL skills to students?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

How can teachers at your school benefit from shared responsibility in teaching SEL to students?
PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Describe how school staff currently reinforce positive uses of SEL skills?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

In what ways does your school assess students’ level of mastery related to social and emotional competencies?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

What is done with the information gained from assessing students’ social and emotional competencies? Who is responsible for determining next steps?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Teacher Self-Reflection and Professional Learning about SEL

The next couple of questions are going to ask about your teaching and learning related to SEL. What professional development have administrators in your district provided to strengthen your social and emotional health?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

What professional development topics should your administrators focus on to better support teachers’ social-emotional growth?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

How can administrators support an ongoing focus on teacher social and emotional competencies and well-being?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

What professional development have administrators in your district provided to strengthen your ability to support a positive school climate?
What professional development topics should your administrators focus on to sustain a positive school climate?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

How can administrators support an ongoing focus on sustaining a positive school climate?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Concluding Thoughts

Before we finish the interview, is there anything else that you would like to add about SEL whether it be at your school or in your classroom?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Script to be read at the conclusion of each interview:

Thank you for participating in the interview and sharing your thoughts. Once I have completed the transcription of the interview, I will provide you with a copy via email. You will have the opportunity to complete a member check at which time you can review your responses and make any additions or deletions. What personal email address can I use for future correspondence?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Over the next few weeks, I will be using the information that you shared for my research. If I have any other questions, is it okay for me to contact you to follow up?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Excellent, thank you! Once I have finished conducting my research, I will share my results with you. If you think of anything else that might be helpful, you can reach me by phone or email which I will provide to you in a follow up email. Do you have any questions before we wrap up?

PAUSE FOR RESPONSE

Version Date: 10/7/2022
As a reminder, your participation in this interview is voluntary and confidential so if you decide to withdraw your responses at any time, please do not hesitate to reach out and we will discontinue use of those. Thank you again for your participation.
Appendix D

IRB APPROVAL

Institutional Review Board
Julie Longua Peterson, Chair

Biddeford Campus
11 Hills Beach Road
Biddeford, ME 04005
(207) 602-2244 T
(207) 602-5905 F

Portland Campus
716 Stevens Avenue
Portland, ME 04103

DATE OF LETTER: October 7, 2022

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Allison Breen
FACULTY ADVISOR: Audrey Rabas, PhD

PROJECT NUMBER: 0922-18
RECORD NUMBER: 0922-18-01
PROJECT TITLE: Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Administrators on the Social and Emotional Health of Teachers and School Climate: A Qualitative Case Study
SUBMISSION TYPE: Exempt Project
SUBMISSION DATE: 9/26/2022

ACTION: Determination of Exempt Status
DECISION DATE: 10/7/2022

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption Category # 2(ii)

The UNE Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed the materials submitted in connection with the above referenced project and has determined that the proposed work is exempt from IRB review and oversight as defined by 45 CFR 46.104.

Additional IRB review is not required for this project as submitted. However, if any changes to the design of the study are contemplated (e.g., revision to the protocol, data collection instruments, interview/survey questions, recruitment materials, participant information sheet, and/or other IRB-reviewed documents), the Principal Investigator must submit an amendment to the IRB to ensure the requested change(s) will not alter the exempt status of the project.

Please feel free to contact me at (207) 602-2244 or irb@une.edu with any questions.

Best Regards,

Bob Kennedy, MS
Director, Research Integrity
Appendix E

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Participant Information Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Sheet Version Date:</th>
<th>October 7, 2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRB Project #:</td>
<td>0922-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title of Project:</td>
<td>Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Administrators on the Social and Emotional Health of Teachers and School Climate: A Qualitative Case Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Investigator (PI):</td>
<td>Allison Breen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI Contact Information:</td>
<td>(860) 803-7888; <a href="mailto:abreen6@une.edu">abreen6@une.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INTRODUCTION

- This is a project being conducted for research purposes.
- The intent of the Participant Information Sheet is to provide you with pertinent details about this research project.
- You are encouraged to ask any questions about this research project, now, during or after the project is complete.
- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- The use of the word ‘we’ in the Information Sheet refers to the Principal Investigator and/or other research staff.
- If you decide to participate in the interview portion of this study, you have the right to withdraw from this research project at any time without penalty. If you decide to withdraw from the research project, all communications, recorded interviews, field notes and reflections related to your prior participation will be destroyed and will not be used in the research study.
- If you complete and submit the survey but later wish to withdraw from the project, I will not be able to delete the data since the survey is anonymous and I will have no way to identify the individual survey responses.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT?
The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding the perceived impact of administrators' support and engagement on teacher health and well-being in a public elementary school located in a suburban Massachusetts town. This study will aim to discover the strengths and weaknesses as they relate to administrators' role in educators' social and emotional wellness. I will remain open to investigating other themes identified through the data collection if applicable (i.e., the impact of administrator actions on student Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and potential suggestions for improving teachers' social and emotional competencies and well-being).

WHY AM I BEING ASKED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT?
You are being asked to participate in this research project because you are a general education teacher that works at the study site (23 total eligible participants). While all teachers at the site will be eligible to participate in the online survey, only teachers who have worked in the district for a minimum of five years will be eligible to participate in the interview portion of the study. The focus on SEL at the district level was initiated during the fall of 2017 at the study site. To gather the most comprehensive information possible during the semi-structured interviews, individuals will be considered eligible if they have worked in the district for a minimum of five years (28 eligible general education teachers). This will ensure that individuals who participate in the study have experience with the phenomenon being studied. It is expected that between eight and twelve individuals will be chosen as participants for the study so that about one third of all eligible participants are included in the semi-structured interview portion of the study.
WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT?

A 62-question survey will be introduced to staff via email with a letter of introduction to the study and explanation of the consent process. Panorama Education’s “Teacher and Staff Survey” will be used to collect information on the following topics: well-being, belonging, teacher self-reflection, professional learning about SEL, school climate, staff-leadership relationships, and school leadership. The survey is expected to take, at most, between 10-15 minutes.

This project will also collect data using semi-structured interviews. After reading the participant information sheet and agreeing to participate in a semi-structured interview with the principal investigator voluntarily, participants will:

- Be asked to identify a date, time, and location for the interview. Interviews will occur via Zoom. Interviews will be conducted in a private setting to ensure others cannot hear the conversation.
- Be asked to provide verbal confirmation that they agree to participate in the interview portion of the study.
- Participate in a recorded (for transcription purposes) interview lasting approximately one hour. Participants will be given the option to turn off their camera if they choose.
- After the study, participants will be emailed by the researcher. The researcher will ask participants to respond via email to confirm the interview data collected.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS INVOLVED FROM BEING IN THIS PROJECT?

The risks involved with participation in this research project are minimal. One conflict of interest that may impact the study is the connection between the study participants and the administrators who are the subject of the research question. The researcher will choose carefully worded interview questions that will provoke constructive rather than critical responses from the participants. The goal of the research study will be clearly communicated to potential participants as well as administrators and other stakeholders to ensure that no negative judgement is presented in a manner that might be construed as a personal attack. At the conclusion of the study, the research will be published and made available to school leadership. Results will be de-identified and displayed in aggregate to minimize the risks to participants.

Pseudonyms will be utilized to help maintain confidentiality for the participants of this study and participants may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. However, it is possible that some responses may unintentionally provide clues as to the names of the participants.

You have the right to skip or not answer any question, for any reason.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS FROM BEING IN THIS PROJECT?

There are no likely benefits to you by being in this research project; however, the information collected may help provide a better understanding of how implementation of social and emotional learning in schools can be improved. Additionally, this study may help provide information about how administrators can support the social and emotional well-being of educators and students.

WILL YOU BE COMPENSATED FOR BEING IN THIS PROJECT?

You will not be compensated for being in this research project.
WHAT ABOUT PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY?
We will do our best to keep your personal information private and confidential. However, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Additionally, your information in this research project could be reviewed by representatives of the University such as the Office of Research Integrity and/or the Institutional Review Board.

The results of this research project may be shown at meetings or published in journals to inform other professionals. If any papers or talks are given about this research, your name will not be used. We may use data from this research project that has been permanently stripped of personal identifiers in future research without obtaining your consent.

The following additional measures will be taken to protect your privacy and confidentiality:

- Participants will be given the opportunity to identify a date, time, and location for the interview. In doing so, they can select a private location to ensure that others cannot hear the conversation.
- During the interview, participants will have the option to turn off the camera if they choose.
- Private data will not be collected without the participant’s knowledge and consent.
- The survey is designed to be anonymous; this means that no one can link the data you provide to you or identify you as a participant. However, the interview portion of this study is designed to be confidential. Only the PI will have access to the master list (see below).

  NOTE: Anonymous means that no one can link data to an individual. However, I cannot promise absolute anonymity.

- A master list will be used to record the names of interview participants, email addresses, and a unique pseudonym for interview participants will be stored securely and separately from the study data.
- Data will be kept through use of an encrypted, password-protected computer. Access to the data will be restricted to the PI and research team.
- During the interview transcription process, participant personally identifiable information will be stripped. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym to be used instead of the participant’s name.
- The master list used to retain identifiers linked to coded study data will be stored securely in a separate location from the study data. The master list and audio/video recordings of the interviews will be destroyed/deleted after all transcripts have been verified for accuracy.
- Communications, recorded interviews, and school/district documents will be converted to electronic files and stored on a password protected computer. Only the PI and members of the research team will have access to the data.
- Any field notes and reflections that are handwritten will be locked and will only be accessible by the study team.
- With the exception of the master list and the audio/video recordings, all other study data will be retained for a minimum of 3 years after completion of the project and then will be destroyed.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS PROJECT?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research project. If you have questions about this project, complaints, or concerns, you should contact the Principal Investigator listed on the first page of this document.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT?
If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Office of Research Integrity at (207) 602-2244 or via e-mail at irb@une.edu.
Appendix F

ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

Well-Being

During the past week, how often did you feel engaged at work?
16 responses

During the past week, how often did you feel excited at work?
16 responses

During the past week, how often did you feel exhausted at work?
16 responses

During the past week, how often did you feel frustrated at work?
16 responses

During the past week, how often did you feel happy at work?
16 responses

During the past week, how often did you feel hopeful at work?
16 responses

During the past week, how often did you feel overwhelmed at work?
16 responses

During the past week, how often did you feel safe at work?
16 responses
**Belonging**

**How well do your colleagues at school understand you as a person?**
16 responses

- Do not understand at all: 37.5%
- Understand a little: 18.8%
- Understand somewhat: 18.8%
- Understand quite a bit: 12.5%
- Completely understand: 6.3%

**How connected do you feel to other adults at your school?**
16 responses

- Not at all connected: 37.5%
- Slightly connected: 18.8%
- Somewhat connected: 18.8%
- Quite connected: 12.5%
- Extremely connected: 6.3%

**How much respect do colleagues in your school show you?**
16 responses

- No respect at all: 43.8%
- A little bit of respect: 18.8%
- Some respect: 18.8%
- Quite a bit of respect: 12.5%
- A tremendous amount of respect: 6.3%

**How much do you matter to others at this school?**
16 responses

- Do not matter at all: 43.8%
- Matter a little bit: 18.8%
- Matter more: 18.8%
- Matter quite a bit: 12.5%
- Matter a tremendous amount: 6.3%

**Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?**
16 responses

- Do not belong at all: 18.8%
- Belong a little bit: 18.8%
- Belong somewhat: 18.8%
- Belong quite a bit: 12.5%
- Completely belong: 6.3%

**School Climate**

**On most days, how enthusiastic are the students about being at school?**
16 responses

- Not at all enthusiastic: 31.3%
- Slightly enthusiastic: 31.3%
- Somewhat enthusiastic: 31.3%
- Quite enthusiastic: 6.3%
- Extremely enthusiastic: 1.3%

**To what extent are teachers trusted to teach in the way they think is best?**
16 responses

- Not at all trusted: 37.5%
- Trusted a little bit: 10.0%
- Trusted somewhat: 10.0%
- Trusted quite a bit: 18.8%
- Trusted a tremendous amount: 12.5%

**How positive are the attitudes of your colleagues?**
16 responses

- Not at all positive: 43.8%
- Slightly positive: 12.5%
- Somewhat positive: 18.8%
- Quite positive: 18.8%
- Extremely positive: 6.3%

**How supportive are students in their interactions with each other?**
16 responses

- Not at all supportive: 62.5%
- Slightly supportive: 18.8%
- Somewhat supportive: 12.5%
- Quite supportive: 6.3%
- Extremely supportive: 1.3%
How respectful are the relationships between teachers and students?
16 responses
- Not at all respectful: 25%
- Slightly respectful: 25%
- Somewhat respectful: 43.8%
- Quite respectful: 9.5%
- Extremely respectful: 3.1%

How optimistic are you that your school will improve in the future?
16 responses
- Not at all optimistic: 43.8%
- Slightly optimistic: 12.5%
- Somewhat optimistic: 12.5%
- Quite optimistic: 12.5%
- Extremely optimistic: 9.5%

How often do you see students helping each other without being prompted?
16 responses
- Almost never: 12.5%
- Once in a while: 12.5%
- Sometimes: 12.5%
- Frequently: 12.5%
- Almost all the time: 37.5%

When new initiatives to improve teaching are presented at your school, how supportive are your colleagues?
16 responses
- Not at all supportive: 12.5%
- Slightly supportive: 12.5%
- Somewhat supportive: 12.5%
- Quite supportive: 12.5%
- Extremely supportive: 37.5%

Overall, how positive is the working environment at your school?
16 responses
- Not at all positive: 25%
- Slightly positive: 31.2%
- Somewhat positive: 43.8%
- Quite positive: 6.2%
- Extremely positive: 0%

Teacher Self-Reflection

How confident are you that you can engage students who typically are not motivated?
16 responses
- Not at all confident: 31.3%
- Slightly confident: 18.8%
- Somewhat confident: 18.8%
- Quite confident: 18.8%
- Extremely confident: 31.3%

How confident are you that you can help your school’s most challenging students to learn?
16 responses
- Not at all confident: 31.3%
- Slightly confident: 18.8%
- Somewhat confident: 18.8%
- Quite confident: 18.8%
- Extremely confident: 31.3%

How thoroughly do you feel that you know all the content you need to teach?
16 responses
- Not thoroughly at all: 18.8%
- Slightly thoroughly: 18.8%
- Somewhat thoroughly: 18.8%
- Quite thoroughly: 18.8%
- Extremely thoroughly: 31.3%

Thinking about grit in particular, how confident are you that you can support your students' growth and development?
16 responses
- Not at all confident: 31.3%
- Slightly confident: 18.8%
- Somewhat confident: 18.8%
- Quite confident: 18.8%
- Extremely confident: 31.3%

I am not sure what we mean by "grit."
In terms of social-emotional learning (SEL) in particular, how supportive has the school been of your growth as a teacher?

- Not at all supportive
- Slightly supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Quite supportive
- Extremely supportive

At your school, how valuable are the social-emotional learning (SEL) professional development opportunities?

- Not at all valuable
- Slightly valuable
- Somewhat valuable
- Quite valuable
- Extremely valuable

When it comes to social-emotional learning (SEL), how helpful are your colleagues’ ideas for improving your teaching?

- Not at all helpful
- Slightly helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Quite helpful
- Extremely helpful

How often do your social-emotional learning (SEL) professional development opportunities help you explore new ideas?

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost all the time

How relevant have your social-emotional learning (SEL) professional development opportunities been to the content that you teach?

- Not at all relevant
- Slightly relevant
- Somewhat relevant
- Quite relevant
- Extremely relevant

Thinking of social-emotional learning (SEL) in particular, how much input do you have into individualizing your own professional development opportunities?

- Almost no input
- A little bit of input
- Some input
- Quite a lot of input
- A tremendous amount of input
Overall, how much do you learn supporting your students’ social-emotional learning (SEL) from the leaders at your school?
16 responses

- 35.3% learned a little bit
- 12.5% learned quite a bit
- 18.8% learned a tremendous amount
- 13.9% learned quite a bit
- 13.9% learned nothing

Staff-Leadership Relationships

How friendly are your school leaders toward you?
16 responses

- 56.3% somewhat friendly
- 31.3% quite friendly
- 12.5% extremely friendly
- 12.5% not at all friendly

At your school, how motivating do you find working with the leadership team?
16 responses

- 37.0% quite motivating
- 31.3% very motivating
- 18.8% somewhat motivating
- 12.5% not at all motivating

How much trust exists between school leaders and staff?
16 responses

- 31.3% a tremendous amount
- 13.9% quite a bit
- 12.5% a little bit
- 20.0% almost no trust

How much do your school leaders care about you as an individual?
16 responses

- 31.3% not at all
- 20.0% care a little bit
- 25.0% care somewhat
- 13.9% care quite a bit
- 12.5% care a tremendous amount

How confident are you that your school leaders have the best interests of the school in mind?
16 responses

- 13.9% not at all confident
- 13.9% somewhat confident
- 25.0% quite confident
- 25.0% extremely confident

How fairly does the school leadership treat staff?
16 responses

- 31.3% not at all fairly
- 12.5% slightly fairly
- 13.9% somewhat fairly
- 31.3% quite fairly
- 25.0% extremely fairly
School Leadership

How clearly do your school leaders identify their goals for teachers? 16 responses

- Not at all clearly: 31.2%
- Slightly clearly: 25%
- Somewhat clearly: 12.2%
- Quite clearly: 12.2%
- Extremely clearly: 15%

How effectively do school leaders communicate important information to teachers? 15 responses

- Not at all effectively: 37.0%
- Slightly effectively: 13.9%
- Somewhat effectively: 13.9%
- Quite effectively: 13.9%
- Extremely effectively: 16.8%

How responsive are school leaders to your feedback? 16 responses

- Not at all responsive: 26%
- Slightly responsive: 16.8%
- Somewhat responsive: 25%
- Quite responsive: 18.8%
- Extremely responsive: 16.8%

How respectful are your school leaders toward you? 16 responses

- Not at all respectful: 68.8%
- Slightly respectful: 16.8%
- Somewhat respectful: 12.2%
- Quite respectful: 12.2%
- Extremely respectful: 15%

How positive is the tone that school leaders set for the culture of the school? 16 responses

- Not at all positive: 56.3%
- Slightly positive: 12.5%
- Somewhat positive: 12.5%
- Quite positive: 12.5%
- Extremely positive: 16%

How knowledgeable are your school leaders about what is going on in teachers’ classrooms? 16 responses

- Not knowledgeable at all: 37.0%
- Slightly knowledgeable: 13.9%
- Somewhat knowledgeable: 13.9%
- Quite knowledgeable: 13.9%
- Extremely knowledgeable: 16.8%

For your school leaders, how important is teacher satisfaction? 16 responses

- Not important at all: 25%
- Slightly important: 16.8%
- Somewhat important: 25%
- Quite important: 18.8%
- Extremely important: 16.8%
When the school makes important decisions, how much input do teachers have? 16 responses

- Almost no input: 31.2%
- A little bit of input: 20.0%
- Some input: 11.8%
- Quite a bit of input: 3.7%
- A tremendous amount of input: 11.8%

How effective are the school leaders at developing rules for students that facilitate learning? 15 responses

- Not at all effective: 25%
- Slightly effective: 13.3%
- Somewhat effective: 33.3%
- Quite effective: 6.7%
- Extremely effective: 13.3%

Overall, how positive is the influence of the school leaders on the quality of your teaching? 16 responses

- Not at all positive: 3.1%
- Slightly positive: 25%
- Somewhat positive: 31.3%
- Quite positive: 20.0%
- Extremely positive: 11.8%