

8-1-2018

# Social And Emotional Learning And Support For Students Living In Rural Communities

Kristen Schebell  
*University of New England*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://dune.une.edu/theses>

 Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

© 2018 Kristen Schebell

---

## Preferred Citation

Schebell, Kristen, "Social And Emotional Learning And Support For Students Living In Rural Communities" (2018). *All Theses And Dissertations*. 170.  
<http://dune.une.edu/theses/170>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at DUNE: DigitalUNE. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses And Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DUNE: DigitalUNE. For more information, please contact [bkenyon@une.edu](mailto:bkenyon@une.edu).

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS  
LIVING IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

By

Kristen Schebell

BA Florida State University 2008

MA University of North Florida 2011

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Affiliated Faculty of  
The College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of New England  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Portland & Biddeford, Maine

August, 2018

Copyright 2018

Kristen Schebell

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS  
LIVING IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

**ABSTRACT**

Some schools have started implementing programs to assist with social and emotional development in students. Social and emotional skills include the ability to get along well with others, manage one's emotions, and self-motivate; all of which impact the academic performance and behaviors of students (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Unfortunately, many schools are lacking the additional supports needed, such as school counselors and social workers, to implement social and emotional learning programs or to provide social and emotional support to students (Education Week Research Center, 2015).

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of social and emotional learning and social and emotional support on academic achievement and behaviors of students in a rural school in Maine. The site of this study was an elementary school in a rural town in northern Maine. The reason this school was chosen for the study was because it was a part of a three-year grant from the 2015-16 school year through the 2017-18 school year, in which a school counselor and social worker were added to the school to provide social and emotional support and teach social and emotional skills to students.

The study explored three research questions: 1) How do teachers and administrators perceive SEL and SES implementation and its impact on the school? 2) What changes occurred in NWEA scores during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place? 3) What changes occurred in student behavior incidents during the two years that

additional social and emotional supports were in place? Data collection included student testing and behavioral data, teacher surveys, and a teacher focus group discussion. The findings suggest the need for social and emotional supports, such as school counselors and social workers, in all schools, especially rural schools that often lack those additional supports. Teachers perceived the additional supports were important to students' wellbeing. The additional social and emotional supports in place through the school counselor and social worker were associated with positive changes in student behavior student behavior.

University of New England

Doctor of Education  
Educational Leadership

This dissertation was presented

by

Kristen Schebell

It was presented on  
July 9, 2018

And approved by:

Marylin Newell, Ph.D., Lead Advisor  
University of New England

Jennifer Galipeau, Ed.D., Secondary Advisor  
University of New England

Ruth Ann Cowger, M.Ed., Affiliate Committee Member  
University of Maine

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my family: my best friend and husband, Mike; sweet son, Michael; and precious daughter, Ansley, for your love and support over the past three years. Thank you for your encouragement and sacrifices you all made during this journey. Mike, there is no way I could have done this without you. Thank you for stepping up and doing as much as you did with the kids so I could work towards this goal.

To my parents: for always encouraging me to pursue my dreams, even during unideal times. The opportunity to pursue this doctorate came in the midst of newborn twins and a move across the country, yet you continued to encourage me. Dad, your courage and strength through some of life's most difficult times has taught me more than you can imagine, and it is something I will always strive to teach Michael, Ansley, and Bryson.

Finally, to my academic support team for their wisdom, feedback, encouragement, and insight during this dissertation process. Dr. Marylin Newell, my Lead Advisor, Dr. Jennifer Galipeau, my Secondary Advisor, and Ruth Ann Cowger, my Affiliate Committee Member and friend, thank you for everything you have done to assist me throughout this process.

## Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study .....	4
Research Questions.....	5
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Limitations .....	7
Significance.....	7
Definition of Terms.....	8
Conclusion .....	9
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	10
Social and Emotional Learning and Social and Emotional Support.....	10
Social and Emotional Learning.....	11
Implementation of SEL.....	15
Social and Emotional Support .....	19
Benefits of Social and Emotional Support.....	20
Effects of Poverty on Students.....	21
Additional Social and Emotional Educational Support for Students Living in Poverty.....	24
Theoretical Framework.....	25
Conclusion .....	25



CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....	27
Research Design.....	27
Setting .....	28
Participants.....	29
Participants Rights .....	29
Data.....	30
Quantitative Data Collection.....	31
Qualitative Data Collection.....	32
Quantitative Data Analysis .....	33
Qualitative Data Analysis .....	34
Potential Limitations .....	34
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	36
Methodology .....	36
Results.....	38
NWEA Data .....	38
Behavior Data .....	40
Teacher Survey and Focus Group Responses .....	42
Emerging Themes .....	48
Summary.....	50
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	52

Interpretation of Findings .....	53
Implications.....	54
Recommendations for Action .....	56
Recommendations for Further Study .....	57
Conclusion .....	58
References.....	59
Appendixes .....	66

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A critical piece of children's education is missing in many schools as academics are often the main focus and social and emotional learning (SEL) and social and emotional support (SES) are absent from the school experience (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). To ensure students receive a well-rounded education and their social and emotional needs are met, some schools in the United States implement SEL and provide SES for their students (CASEL, 2013). SEL and SES teach students how to “manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors” (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004, p. 4). Rather than focusing strictly on academics, once schools shift to meet students' social and emotional needs, academics will most likely improve (Weissberg, 2011).

There is a positive correlation between social and emotional competence and academic performance (Elias, O'Brien, & Weissberg, 2006, p. 10). Students' behavior, social and emotional skills, attitudes, academic performance, and test scores are all positively affected by SEL (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Weissberg (2011) stated that SEL “is a process of acquiring knowledge and skills related to five core competencies” (p. 10). The competencies include self-awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills (Weissberg, 2011, p. 10).

In addition to SEL, research on SES has shown that a sense of belonging in school has been linked to “emotional well-being, intrinsic motivation, prosocial behavior, commitment to school, engagement, and achievement” (Protheroe, 2007, p. 51). SES includes ways in which parents, educators, siblings, and others can support a child's social and emotional development

(NYC Department of Education, 2014). Additional SES can have a significant positive impact on students, especially at-risk students (Protheroe, 2007).

Some students come to school lacking social and emotional awareness, and as a result, are academically or behaviorally unsuccessful in school (Jensen, 2013). This is due to different reasons including (a) lack of health and nutrition; (b) lack of hope and optimism; (c) lowered expectations about the future; (d) short attention spans, distractibility, difficulty generating new solutions to problems; (e) parental absence; and (f) acute and chronic stress. The stress that some students are dealing with at home can often be correlated to some of the depressive symptoms listed above. “Behavioral geneticists commonly claim that DNA accounts for 30–50% of our behaviors, an estimate that leaves 50–70% explained by environment” (Jensen, 2009, p. 13). If students are dealing with stressors from their home life, educators must take the time to connect with their students and create respectful relationships to address and help them deal with the stress in a positive way (Jensen, 2013). SEL and SES in schools provides students with social and emotional skills and models appropriate social and emotional responses that they may not be seeing at home.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Prosocial classroom behavior is linked with positive intellectual outcomes, and conversely, antisocial behavior is often linked with poor academic performance (Zins et al., 2004, p. 4). Unfortunately, some students come to school with behavioral problems, some of which are due to the lack of social and emotional support at home. “Every emotional response other than the six hardwired emotions of joy, anger, surprise, disgust, sadness, and fear must be taught” (Jensen, 2009, p. 19). When teachers expect certain responses from their students who have not learned emotions like empathy or patience, teachers may think the student is being

disrespectful when they act inappropriately (Jensen, 2009).

Implementing SEL and SES school-wide can address the lack of social and emotional awareness some students may be dealing with. SEL and SES consist of being proactive and providing students with the tools they need to overcome challenges, get along with others, treat adults with respect, and self-motivate. At Southside School (a pseudonym for the site of this study), these tools are taught through classroom guidance lessons with the school counselor, individual counseling with the school counselor or social worker, group counseling sessions with the school counselor or social worker, and relationship building with every student.

Although there are studies showing the importance of SEL and SES in all schools, a 2015 report published by the Education Week Research Center (EWRC) showed there is a lack of SEL and SES in many schools. The study gathered data from survey results of more than 500 educators, including teachers, principals, assistant principals, other school-based administrators, and school-based department leaders or specialists, to get a better understanding of how they view SEL. The questions on the survey were focused on SEL and “issues related to school climate and discipline and student engagement” (EWRC, 2015, p. 2). Data showed a decline in educators reporting positive conditions in their schools and more negative perceptions about student behavior (EWRC, 2015, p. 3). There was also an increase in educators recognizing that SEL could make significant changes in their schools, yet fewer than half of the educators agreed that their schools foster social and emotional well-being (p. 3-4). Although educators recognize a need for change, some may need additional resources or information to assist them with the undertaking of creating a school environment which promotes SEL (EWRC, 2015, p. 23).

## **Purpose of the Study**

There is a positive correlation between social-emotional competence and academic performance (Elias et al., 2006, p. 11), and social-emotional interventions have “significantly improved social emotional skills, self-esteem, school bonding, and adherence to social norms; reduced disruptive behavior, school violence, and suspensions; and increased positive classroom behavior, academic performance, and test scores” (p. 11). The purpose of this study was to examine the association between SEL and SES on academic achievement and behaviors of students in a rural school in Maine. Southside School provided SEL and teaches social and emotional skills to help instill positive attributes and guide students as they become productive members of the community. This additional support was done through a grant from the elementary and secondary school counseling (ESSC) program funded by the Department of Education. The ESSC grant provides funding to elementary and secondary school counseling programs that demonstrate a need for counseling services, propose innovative approaches, and show potential for replication (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). With support through the ESSC grant, school counselor and social worker positions were funded for the 2015-16 through 2017-18 school years in select schools.

The grant is specifically geared towards providing SEL and SES for students. As a result of implementation of SEL and SES, the desired outcomes include decreased number of students sent to the principal’s office for behavioral issues based on behavioral log data; and an increase in academic performance based on students’ Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) test scores. NWEA is an assessment local districts in Maine use to get feedback on student growth in reading, language usage, and mathematics (NWEA, 2017). This study sought to determine if two

years of SEL and SES in a rural school in Maine had a positive effect on students' academics and behaviors.

### **Research Questions**

By looking at student performance on the NWEA assessments, behavior logs, teacher surveys, and through focus group discussions, these research questions were answered:

1. How do teachers and administrators perceive SEL and SES implementation and its impact on the school?
2. What changes occurred in NWEA scores during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?
3. What changes occurred in student behavior incidents during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?

The hypothesis was that there would be a relationship between student performance and behavior and SEL and SES implementation, which would also be supported by teachers' perceptions of the impact on the school. It was anticipated that if the results were positive, these findings might create a sense of urgency for other rural schools to implement school-wide SEL and SES.

### **Conceptual Framework**

There are a few key authors who have played an integral part in the work around SEL and SES. The term emotional intelligence (EI) was created by two researchers, Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990), and it is defined as "the ability to recognize, understand and manage our own emotions, and recognize, understand, and influence the emotions of others" (Institute for Health and Human Potential, 2018, para. 1). Daniel Goleman, a co-founder of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), was electrified over the new term and

way of thinking and published a book called *Emotional Intelligence* in 1995 to help spread the concept more widely (Goleman, 2018). This was when the SEL movement was just beginning to emerge. Goleman shared that EI determines humans' social success more so than IQ, as it determines one's success with relationships, work, and physical well-being. He reported multiple research studies in the book to support his belief that SEL improves academic learning for students. Since Goleman founded CASEL, numerous studies have been completed and the organizations continue to work towards its mission to make SEL an integral part of every school, from preschool through high school (CASEL, 2013). Elias et al. (2006) and Weissberg's 2011 study have also provided insight into the benefits of SEL in schools. Elias et al. (2006) discussed research that was conducted on school-wide social and emotional programs. Their research showed that social and emotional interventions "significantly improved social emotional skills, self-esteem, school bonding, and adherence to social norms; reduced disruptive behavior, school violence, and suspensions; and increased positive classroom behavior, academic performance, and test scores" (p. 11). Findings from a longitudinal study also discovered long-term benefits of SEL (Weissberg, 2011).

"Maslow's hierarchy of human needs suggests that students who have their needs for safety, belonging, and self-esteem met—as well as their basic physiological needs—possess an important foundation for building knowledge" (Protheroe, 2007, p. 51). Unfortunately, all of these needs are not met for every student. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory that is laid out as a pyramid beginning with basic needs, and leading up to self-fulfillment needs. The bottom tier includes physiological needs, including food, water, warmth, and rest. The second tier includes safety needs, including security and safety. The third tier includes belongingness and love needs, including intimate relationships and friends. The fourth tier



includes esteem needs like prestige and feelings of accomplishment. The fifth tier, self-actualization, includes achieving one's full potential in areas such as creative activities (McLeod, 2016). All of these tiers can be addressed successfully in a school that focuses on SEL and SES (Protheroe, 2007).

### **Limitations**

The researcher is aware of biases of this study. The researcher's background in school counseling has influenced her views on SEL and SES and exposes potential bias in this study. Her background with SEL and SES in Southside School has led her to determine if they make an impact on students' academic success within a rural community school.

There are limitations to this study. Southside School only had a school counselor for two of the three academic years of the grant. The social worker has been present all three years. Unless a student was referred to the social worker for individual or group counseling, he or she did not receive any additional SES for one year under the grant program. The NWEA and behavior data for this study was also limited, as it looked at different fifth- and sixth graders' proficiency scores and behavioral data over a three-year timeframe. It would be helpful to analyze data for the same students over several years.

### **Significance**

Creating a school atmosphere where students feel safe, respected, and encouraged is not a quick or easy task. Elias et al. (2006) stated that sometimes implementation begins with the staff. In order to implement a successful program, it is important that the leader and teachers not only become aware of SEL theory and implementation, but they also need to do some self-exploration and recognize their own strengths and weaknesses in relation to social and emotional awareness (Elias et al., 2006). This allows further discussion and continuous improvement with all staff

members. With the support of staff, SEL programs can be implemented successfully and make a significant impact on students and their academic success (Elias et al., 2011).

It is no secret that some students come to school with outside stressors and negative feelings towards school, which is why Southside School implemented additional supports to help them feel that the school is a place where they are safe, respected, and encouraged to enhance their social and emotional skills. Answering the research questions and analyzing data collected determined that the additional supports that Southside School put in place positively affected students' academics and behaviors. These findings add to the current research on SEL and SES in rural schools. Even more so, findings give educators in rural schools information about additional social and emotional supports for their students and the skills to be a resource to create a school environment that promotes SEL and SES.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms included in this section are used throughout the study. The list is included to ensure the readers interpret the meaning of the terms correctly.

*Emotional intelligence (EI)*. “The ability to recognize, understand and manage our own emotions, and recognize, understand, and influence the emotions of others” (Institute for Health and Human Potential, 2018, para. 1)

*Maslow's hierarchy of needs*. A motivational theory that addresses basic needs in life, including physiological needs, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization (Shafritz, Ott & Jang, 2015, p. 151).

*NWEA assessment*. An assessment local districts in Maine use to get feedback on student growth in reading, language usage, and mathematics.

*Responsive classroom.* An educational approach that focuses on the relationship between SEL and academic success (Responsive Classroom, 2017).

*Social and emotional learning (SEL).* “The process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (CASEL, 2018, para. 1)

*Social and emotional support (SES).* Ways in which parents, educators, siblings, and others can support a child’s social and emotional development (NYC Department of Education, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

There are several factors that contribute to a child’s social and emotional well-being. Many factors are controlled strictly by children’s environments (Jensen, 2009), which schools are unaware of until children are school-age. Often, the students who are living in dysfunctional homes act out at school (Zins et al., 2004), and are known for their inappropriate behaviors. When children reach pre-kindergarten, there are supports schools can put in place to promote social and emotional awareness to ensure students are successful, academically and behaviorally. The essential life skills learned from SEL and SES could make a difference in students’ lives, the school, and the community. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of SEL and SES on academic achievement and behaviors of students in a rural school in Maine.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Social and Emotional Support (SES) on academic achievement and behaviors of students in a rural school in Maine. The literature review takes a look at the research on emotional intelligence (EI), SEL and SES, factors that may affect social and emotional awareness, as well as the lack of SES that some students may be dealing with. EI is first discussed, as the term helped form the SEL movement. The next part of the chapter, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Social and Emotional Support (SES), gives a background of what each is, distinguishes the difference between the two, and discusses the benefits of both SEL and SES for students. Research-based recommendations for supporting students are then made. Lastly, poverty and its effects on social and emotional awareness are discussed, and additional supports for students living in poverty are described.

#### **Social and Emotional Intelligence**

EI consists of the ability to recognize and manage one's emotions, leverage those emotions to solve problems, communicate effectively, even in difficult situations, make good decisions, build relationships with others, and manage stress effectively (Ruel, 2016). Daniel Goleman (2018) found that 67% of the skills that employers look for in employees are related to emotional intelligence, yet schools only work on developing these skills with students less than two percent of each school week. Teaching SEL and providing SES in schools can address and promote EI for all students (CASEL, 2013; Protheroe, 2007; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

#### **Social and Emotional Learning and Social and Emotional Support**

Although the terms SEL and SES seem interchangeable, there is a difference. Both have

been successfully implemented in schools with a clear understanding of what each type of support looks like. SEL requires consistent implementation school-wide, including in daily classroom lessons. SES is taking the time to connect and build relationships with students, and providing educational and personal support every day.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, which was developed in the 1940's, aligns with the need for SEL and SES for all students. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is often viewed as a pyramid of needs in an order of: 1. Physiological needs, 2. Safety, 3. Love and belongingness, 4. Esteem, and 5. Self-actualization (McLeod, 2017, para. 3). Although not rigid, and while individuals may view certain needs as more important than others, Maslow believed that the order of needs started with physiological needs and ended with self-actualization. Physiological needs and safety needs are basic needs, such as food, water, warmth, rest, security and safety (McLeod, 2017). Love and belongingness needs and esteem needs are psychological needs, such as intimate relationships, friends, prestige and feeling of accomplishment (McLeod, 2017). Lastly, self-actualization is self-fulfillment needs, including achieving one's full potential (McLeod, 2017). All of these needs should be fulfilled in students' lives, which is something schools can assist with through SEL and SES.

### **Social and Emotional Learning**

CASEL's (2018) studies on SEL in schools express the importance of providing it for all students. According to CASEL (2013),

SEL is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. (p. 4)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs supports James Comer's focus on comfort, value, and security for children (Gawel, 1997). Comer was one of the first researchers to focus on meeting students' needs of comfort, value, and security by creating school programs that nurtured those needs (Coulter, 1993). In the late 1960's, Comer piloted a program called the Comer School Development Program in two low performing schools. It was "designed to create a school environment where children feel comfortable, valued, and secure" (Coulter, 1993, para. 3) by building relationships between students, parents, and teachers. Due to the success of Comer's school programs, the program expanded into more than 250 schools by 1993, and the SEL movement took off (Edutopia, 2011). Other significant figures in the movement, such as Roger Weissberg and Timothy Shriver began researching the success of SEL in the Comer School Development Program (Edutopia, 2011). In 1994, CASEL was formed with the goal of researching the effects of SEL implementation in schools and making it an essential part of every school (CASEL, 2013, p. 2).

Weissberg (2011) stated that SEL is the process of gaining awareness, knowledge and skills that relate to five core competencies: (a) self-awareness, which is the ability to "recognize one's emotions, values, strengths, and limitations" (p. 10); (b) the ability to make responsible, ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior; (c) the ability to manage emotions and behaviors; (d) showing understanding and empathy for others; and (e) an understanding of what it means to form positive relationships, work in teams, and deal effectively with conflict (p. 10).

SEL "refers to the process of integrating thinking, feeling, and behaving in order to become aware of the self and of others, making responsible decisions, and manage one's own behaviors and those of others" (Brackett & Rivers, 2014, p. 4). By promoting social and

emotional awareness, schools will be increasing students' social and emotional skills, as well as their academic achievement (Schonert-Reichl, 2017, p. 138).

### **Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning**

There is a significant amount of research on the benefits of SEL. Durlak et al. (2011) presented findings from a meta-analysis of 213 SEL programs in schools, including 270,034 kindergarten through high school students. About half of the schools were rural schools, and the student ethnicity and socioeconomic statuses differed in each school. Implementation of SEL also differed in each school, although the majority of the implementation was classroom-based (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 7).

Current findings document that SEL programs yielded significant positive effects on targeted social-emotional competencies and attitudes about self, others, and school. They also enhanced students' behavioral adjustment in the form of increased prosocial behaviors and reduced conduct and internalizing problems, and improved academic performance on achievement tests and grades. (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 13)

Hann-Morrison (2011) shared that "80 percent of rural children with potential mental health problems live in counties that do not have community mental health centers" (p. 28), yet the schools do not have services to mitigate these problems. School-wide SEL requires that the overall school principles are based around social, emotional, and academic learning (Elias et al., 2006). Schools that have successfully implemented SEL school-wide "significantly improved social-emotional skills, self-esteem, school bonding, and adherence to social norms; reduced disruptive behavior, school violence, and suspensions; and increased positive classroom behavior, academic performance, and test scores" (Elias et al., 2006, p. 11). SEL programs help

students feel safe, respected, and encouraged to enhance their social and emotional skills (Elias et al., 2006).

There are a variety of reasons why SEL can make a positive impact on students and the overall school atmosphere. Students who are more confident and self-aware try harder and are persistent even when faced with challenges (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 13). “Students who set high academic goals, have self-discipline, motivate themselves, manage their stress, and organize their approach to work learn more and get better grades” (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 14). Students who are responsible and use problem-solving skills overcome obstacles and make the decision to complete homework and study (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 14). In addition to person-centered changes, interpersonal, instructional, and environmental supports also make an impact on school performance. This is a result of (a) school-wide high expectations and support for academic success, (b) caring teacher and student relationships, (c) proactive classroom management and cooperative learning; and (d) an environment that encourages and promotes positive classroom behavior (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 14).

Longitudinal findings from the Seattle Social Development Project (SSDP) also suggest there are long-term benefits of SEL (Hawkins, Kosterman, Catalano, Hill, & Abbott, 2005). The SSDP was a school-based program that included a piece for teachers, students, and parents. Teachers received training in communication, effective classroom management, and cooperative learning. Improving students’ skills in communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, and refusal were a part of the program. Parents’ topics of training included “behavior management, academic support, and skills to reduce the risks for drug use” (Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2012, p. 1). The student sample consisted of 668 first- through fifth-graders, including a no-treatment control group. Researchers followed up with participants nine years



after the intervention ended to see how SEL affected them. Of the students who were a part of the intervention, more of them were high school graduates, more attended college, more were employed, they had better emotional and mental health, fewer had criminal records or were involved with drugs, and less had a diagnosis of substance abuse and/or mental disorder (Weissberg, 2011, p. 17).

### **Implementation of SEL**

It is becoming increasingly common for educators to incorporate topics that align with SEL into their curriculum and school community (Edutopia, 2011). Unfortunately, some of their attempts are not making much of an impact due to a lack of systematic implementation (Brackett & Rivers, 2014, p. 4). Bullying and violence are narrow topics that are common discussions in the classroom and are the closest some teachers get to addressing SEL related topics. SEL implementation is a more unified approach that meets each students' developmental needs.

There are key factors to ensure successful SEL implementation (CASEL, 2013). Creating a school atmosphere where students feel safe, respected, and encouraged to enhance their social and emotional skills is not a quick or easy task. Integrating SEL into schools requires transformational leadership (Elias et al., 2006, p. 11). Transformational leadership means that leaders are creating an inspiring vision, motivating teachers to engage in the vision and plan, manage the delivery of the vision and plan, and build strong, trusting relationships with the teachers (Bass & Riggio, 2014). Leaders must make a substantial effort to promote SEL by demonstrating significant commitment through school policies and procedures, using SEL language, providing professional development opportunities, and communicating with families (Elias et al., 2006, p. 12). Without these key factors, implementation will likely not be school-wide, therefore, not as effective.

In order to implement a successful program, it is important that the leaders and teachers become aware of SEL theory and implementation, as well as do some self-exploration and recognize their own strengths and weaknesses (Elias et al., 2006). Recognizing individual and group social and emotional assets and areas that need improvement allows the group to strengthen their relationship with each other. Understanding personal social and emotional strengths and weaknesses allows for further discussion and continuous improvement with all staff members. With the support of staff, through transformational leadership, SEL programs can be implemented successfully and make a significant impact on students and their academics (Elias et al., 2006).

Below are ways in which researchers have suggested incorporating SEL into schools (Elias et al., 2006; CASEL, 2013; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Katz & Porath, 2011; Mulvahill, 2016; Rimm-Kaufman, 2006). One factor is to have high-quality student-teacher interactions, including emotional support and positive discipline practices. Positive discipline practices include preventing behavior problems by implementing SEL and assisting students with their development of self-discipline, as well as using an authoritative style of discipline to correct misbehavior (Bear, 2010).

Authoritative teachers set high standards and hold high expectations; enforce rules and standards in a firm, fair, and consistent manner; and promote autonomy by encouraging students' active participation in decisions regarding their behavior (Bear, 2010, p. 2). Effective teachers are focused on their relationships with their students by delivering warmth, acceptance, and support; creating an atmosphere where students use appropriate behavior out of respect for their classmates and teacher (Bear, 2010).

Another factor to ensure successful SEL implementation is to have a partnership between

the school and family. This allows shared educational goals, collaborative interventions, mutual support, and different perspectives for a better understanding of the student, and it prevents blaming on either part (Virginia Department of Education, 2002, p. 7). Henderson and Berla (1994) reviewed and analyzed 85 studies that documented the benefits of parental involvement in schools. Their findings included benefits for students, parents, and educators.

Next, success depends on high-quality implementation throughout the entire school. Jones and Bouffard (2012) believed the idea of SEL needs to shift in the schools from weekly or monthly lessons to integrating the skills into everyday interactions, lessons, and practices. Much like academic skills, social and emotional skills are continuously developing, needing consistent attention. Katz and Porath's (2011) mixed methods study found that SEL implementation with more flexibility, allowing for differentiation based on classroom setting, and the use of multiple intelligences to facilitate SEL resulted in significant gains. Social and emotional competence is something educators can incorporate into daily lessons without creating blocks of time strictly for SEL lessons. Mulvahill (2016) created a list of 21 simple ways educators can incorporate SEL into everyday lessons. These are examples of elementary age appropriate SEL:

1. Start the day with a check-in.
2. Use story time for teachable moments.
3. Work in partnerships.
4. Teach them how to work in groups.
5. Nurture a culture of kindness.
6. Give them new words to say instead of using failure words.
7. Set up a place in the classroom where students can go when they are upset or angry and need to calm down.

8. Teach students how to manage conflict with peer mediation.
9. Use charts around the classroom to teach social and emotional skills.
10. Practice role-play.
11. Allow for talk time.
12. Play games to build community.
13. Buddy up with an older or younger class.
14. Build community with teams.
15. Teach students to make personal goals and monitor their own progress.
16. Hold class meetings.
17. Make time for reflective writing.
18. Encourage expression through art.
19. Assign interview projects so students can learn about each other's cultural background, family traditions, or opinions about current events.
20. Assign class jobs.
21. End each day with a checkout. (Mulvahill, 2016)

The Responsive Classroom approach is another way that educators can ensure their students are learning essential social and emotional skills. The responsive classroom focuses on the connection between academic success and SEL. The quasi-experimental longitudinal study completed by Rimm-Kaufman (2006) reported six key findings that support the need for SEL in schools:

Finding 1: Children showed greater increases in reading and math test scores

Finding 2: Teachers felt more effective and more positive about teaching

Finding 3: Children had better prosocial skills, felt closer to teachers, and were less

fearful

Finding 4: Teachers offered more high-quality instruction

Finding 5: Children felt more positive about schools, teachers, and peers

Finding 6: Teachers more frequently engaged in and placed higher value on collaboration. (p. 6)

The data provided in the study showed there is a correlation between responsive classrooms and student success, positive attitudes, and overall perception of school. Consistency, individuality, and inclusiveness allow students to feel recognized, appreciated, and safe (Rimm-Kaufman, 2006). Students' prosocial skills and assertiveness improved, and their fearfulness and anxiousness decreased (Rimm-Kaufman, 2006).

### **Social and Emotional Support**

SES includes ways in which parents, educators, siblings, and others make a child feel safe, accepted, and valued (Protheroe, 2007, p. 51). The NYC Department of Education (2014) gave some suggestions: (a) encourage children to make decisions; (b) establish and follow a predictable, daily routine; (c) respond with inquisitiveness and specific praise when children show pride in an accomplishment; and (d) teach children strategies to calm down when they are angry or upset (p. 2).

Providing SES may be as simple as being a trusted adult that provides food, helps with school work, or allows students to brush their hair and teeth at school. It can mean taking an extra step to make eye contact and greet students in the hall (Protheroe, 2007). SES for students means that educators are taking the time to build relationships with students and going outside of their preferred teaching modality to meet the needs of their students (Izard, 2016).

### **Benefits of Social and Emotional Support**

A student's experience of belongingness at school is linked to motivational, attitudinal, and behavioral factors that are all associated with academic and behavioral success (Osterman, 2000). Klem & Connell (2004) shared findings from a longitudinal study geared towards "improving levels of teacher support and the effects on student engagement and performance" (2004, p. 263). The data was obtained from six elementary schools that restructured their schools into small learning communities (SLCs) to integrate high-quality, standards-based teaching. SLCs consist of small groups of teachers and students that stay together for all core classes and for the entire time the student attends the school. The teachers' collective responsibility for student success encouraged student engagement and learning (Klem & Connell, 2004, p. 271). In addition to having the same teacher every year, students and families were also given an advisor or advocate that worked with them the entire time they were in school, to build and maintain relationships between the school and home. The study showed that students who felt their teachers created a "caring, well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear, and fair are more likely to report engagement in school" (Klem & Connell, 2004, p. 270). High engagement often results in higher attendance and test scores—strong predictors of graduating from high school and pursuing a post-secondary education (Klem & Connell, 2004).

### **Providing Social and Emotional Support**

Simply having a trusted adult at school can make a significant impact on students and their success in school (Protheroe, 2007). Creating an overall school community of caring and trust can be done with very little extra work. Protheroe (2007) made several recommendations for school staff: (a) Make sure students feel safe, which includes addressing bullying issues; (b) Model caring and respect for all members of the school and community; (c) Call students by

their first name; (d) Focus on each student as a person rather than a problem when they misbehave; (e) Create routines, including things like welcoming students in the hall each morning, and starting the day with a classroom meeting; (f) Convey high expectations for academic achievement and behavior for every student; (g) Take responsibility for every students' success to ensure they do not fall through the cracks (p. 53). These suggestions can help build a sense of community within a school allowing students to feel engaged and connected at school, and increasing their ability to focus on learning (Protheroe, 2007).

### **Effects of Poverty on Students**

Given that so many students are living in poverty, it is important to address the relationship between poverty and social and emotional awareness, and share the research, but it is beyond the scope of this study. Some predictors of academic, behavioral, and emotional success for students are engrained in students before they begin school. Children under the age of 3 must have certain needs met to grow up emotionally healthy: (a) consistent love, guidance, and support from a reliable caregiver; (b) an environment that is stable, predictable, and safe; (c) reciprocal interactions for 10 to 20 hours a week; and (d) enrichment through activities (Jensen, 2009, para. 8). These crucial needs are not met for many children living in poverty, due to caregivers being overworked, stressed, and authoritative with children (Jensen, 2009, para. 11). As a result, many children's social and emotional development and academics are further behind than their more affluent peers (Jensen, 2009, para. 9). These students are in need of additional SES (Jensen, 2013).

For students living in rural communities, poverty is a consistent concern (Morrison, 2011). These significant challenges are accurate for both urban and rural poverty. The difference is that rural poverty problems are exacerbated "by their isolation and limited access to support

services that are common in urban areas” (O’Hare, 2009, para. 7). In addition, other factors contribute to rural poverty: rural parents are often less educated and unemployment is more likely; and it is less common for children to live in married-couple families (O’Hare, 2009).

The overall poverty rate in the U.S. is 13.5%, and the poverty rate for children under 18 is 19.7% (Proctor, Semega, & Kollar, 2016, para. 5). Abenavoli and Greenberg (2016), gathered data from high-poverty, rural counties in Pennsylvania and North Carolina for three consecutive years and determined a connection between social and emotional readiness and classroom success and experiences. Many students living in poverty have an academic and behavioral gap which continues to grow with age (Abenavoli & Greenberg, 2016). The research supports the idea of social and emotional readiness being needed in schools to reduce the gaps that many low-income children have (Abenavoli & Greenberg, 2016; Jensen, 2013; Protheroe, 2007).

According to Jensen (2009), chronic exposure to poverty causes students’ brains to adapt to “suboptimal conditions in ways that undermine good school performance” (p. 14). As a result, their engagement in the classroom may be lacking. Jensen (2013) listed seven ways students living in poverty differ from middle and upper-class students: (a) Children “are less likely to exercise, get proper diagnoses, receive appropriate and prompt medical attention, or be prescribed appropriate medications or interventions” (para. 6); (b) Children typically have a smaller vocabulary, risking academic failure; (c) Children seem unmotivated, due to a lack of hope and optimism; (d) They view the future as more negative than positive; (e) Children often perform lower on tests of intelligence and academic achievement, and show cognitive problems; (f) Unstable and disruptive homes often create mistrust in children, resulting in inappropriate language, impulsivity, and disrespect at school; and (g) “Children living in poverty experience greater chronic stress than do their more affluent counterparts” (para. 39), resulting in aggressive



or passive behaviors.

In addition to the struggles of students living in poverty, students living in rural poverty may have additional difficulties. The non-financial resources that rural families have are minimal compared to urban families (Hann-Morrison, 2011, p. 28). Moore et al. (2005) reported that 80% of children living in rural areas with possible mental health problems do not have access to community mental health centers. In addition, some rural schools have no school counselor (Hann-Morrison, 2011). Therefore, some students are not receiving the SES at home, school, or in the community. As a result, rural teens have a higher risk for using tobacco products, crack/cocaine, steroids, and crystal meth (Hann-Morrison, 2011, p. 28). Rural areas also have a higher percentage of high school dropouts than urban areas (USDA, 2017). Although graduation rates in rural areas have improved over the years, there is still a gap in educational attainment (United States Department of Agriculture, 2017). The percentage of high school graduates and adults with bachelor's degrees is lower in rural areas than in urban areas (United States Department of Agriculture, 2017).

Fortunately, research on SEL and SES indicates that students can overcome these challenges with support from a trusted adult (Protheroe, 2007, p. 51). The more educators care and build strong, positive, caring relationships with students, the better the foundation is for interventions (Jensen, 2013). Protheroe (2007) wrote, "Simply knowing that a respected adult cares about his or her interests...may provide...students with the emotional support they need to focus on learning" (p. 54). Providing the SES that some students may not be receiving, could make a significant impact on their social, emotional, and academic success (Protheroe, 2007, p. 52).

### **Additional Social and Emotional Educational Support for Students Living in Poverty**

Payne (2008) identified strategies to help raise the achievement of students living in poverty, some of which tie into SES. Students living in poverty especially need respectful relationships with adults in the school; to be taught about formality of language and unspoken rules; role models and support systems; and emotional support and guidance (para. 2-20).

Respectful adult relationships means that educators are taking the time to learn students' names, ask about their families and hobbies, and learn what is important to them (Jensen, 2013).

Jensen (2013) made suggestions for educators, to assist with the ways students living in poverty differ from other students, oftentimes resulting in lack of engagement. Although they may not seem like SES tactics, most of them affect students' social and emotional well-being. Jensen (2013) warns against punishing students by taking away their recess or physical education. Oxygen and glucose levels may be lower due to poor nutrition, and physical activity will increase oxygen and glucose levels, which can contribute to better learning. Introduce new vocabulary to students daily, as students living in poverty may have a smaller vocabulary than their more affluent peers (Jensen, 2013). Take the time to strengthen relationships with students by learning more about each other, make connections to their world, give positive feedback and affirm their work, and set attainable goals with students. Guide students to have a more positive attitude, and assist them with the core academic skills they need the most help in, such as note taking, organization, and studying. Lastly, be a strong, positive, and caring adult they can trust and rely on. Do not embarrass students by calling them out in front of their peers after making mistakes or poor decisions. To assist with reducing stress, teach students coping skills, and to feel open to sharing personal examples (Jensen, 2013). Jensen (2013) also suggested being consistent with routines and setting clear rules and expectations from the start.

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs, meeting needs such as safety, belongingness, and self-esteem is essential for social and emotional development, yet some of these needs are not being met for some students (Jensen, 2009). To meet students' needs and improve their social and emotional well-being, Elias et al. (2006) and Durlak et al. (2011) have researched the importance of implementing and providing SEL and SES in every school. Educators who make a strong effort to provide social, emotional, and physical support to students made the greatest gains in student achievement (Elias et al., 2006). Protheroe (2007) shared that schools must provide strong social and emotional support for students, as well as have a strong academic press to promote student success.

### **Conclusion**

Social and emotional skills are skills that every student needs for their success in school, as well as their success in the future, yet there is a lack of SEL and SES in schools. Educators have the opportunity to provide SEL and SES to all students on a daily basis. They can be implemented in every school and classroom to ensure all students, including students whose social and emotional awareness may be lacking, receive the knowledge and skills they need to be successful. School-wide SEL and SES gives students an opportunity to learn appropriate behaviors and change their negative behaviors. The benefits of providing SEL and SES have been proven to be long-term (Weissberg, 2011).

This review has addressed key aspects of SEL and SES, as well as made recommendations on how to implement SEL and provide SES for students. It also examined the effects of poverty on students in relation to social and emotional awareness, and made additional recommendations for educators working with students living in poverty. The purpose of this

study was to examine the effects of SEL and SES on academic achievement and behaviors of students in a rural school in Maine.

Taking a deeper look at SEL and SES in a rural elementary school with over 70% of the students on free-or-reduced lunch demonstrates the ways additional support improves students' academics and behavior. This study provides insight into the impact of SEL and SES on students living in rural communities. Educators, parents, and rural communities will benefit from the research.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Current research shows a connection between SEL and SES and academic and behavioral success (Elias et al., 2006; Durlak et al., 2011). The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of SEL and SES on academic achievement and behaviors of students in a rural school in Maine.

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How do teachers and administrators perceive SEL and SES implementation and its impact on the school?
2. What changes occurred in NWEA scores during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?
3. What changes occurred in student behavior incidents during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?

#### **Research Design**

The researcher chose a descriptive case study design as it was the most appropriate for this study. The descriptive case study design is used to describe an intervention of SEL and SES implementation in the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2003). This descriptive case study is an in-depth study of the effects of SEL and SES on students living in a rural community. In line with a descriptive case study design, this study includes creative exploration to describe a problem, organizes the findings to align them with explanations, and validates the explanations with data with the intention of making SEL and SES recommendations to educators (AECT, 2001). The study examines if SEL and SES positively affected academic and behavioral data from a rural school that implemented additional SEL and SES for two years.

## Setting

The study took place in an elementary school in a rural town in northern Maine. The school participated in a three-year grant from the 2015-16 school year through the 2017-18 school year. The principal of the site and the grant supervisor gave site permission to collect and analyze data to determine if the goals of the grant were met for two years. The third academic year was not complete before data collection began, so it was not included in the study. The overall goals of the grant were to increase academic scores and decrease behavior incidents using SEL and SES.

Southside School is a pre-kindergarten through sixth grade school in a rural town in northern Maine. Sixteen-and-a-half percent of the population are living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015). However, over 70% of the students at Southside School qualify for the free-or-reduced lunch program and 30.6% are below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015). There are 12 teachers, two classes for kindergarten, first, second, third, and fourth grades with one teacher in each of them, and one class for fifth and sixth grades with one teacher in each of them. Administration consists of a school principal and an assistant principal, and support staff includes a school counselor and social worker. There are approximately 300 students attending Southside School each year; of those 300 students, 50 to 60 of them are in fifth- and sixth-grade each year. Only the fifth- and sixth-grade students' academic scores and behavior logs were included in the study as they have participated in two years of SEL and SES and have baseline data to compare. The majority of the student population is Caucasian, with 93% white, 0.6% Hispanic, 0.6% black, 0.6% two races, and 4.7% American Indian. Forty-seven percent are females and 53% are males. The overall school performance on the state test in 2017 consisted of 37% of the students passing the math exam and 52% passing the English language arts exam.

## **Participants**

The teachers and administrators were the participants, as the teachers were a part of the weekly classroom guidance lessons, the teachers and administrators have referred students for counseling with the school counselor and social worker, and they likely saw whether or not the additional supports in place were beneficial for students. Teachers at Southside School make frequent grade level changes at the end of each year, which is why every teacher who taught during the 2013-14 through 2016-17 academic years was asked to participate. Teachers and administrators were asked to complete confidential surveys about the impact of the social and emotional supports for their students. They received an email about the study (Appendix A), along with a link to a confidential online survey (Appendix B) through Survey Monkey. Once the surveys were complete, data was stored in the researcher's Survey Monkey account.

## **Participants Rights**

Participation in the confidential survey was voluntary and teachers and administrators were able to opt out of the study at any time. The first page of the survey contained the informed consent (Appendix B), including the purpose of the study, who the participants were, what the participants would be asked to do, the risks of taking part in the study, how privacy and confidentiality would be kept, and that the survey and focus groups were voluntary. The data from the surveys were stored in Survey Monkey and saved onto a private, password-protected computer located at the researcher's home. Teachers and administrators who completed the survey were sent a separate email (Appendix C) to see if they would be a part of a voluntary focus group to reflect on the questions from the online survey. The email included a consent form (Appendix D) for them to complete and return to the researcher if they agreed to participate in the focus group. Focus groups were held on Google Hangout and recorded using the voice

application on the iPhone. The discussion was then transcribed using Trint, an artificial intelligence transcription service, and saved as a Word document where the researcher removed any personal identifiable information, and pseudonyms were used. The recordings and data from the focus groups were saved onto a private password protected computer, located at the researcher's home.

### **Data**

The study used concurrent triangulation mixed methods. Quantitative and qualitative measures were used to answer the research questions and show whether or not the SEL and SES in place for two years made an impact on students and how teachers, administrators, and staff perceive the implementation and impact of the program. Quantitative measures included archival student testing data from the Northwest Educational Assessment (NWEA), an assessment local districts in Maine use to get feedback on student growth in reading, language usage, and mathematics (NWEA, 2017), as well as behavioral logs. Additionally, qualitative measures included teacher and administrator online survey responses and focus groups regarding the impact of additional social and emotional supports within the school. The data triangulates to increase the level of knowledge about SEL and SES implementation and to strengthen the study from various datasets. The research question "How do teachers and administrators perceive SEL and SES implementation and its impact on the school" was answered by teacher and administrator surveys and focus group interviews. NWEA proficiency scores were used to give insight into the research question "What changes occurred in NWEA scores during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?" Lastly, behavior logs give insight into the research question "What changes occurred in student behavior incidents during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?"



## **Quantitative Data Collection**

Data collection included 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 reading and mathematics NWEA proficiency scores for approximately 154 fifth and sixth grade students. The NWEA is an assessment students take every year, which gives insight into how students are doing over several years. The 2014-15 scores were used as baseline data for the fifth graders, and the 2014-15 and 2015-16 scores were used as baseline data for the sixth graders, as they were taken before the additional SEL and SES implementation. Proficiency scores in reading and mathematics data were pulled by the school principal from the online system where NWEA scores are stored. Then proficiency numbers, excluding student information, were shared with the researcher through Google Docs. The researcher reviewed the data from the three academic years to determine if there was an overall increase in students who were proficient, above proficiency, or significantly above proficiency in reading and mathematics. Reading and mathematics were analyzed separately.

In addition to NWEA proficiency scores, behavior logs for fifth and sixth grade students who attended Southside School during the entire 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 academic years were gathered by the school principal. The 2014-15 behavior logs were used as baseline data for the fifth graders, and the 2014-15 and 2015-16 scores were used as baseline data for the sixth graders. Behavior logs that were analyzed were for students who were sent to the principal or assistant principal after behavioral incidents' during the school day. This also included bus incidents. Each year's behavior log was reviewed and analyzed to determine if there was any numerical change in behavioral incidents. The number of behavior incidents for each year is shared to show an increase or decrease in incidents.

Archival student academic and behavior data was collected by the school principal and shared with the researcher through Google Docs. NWEA data and behavior logs were gathered and analyzed without personal information, such as names and student identification number. The data was stored on a private password protected computer located at the researcher's home.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

Every kindergarten through sixth grade teacher (12 teachers) and the two administrators currently at the school who worked at Southside School during the 2013-14 through the 2016-17 school years received an email (Appendix A) with a link to the online survey (Appendix B), which included the informed consent on the first page of the survey. Continuing to take the survey indicated informed consent. Surveys were completed and collected online, via Survey Monkey. Using a 5-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to rate questions in relation to the impact that the additional social and emotional support had on their students and school as a whole. The survey assisted with answering the research question "How do teachers and administrators perceive SEL and SES implementation and its impact on the school?" The researcher created and tested the survey by accessing the Survey Monkey link through an email, before asking teachers and administrators to participate. In addition to the researcher testing the survey, the grant supervisor reviewed the survey questions to ensure the questions would elicit information directly related to each question and that the questions were not biased or leading.

The same group of teachers and administrators were also invited by email (Appendix C) to participate in focus groups, which were conducted via Google Hangout. Google Hangout allowed face-to-face discussions, as well as an opportunity to record the discussion through the voice application on the iPhone for transcribing. Informed consent forms for focus group participation (Appendix D) were included with the email invitation. The focus group script

(Appendix E) was reviewed and revised to include questions prompted by the researcher's analysis of the survey questions, and it allowed the opportunity to probe for clarification. Open-ended questions were asked in the focus group, and they were focused on the responses from the online survey responses (Appendix C).

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

Before analysis began, NWEA and behavioral data was collected by the school principal and shared with the researcher through Google Docs. All personal identifiable information was excluded. All data was stored on the researcher's private password protected computer, located at the researcher's home. Any student who was not in fifth- or sixth-grade at Southside School for the 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 academic years, was not included in the analysis.

NWEA scores were already organized annually by grade level, and included proficiency scores. The proficiency scores were analyzed for each academic year, to determine if the percentage of students who were proficient, above proficiency, or significantly above proficiency increased, decreased, or stayed the same from the 2014-15 to 2016-17 academic years.

Proficiency scores were manually put into Microsoft Word by the researcher to compare proficiency scores from the 2014-15 academic year to the 2016-17 academic year to determine if proficiency scores increased, decreased, or stayed the same each year. Then the number of students under each proficiency level in the fifth and sixth grade was displayed in a table. The 2014-15 proficiency scores were included in the table as baseline data to show a comparison in proficiency scores before and after SEL and SES implementation. The 2015-16 proficiency scores were also baseline data for the sixth graders.

Behavioral data was organized for each academic year, 2014-15 through 2016-17, and only included the number of behavior incidents for the fifth and sixth graders. Each year's

behavior log was reviewed and analyzed to determine if there was any numerical change in behavioral incidents. The number of behavior incidents for each year and grade level prior to and during the intervention was determined, and the researcher presented the data in the most appropriate way to visually show the reader any changes that occurred after SEL and SES implementation.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Teacher survey data was collected by the researcher via Survey Monkey and also stored and organized in Survey Monkey. The data was then analyzed to determine the percentage of the respondents who chose to agree or strongly agree compared to those that disagreed or strongly disagreed. Survey responses gave insight for follow-up questions during the focus group. If teachers and administrators did not participate in the focus group, their survey responses were still included in the survey data. Data from surveys were displayed in tables.

Focus groups were held on Google Hangouts and recorded on the recording application on the iPhone so the discussion could be transcribed through Trint and saved into a Word document. The transcription was then read over by the researcher and each member of the focus group. Then the transcription was coded by the researcher to determine what patterns, themes, and frequency came about during the discussions. All recordings and coding were stored on the researcher's private password-protected computer located at the researcher's home. Focus group data was reported in a table.

### **Potential Limitations**

Although the length of the grant is for three academic years, the researcher was only able to use data from two years of the SEL and SES implementation, as the third school year was not completed. As the prior school counselor for the grant and researcher, the researcher had to

remain aware of her biases of the school, the grant, and the study. To ensure bias was mitigated from the study, participation in the survey and focus groups were voluntary and every teacher and administrator was invited to participate; survey and focus group questions were clear, open-ended, and focused on answering the research question without leading the participants to answers; and no changes were made to the NWEA or behavioral data (Regoniel, 2013).

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to examine the effects of SEL and SES on academic achievement and behaviors of students in a rural school in Maine. Concurrent triangulation mixed methods were used to answer the research questions:

1. How do teachers and administrators perceive SEL and SES implementation and its impact on the school?
2. What changes occurred in NWEA scores during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?
3. What changes occurred in student behavior incidents during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It first discusses and displays the quantitative data collected to show if there was any change in NWEA scores or behavioral data during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place. Then the qualitative data from the teacher surveys are presented, and the focus group is categorized into themes that were identified during the data analysis process. The methodology used for this study is discussed below.

#### **Methodology**

The quantitative data was collected by the principal at Southside School. Every fifth- and sixth-grade students' NWEA math and reading test scores for the 2014-15 through 2016-17 academic years were given proficiency scores. Proficiency scores were organized by quintiles: significantly below proficiency, below proficiency, proficient, above proficiency, and significantly above proficiency. The school principal provided the researcher with a Google Doc

in which included the number of fifth- and sixth-grade students under each level of proficiency for each year. Behavior data for the fifth and sixth graders from 2014-15 through 2016-17 academic years were also included in the Google Docs. Behavior incidents were sorted into in-school suspensions, technology issues, and loss of recess.

Qualitative data analysis began with teacher and administrator surveys. Every teacher and administrator at Southside School received an email inviting them to participate in an online survey about the additional social and emotional supports in place by the school counselor and social worker. Out of the 12 teachers and two administrators who were invited to participate, five teachers completed the survey. The online survey was completed through Survey Monkey, where all of the data was stored for analysis. The five teachers who completed the survey were then emailed with an invitation to participate in a focus group, in which three agreed to participate.

The focus group was conducted on Google Hangout and recorded using the voice application on the iPhone. Upon completion of the focus group, the voice recording was transcribed using Trint, an artificial intelligence transcription service. The recording did not include any personal identifiable information from the focus group participants. Focus group participants received a copy of the transcript for member checking, in which they were given the opportunity to clarify anything they felt may have been misinterpreted. Once the participants had adequate time to make changes, the coding process to identify themes and sub-themes began.

The Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) approach was used for analyzing the focus group transcript. The researcher read over the transcript several times before coding to get a clear understanding of what the participants said. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used. Since the focus group questions and responses aligned with the research question “How do teachers and administrators perceive SEL and SES implementation and its impact on the

school?” the transcript was treated as a whole data document, rather than taking each question as a data document. Throughout the coding process, the researcher went line by line and assigned topics to a portion of a line, a line, or several lines. Topics were typed into the Word document by adding a comment into the margin of the document. Once the entire transcript was read through and topics were assigned, similar topics were highlighted with the same color. Then, each cluster of topics (theme) was given a name.

## **Results**

Results from the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis gave the researcher essential information to answer the research questions. NWEA data helped answer the question “What changes occurred in NWEA scores during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?” The research question “What changes occurred in student behavior incidents during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?” was answered by an analysis of three years of behavior data. Insight from the teacher surveys and focus group helped answer the question “How do teachers and administrators perceive SEL and SES implementation and its impact on the school?”

### **NWEA Data**

The NWEA math and reading test scores were analyzed by separating them into grade level and determining how many students were at each proficiency range for the 2014-15 through 2016-17 academic years. Next to each academic year, the number of years the students received SEL and SES was included. The fifth graders in 2014-15 received zero years of SEL and SES, the fifth graders in 2015-16 received one year of SEL and SES, and the fifth graders in 2016-17 received two years of SEL and SES. Tables 1 and 2 below are the fifth grade math and



reading proficiency numbers. Percentages were included under the proficiency numbers, to give a better idea of whether or not the scores changed after the students received SEL or SES.

Table 1

*5<sup>th</sup> Grade Math NWEA Math Proficiency*

Academic Year	Significantly below proficiency	Below proficiency	Proficient	Above proficiency	Significantly above proficiency	Total
2014-15 (0 years of SEL & SES)	4 (14.3%)	8 (28.6%)	2 (7.1%)	8 (28.6%)	6 (21.4%)	28
2015-16 (1 year of SEL & SES)	2 (9.1%)	4 (18.2%)	10 (45.5%)	6 (27.3%)	0 (0%)	22
2016-17 (2 years of SEL & SES)	1 (3.6%)	9 (32.1%)	0 (0%)	17 (60.7%)	1 (3.6%)	28

Table 2

*5<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading NWEA Reading Proficiency*

Academic Year	Significantly below proficiency	Below proficiency	Proficient	Above proficiency	Significantly above proficiency	Total
2014-15 (0 years of SEL & SES)	6 (21.4%)	6 (21.4%)	2 (7.1%)	12 (42.9%)	2 (7.1%)	28
2015-16 (1 year of SEL & SES)	2 (9.1%)	6 (27.3%)	12 (54.5%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (4.5%)	22
2016-17 (2 years of SEL & SES)	4 (14.8%)	10 (37.0%)	0 (0%)	9 (33.3%)	4 (14.8%)	27

The sixth graders in 2014-15 received zero years of SEL and SES. The sixth graders in 2015-16 received zero years of SEL and SES, and the sixth graders in 2016-17 received two years of SEL and SES. Percentages were included with the proficiency numbers, to give a better idea of whether or not the scores changed after students received SEL and SES. Tables 3 and 4 are the 6<sup>th</sup> grade math and proficiency numbers.

Table 3

*6<sup>th</sup> Grade Math NWEA Proficiency*

Academic Year	Significantly below proficiency	Below proficiency	Proficient	Above proficiency	Significantly above proficiency	Total Students
2014-15 (0 years of SEL & SES)	4 (13.8%)	11 (37.9%)	0 (0%)	8 (27.6%)	6 (20.7%)	29
2015-16 (0 years of SEL & SES)	4 (14.3%)	4 (14.3%)	10 (35.7%)	8 (28.6%)	2 (7.1%)	28
2016-17 (2 years of SEL & SES)	1 (5.3%)	6 (31.6%)	0 (0%)	11 (57.9%)	1 (5.3%)	19

Table 4

*6<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading NWEA Proficiency*

Academic Year	Significantly below proficiency	Below proficiency	Proficient	Above proficiency	Significantly above proficiency	Total Students
2014-15 (0 years of SEL & SES)	6 (20.7%)	12 (41.4%)	1 (3.4%)	6 (20.7%)	4 (13.8%)	29
2015-16 (0 years of SEL & SES)	4 (14.3%)	6 (21.4%)	12 (42.9%)	6 (21.4%)	0 (0%)	28
2016-17 (2 years of SEL & SES)	1 (4.5%)	6 (27.3%)	4 (18.2%)	8 (36.4%)	3 (13.6%)	22

### Behavior Data

After NWEA data was analyzed, behavior data for the same grades and academic years were analyzed to determine if there was a change after students received SEL and SES. The number of behavior incidents for fifth graders dropped from 38 total after zero years of SEL and SES, to 18 total after two years of SEL and SES. The number of behavior incidents for sixth graders dropped from 27 total after zero years of SEL and SES, to 6 total after two years of SEL

and SES. The significant decrease may be a result of more students being referred to the school counselor and social worker for behavior issues, rather than receiving disciplinary actions, during the years that additional social and emotional supports were in the school.

Table 5 shows the number of behavior incidents for fifth grade, and Table 6 shows the number of behavior incidents for sixth grade. Behavior incidents were broken into the severity of the incident: in-school suspension, technology issues, or loss of recess.

Table 5

*5<sup>th</sup> grade – Behavior*

Academic Year	In-School Suspensions	Technology Issues	Loss of Recess	Total
2014-15 (0 years of SEL & SES)	18	6	14	38
2015-16 (1 year of SEL & SES)	14	4	10	28
2016-17 (2 years of SEL & SES)	9	2	7	18

Table 6

*6<sup>th</sup> grade - Behavior*

Academic Year	In-School Suspensions	Technology Issues	Loss of Recess	Total
2014-15 (0 years of SEL & SES)	13	4	10	27
2015-16 (0 years of SEL & SES)	7	0	5	12
2016-17 (2 years of SEL & SES)	0	5	1	6

## Teacher Survey and Focus Group Responses

The last component of the research was analyzing the teacher survey responses and focus group discussion, in an attempt to answer the research question “How do teachers and administrators perceive SEL and SES implementation and its impact on the school?”

Five teachers completed the teacher survey and three of the five volunteered to participate in the focus group discussion. Survey responses were then reviewed on Survey Monkey to determine the percentage of participants who felt the additional supports in place through the school counselor and social worker were beneficial to the students and school as a whole, and the focus group questions were all geared around the survey responses. Results of the survey questions and focus group discussions are shown in Tables 7 through 13, and each table is followed by a summary of the corresponding focus group discussion.

Table 7

*Survey Response, Question #1: How helpful do you feel the classroom guidance lessons were for your students?*

	Not at all helpful	Not so helpful	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	Extremely helpful	N/A
Number of responses	0 of 5	0 of 5	2 of 5	2 of 5	0 of 5	1 of 5

*Focus Group Question 1: The majority of you stated that the classroom guidance lessons were somewhat helpful to very helpful for your students. Please share a little about the impact or lack thereof that you feel the classroom lessons had on your students and/or classroom.*

Two of the three participants had positive things to say about the impact of SEL implementation in the classrooms. One stated that being a part of the lessons allowed her to remind students of the concepts, and expected behaviors or practices discussed during the lessons, making things tie in together. Another participant stated that it would be ideal if social

and emotional concepts were used throughout the entire school so everyone was using the same language. The participant felt that educators would make a greater impact if everyone was using the same language rather than implementing different programs with different terminology throughout the school that are very similar in their purpose and goals around social and emotional awareness.

Table 8

*Survey Response, Question #2: How helpful do you feel the individual counseling/therapy and/or group counseling was for your students?*

	Not at all helpful	Not so helpful	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	Extremely helpful	N/A
Number of responses	0 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5	3 of 5	1 of 5	1 of 5

*Focus Group Question 2: Some of you referred students to the school counselor or social worker for individual counseling/therapy or group counseling. If you feel like it made an impact on your student, please share what impact it made, from your standpoint. If you don't feel like it made an impact, please share how it wasn't helpful for your student.*

Each participant expressed that they felt it was beneficial for students to have someone other than their teacher to talk to about personal matters. In some cases, the students were desperate for some one-on-one time with an adult, and having someone listen to them allowed them to relieve some stress and return to the classroom with a positive demeanor. One of the participants stated that many students at Southside School are not feeling safe and comfortable at home. "No wonder they are not interested in learning to read. They have too many things on their minds" (Participant 2). She felt that having an outlet and someone to talk to about their home life helped students with some of their stress and allowed them to focus on academics more.

Table 9

*Survey Response, Question #3: How do you think the additional supports in place through the school counselor and social worker impacted student behavior?*

	Didn't impact student behavior at all	Very little impact on student behavior	Somewhat impactful on student behavior	Very impactful on student behavior	Extremely impactful on student behavior	N/A
Number of responses	0 of 5	0 of 5	1 of 5	3 of 5	1 of 5	0 of 5

The researcher felt this question was addressed previously during the focus group, so there was no focus group discussion around this specific question. Each participant expressed that it was beneficial for the students to have someone other than the classroom teacher to talk to about personal matters. Participant 3 mentioned that it gave students an opportunity to work through their concerns or problems with a caring adult. Then they were able to get back to their classroom and focus on academics, rather than dwelling on whatever happened.

Participant 1 shared “I just felt it was nice for them to know that in their struggles they had someplace else to be able to go. It did make a difference in their demeanor. It made a difference in the way that they saw things, and their outlook on the day or the class. I just see a little bit of heaviness off shoulders when they get a chance to have communication with the school counselor. When they come back they have a little bit more hope than they did when they left the classroom.”

Table 10

*Survey Response, Question #4: How do you think the additional supports in place through the school counselor and social worker impacted student academic performance?*

	Didn't impact academic performance at all	Very little impact on academic performance	Somewhat impactful on academic performance	Very impactful on academic performance	Extremely impactful on academic performance	N/A
Number of responses	0 of 5	0 of 5	2 of 5	3 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5

*Focus Group Question 3: There are so many factors that go into academic performance. Do you feel that social and emotional intelligence, such as getting along with others and building relationships, understanding one's emotions, and managing stress effectively could impact academic performance? If so, how? If not, please explain.*

A lack of social and emotional intelligence in students was a concern for the participants, as that often impacts academics and behavior in the classroom. One participant stated,

Well I think the kids that do not have social emotional ability do not know how to take care of themselves in a way that they do not have the skills to deal with interruptions in the day or interruptions in a lesson. Therefore, it causes them to be disruptive or not understand or either they are just not 100% involved in a lesson. They are more concerned about what is going on around them. They are daydreaming about whatever troubles they have. They do not have the strategies to sit in a classroom quietly on their bottoms and care about what the adult is saying. There are too many other things going on in their minds. (Participant 1)

Examples were shared about students who lacked skills to sit still and quietly, which meant larger classrooms were difficult for the students to excel academically. Minor concerns

were major distractions for the students, as they did not have the skills to stay focused on the teacher's lessons.

Table 11

*Survey Response, Question #5: How much impact do you feel the additional supports in place through the school counselor and social worker had on the school atmosphere as a whole?*

	Didn't impact the school atmosphere at all	Very little impact on the school atmosphere	Somewhat impactful on the school atmosphere	Very impactful on the school atmosphere	Extremely impactful on the school atmosphere	N/A
Number of responses	0 of 5	0 of 5	1 of 5	4 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5

*Focus Group Question 4: In what ways, if any, do you think the additional supports through the school counselor and social worker impacted the school as a whole?*

The participants each expressed that the school counselor and social worker promoted positive interactions with students. Minor examples of SES were mentioned as being impactful on the overall school atmosphere. Remembering students' names, interacting in the hallways and lunchroom, greeting students in the morning and saying goodbye in the afternoon were all things that the participants mentioned as being beneficial for the students and school. One participant stated,

Any time you are able to lift the spirits of a chunk of students who might otherwise have gone through the day bearing the burdens of whatever it is that they were bearing has to have some sort of a positive impact on the whole environment. We may not have seen the behaviors that they might have had had they not had a chance to meet with a counselor throughout the day. They had a place to be able to get rid of that so that perhaps we did not see behaviors. So I think maybe some of that was unseen. Counselors are taking care



of some things that we might not have known about otherwise and some behaviors and attitudes maybe did not show themselves around the environment of the school because they had someone supporting them. (Participant 1)

Table 12

*Survey Response, Question #6: How important do you feel the additional supports through the school counselor and social worker are for all students?*

	Not at all important	Not important	Somewhat important	Very important	Extremely important	N/A
Number of responses	0 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5	2 of 5	3 of 5	0 of 5

*Focus Group Question 5: Social and emotional supports from a school counselor and social worker aren't available in some schools. If it's something you feel all schools should have, please explain. If you don't think it's necessary, please explain.*

Each participant was very much in favor of social and emotional supports in place from school counselors and social workers. One expressed how she did not understand how social and emotional intelligence and support has been discussed so much lately, and the leadership team at Southside School feels that it is one of the most important components of education, yet some neighboring schools do not have those supports in place for their students or teachers. She expressed “It truly is the foundation of a child's school experience and crucial for their success. Then every school should have that support to their kids” (Participant 2). Participant 1 also brought up that in rural areas, it is difficult for students and families if the support is not provided in the school. She stated, “By the time they actually get a chance to see someone there is already emotional damage.”

Each of the participants stated how helpful it is to have that resource for teachers, as well. Two participants said that some teachers feel ill-equipped to deal with stress students are dealing

with, and all participants expressed that time is always a concern for teachers. Support from school counselors and social workers relieve them from that extra need.

### **Emerging Themes**

After analyzing the data, four themes emerged from the data sets:

1. The lack of social and emotional intelligence has a negative impact on student behavior and academic achievement.

This theme emerged through the behavior logs and accounts of the teachers through the focus group discussion. Each of the focus group participants agreed that a lack of social and emotional intelligence can negatively impact student behavior, resulting in poor academic performance. Two examples were shared of students with academic intelligence, but low social and emotional intelligence. Both students were not succeeding as well as they could in a larger classroom setting because it was too much for them. Either it was uncomfortable for them, or they were being too disruptive because they did not have the skills to sit quietly. Once their social and emotional skills improved, their behavior and academics improved. The behavior logs also align with this theme, as the number of behavior incidents was significantly higher before supports were in place to impact social and emotional intelligence.

2. Offering additional SEL and SES supports is associated with certain changes in student behavior and academic achievement.

Analyzing the teacher surveys, focus group discussion, and behavior logs led the researcher to this finding. Eighty percent of the survey respondents felt that the additional supports in place through the school counselor and social worker were very to extremely impactful on student behavior. Sixty percent felt the additional supports in place through the school counselor and social worker were very impactful on student academic performance.

During the focus group, participants supported their survey responses by stating things like “Our kids come with so much baggage and we do not know what is going on in their little heads and hearts unless they share it. So when they get a chance to speak about that to someone they come back a little bit lighter” (Participant 1). As a result, the participants felt the students were able to focus more and their behavior improved, resulting in higher academic achievement.

The number of behavior incidents decreased significantly as students received SEL and SES. SEL promoted social and emotional intelligence through classroom guidance lessons, by teaching students about managing one’s emotions, leveraging those emotions to solve problems, communicating effectively, making good decisions, building relationships with others, and managing stress effectively. Participants believe that SES may have influenced social and emotional intelligence because students had an additional support in place to help them with those things. They had someone to talk to about their emotions, problems, and stress, and were not dealing with them on their own.

3. The additional support is helpful for teachers.

During the focus group, each of the participants expressed how essential and beneficial the additional supports are for teachers. Two of them stated that some teachers feel ill-equipped to help with the stress that their students are dealing with. Even if they did feel comfortable providing that support, they lacked the time to give students the individual attention they need to talk about their emotions, relationships, and stress.

4. Overall, implementing SEL and SES is associated with certain changes within the school.

The behavior logs, teacher surveys, and accounts of what the teachers shared in the focus group allowed this theme to emerge. The behavior logs showed positive changes, teacher surveys showed 80% felt SEL and SES were very impactful on the school atmosphere, and the teachers

also shared in the focus group that student behaviors improved. Although the NWEA scores did not show a change, the teachers felt that the positive behavioral changes impacted academics. They shared that talking to a trusted adult allowed the students to relieve some stress, return to the classroom with a more positive demeanor, and focus on academics. One teacher stated that the school counselor and social worker “took care of some things that we might not have known about otherwise. Some behaviors and attitudes did not show themselves around the environment of the school because the students had support” (Participant 1). As far as SEL, students were taught social and emotional skills that they may have been lacking, and teachers were then able to implement what was taught during the SEL guidance lessons.

Based on the themes that emerged from each of the data sets, the researcher concluded that the additional supports through the school counselor and social worker were beneficial for students, teachers, and the school as a whole. Teachers at Southside School perceive SEL and SES implementation as an essential component of every school. The surveys and focus group participant responses expressed a need for students and teachers to have additional social and emotional supports, such as school counselors and social workers. Their perceptions were supported by Southside School’s behavioral data.

### **Summary**

The findings from this study revealed several important factors and answered the research questions. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of SEL and SES on academic achievement and behaviors of students in a rural school in Maine. The benefits of the additional supports have been shown by research, yet there is a lack of SEL and SES in many schools (EWRC, 2015).

The data from this research shows there are benefits for students and teachers. The

research questions, “What changes occurred in NWEA scores during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?” and “What was the effect on student behavior incidents during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?” were both answered. NWEA math proficiency scores for both fifth graders and sixth graders improved after SEL and SES were implemented in Southside School, and reading proficiency scores for sixth graders also improved. The reading proficiency scores for the fifth graders in the 2016-17 academic year are the only exception, as they did not improve. In addition to NWEA proficiency scores, behavior incidents decreased for fifth- and sixth-graders after SEL and SES implementation.

To support the student data, teacher survey results and the focus group discussion addressed the research question “How do teachers and administrators perceive SEL and SES implementation and its impact on the school?” Results showed that Southside School administrators and teachers feel that additional supports from a school counselor and/or social worker are important in all schools.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This mixed methods case study was designed to examine the effects of SEL and SES on academic achievement and behaviors of students in a rural school in Maine. The study analyzed student testing data and behavioral data, as well as teacher survey responses and focus group discussions to answer the study's research questions. Southside School was in a unique situation that the researcher wanted to study. Southside School was a recipient of a grant from the ESSC program funded by the Department of Education, which allowed the school to fund school counselor and social worker positions for three years. During those three years, students received SEL and SES that were not in place beforehand. The desired outcomes of the grant and an increase in academic performance based on students' Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) test scores. The hope was that by gathering and analyzing the data geared around the grant outcomes, the researcher would be able to show if the additional SEL and SES were associated with students' academic and behavioral gains.

Quantitative data included three years of NWEA math and reading proficiency scores and behavioral logs. Qualitative data resulted from collecting data through teacher surveys and a focus group. Focus group data was coded to determine common themes that answered the focus group questions and gave insight into the research questions. The purpose of this chapter is to give an interpretation of the different findings in relation to the research questions, address implications of the findings, give recommendations for action, and give recommendations for further studies.

## **Interpretation of Findings**

The findings from this study were consistent with the research on SEL and SES. This section will discuss each of the data sets and how they interface with the research questions.

### **Research Question 1: How do teachers and administrators perceive SEL and SES implementation and its impact on the school?**

Data analysis of teacher surveys and a focus group discussion allowed the researcher to conclude that the teachers at Southside School perceive SEL and SES as an essential component of the school. There was a concern with SEL miscommunication and not collaborating with other efforts as much as the participant would have liked to see, but that was the only concern. That participant and the other two participants stated that SEL and SES implementation through supports such as a school counselor and/or social worker is “incredibly important” (Participant 3) for students and teachers.

### **Research Question 2: What changes occurred in NWEA scores during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?**

Analyzing two grade levels over a three-year timeframe allowed the researcher to see if there was any change in NWEA proficiency scores after one or two years of SEL and SES implementation. The fifth graders in 2015-16 had higher proficiency scores during the first year of SEL and SES implementation than the fifth graders in 2016-17 who had two years of SEL and SES. The percentage of fifth graders that were proficient, above proficiency, or significantly above proficiency in math was 57.1% in 2014-15, 72.7% in 2015-16, and 64.3% in 2016-17. The percentage that were proficient, above proficiency, or significantly above proficiency in reading was 57.1% in 2014-15, 63.6% in 2015-16, and 48.1% in 2016.

The sixth graders in 2014-15 and 2015-16 did not receive SEL and SES, but the sixth

graders in 2016-17 received two years of SEL and SES. The percentage of sixth graders that were proficient, above proficiency, or significantly above proficiency in math was 48.3% in 2014-15, 71.4% in 2015-16, and 63.2% in 2016-17. The percentage that were proficient, above proficiency, or significantly above proficiency in reading was 37.91% in 2014-15, 64.27% in 2015-16, and 68.17% in 2016-17.

The NWEA scores were inconsistent for fifth and sixth graders and did not show an increase. Since the scores did not consistently improve each year, the researcher concluded that, while the additional social and emotional supports were recognized by staff, the NWEA proficiency scores for the fifth and sixth graders during the 2015-16 or 2016-17 academic years remained the same.

**Research Question 3: What changes occurred in student behavior incidents during the two years that additional social and emotional supports were in place?**

The behavioral data significantly changed during the two years of SEL and SES implementation. The fifth graders in 2014-15 had a total of 38 behavior incidents' requiring them to report to the front office. After two years of SEL and SES, the fifth graders in 2016-17 had 18 behavior incidents. The sixth graders in 2014-15 had a total of 27 behavior incidents, and in 2016-17 after two years of SEL and SES they had 6 behavior incidents. Therefore, the researcher was able to conclude that the additional social and emotional supports in place through the school counselor and social worker were associated with positive changes in student behavior student behavior.

**Implications**

There are implications from this case study that are noteworthy for educational leaders and educators. Teachers in this setting expressed the importance of social and emotional



supports, such as school counselors and social workers, in all schools. They felt the supports in place made an impact on individual students, classrooms, teachers, and the school as a whole.

The results from the teacher surveys and focus group validate prior research on the positive impact of SEL and SES for students (CASEL, 2013; Protheroe, 2007; Weissberg, 2011; Zins et al., 2004, p. 4), and it also helped show a need for teachers to have those additional supports in place for their students. Each participant in the focus group mentioned that they do not have the time needed to address social and emotional concerns for every student as much as they need, and they also felt unqualified to do so. Focus group participants stated that behavior problems that stemmed from a lack of social and emotional intelligence make teaching more difficult, but once students learn essential social and emotional skills, their behavior improves. This is validated by prior research stating that SEL and SES teach students how to “manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors” (Zins et al., 2004, p. 4).

The research by Zins et al. (2004) aligns with another implication of this study. Having the additional social and emotional supports in place significantly decreased behavior incidents requiring students to be sent to the front office. Students benefitted from having a school counselor and social worker to talk to about concerns, stress, family life, and many other important topics. They had an additional support system in place, which many students felt comfortable utilizing regularly. In addition to students feeling comfortable going to the school counselor and social worker, the teachers took advantage of the support and referred students when they were having a rough day, or something came up that upset the student.

Even if students were not visiting the school counselor’s or social worker’s offices, the school counselor and social worker were making an effort to be visible and check in with

students in the hallway, cafeteria, or on the playground. They learned students' names and made connections with students. These simple practices are supported by research on SES, which have shown that a sense of belonging in school has been linked to "emotional well-being, intrinsic motivation, prosocial behavior, commitment to school, engagement, and achievement" (Protheroe, 2007, p. 51).

Social and emotional programs, such as SEL and SES that Southside School implemented through classroom guidance lessons, individual counseling, group counseling, and daily check-ins with students during unstructured times, have been shown to "significantly improve social emotional skills, self-esteem, school bonding, and adherence to social norms; reduce disruptive behavior, school violence, and suspensions; and increase positive classroom behavior, academic performance, and test scores" (Elias et al., 2006, p. 11). Findings from this study support previous research, but also serve to guide educators in rural schools who are trying to determine if these additional supports are necessary, or what entails SEL and SES implementation.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Recommendations for action stem from in-depth research on SEL and SES literature, and the data analysis and findings from this study.

- Rural districts that currently do not have social and emotional supports in place, such as a school counselor and social worker, should strongly consider adding these roles to their schools.
- Current school counselors and social workers should collaborate with teachers for SEL, as well as for student referrals for counseling services and support.

- Administrators and educators looking to implement SEL into schools should implement programs schoolwide and use the same age-appropriate terminology schoolwide.
- Every educator should be implementing SES for all students. This can be as simple as greeting students in the hallway each morning and saying goodbye in the afternoon, learning students' names, smiling at students in the hallway, or being someone students feel comfortable talking to. These are all simple ways to help students feel comfortable and welcome at school.

This case study focused on a small rural elementary school in northern Maine, but the researcher believes this study has implications for other schools, especially rural schools without social and emotional supports in place.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

There is an extensive amount of research on SEL, but the research on SES, especially for rural students, is limited. Research on SES mostly includes recommendations on ways to implement SES, but there is a lack of studies showing any data to support the importance of SES.

Due to the time constraints of the grant at Southside School, the researcher was only able to use data from two years of SEL and SES implementation. It would be beneficial to look at other rural schools who have implemented SEL and SES schoolwide for several years, and look at current data and baseline data to see if test scores and behaviors were impacted. When looking at data, it would also be helpful to look at data for the same students over several years. The data for this study was limited, as it contained only different fifth- and sixth-grader's proficiency scores and behavioral data over a three-year timeframe.

The researcher initially wanted to address the relationship between poverty and social and emotional awareness, but it was beyond the scope of this study. It would be beneficial to see

what type of impact the additional social and emotional supports have on students living in poverty, as they may not be receiving the necessary SES for healthy development at home.

### **Conclusion**

Emotional intelligence includes essential life skills that all students should be working on regularly. It consists of the ability to recognize and manage one's emotions, leverage those emotions to solve problems, communicate effectively, even in difficult situations, make good decisions, build relationships with others, and manage stress effectively (Ruel, 2016). Schools only work on developing these skills with students less than two percent of each school week (Goleman, 2018). Research on SEL and SES has been shown to address the lack of social and emotional awareness some students may be dealing with (Elias et al., 2006 & Durlak et al., 2011). Although there are studies showing the importance of SEL and SES in all schools, there is a lack of SEL and SES in many schools (EWRC, 2015).

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of SEL and SES on academic achievement and behaviors of students in a rural school in Maine. The particular school in this study was in a unique situation as social and emotional supports, such as a school counselor and social worker, were not in the school until the grant began. The study highlighted the need for schools, especially rural schools that are often lacking these supports, to have social and emotional supports in place for their students and teachers. The teacher surveys, focus group, and behavioral data analyzed for this study showed that SEL and SES had positive effects on students and teachers. The researcher hopes that this research in one rural school in Maine will allow educational leaders and other educators to recognize how beneficial these supports are for students and teachers, especially for those in rural locations.

## References

- Abenavoli, R., & Greenberg, M. (2016). *Contributions of social-emotional readiness and classroom quality to social-emotional trajectories across elementary school*. Paper presented at the Spring 2016 Conference of the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE), Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED567203.pdf>
- Bear, G. (2010). Discipline: Effective school practices. *National Association of School Psychologist, S4H18*, 1-4. Retrieved from [www.nasponline.org/assets/documents/.../S4H18\\_Discipline.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/assets/documents/.../S4H18_Discipline.pdf)
- Bass, B., & Riggio, R. (2014). *Transformational leadership*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Brackett, M., & Rivers, S. (2014). Transforming students' lives with social and emotional learning. To appear in R Pekrun & L Linnenbrink-Garcia (Eds.), *International Handbook of Emotions in Education, Chapter 19*. Retrieved from <http://ei.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Transforming-Students'-Lives-with-Social-and-Emotional-Learning.pdf>
- Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M., & Hariharan, A. (2013). *The missing piece: A national teacher survey on how social and emotional learning can empower children and transform schools*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED558068.pdf>
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (2013). *CASEL guide: Effective social and emotional learning programs*. Retrieved from <https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2013-casel-guide.pdf>
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (2018). What is SEL? (Web page). Retrieved from <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>

- Coulter, P. (1993). The Comer school development program. *Education Research Consumer Guide* (6th ed.). Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/OR/ConsumerGuides/comer.html>
- Durlak, J., Weissberg, R., Dymnicki, A., Taylor, R., & Schellinger, K. (2011). Impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432. Retrieved from <https://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/.../meta-analysis-child-development-1.pdf>
- Education Week Research Center. (2015). *Social and emotional learning: Perspectives from America's schools*. Bethesda, MD: Author. Retrieved from [https://www.edweek.org/media/ewrc\\_selreport\\_june2015.pdf](https://www.edweek.org/media/ewrc_selreport_june2015.pdf)
- Edutopia. (2011). Social and emotional learning: A short history (Web page). Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning-history>
- Elias, M., O'Brien, M., & Weissberg, R. (2006). Transformative leadership for social-emotional learning. *Principal Leadership*, 12(4), 10-13. Retrieved from [www.mfis.ca/wp-content/uploads/.../Transformative-Leadership-Elias-et-al-2006.pdf](http://www.mfis.ca/wp-content/uploads/.../Transformative-Leadership-Elias-et-al-2006.pdf)
- Gawel, J. (1997). Herzberg's theory of motivation and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 5(11), 1-3. Retrieved from <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=5&n=11>
- Goleman, D. (2018). Emotional Intelligence (Web page). Retrieved from <http://www.danielgoleman.info/topics/emotional-intelligence/>
- Hann-Morrison. (2011). The varied roles of school counselors in rural settings. *Georgia School Counselors Association*, 26-33. Retrieved from [files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ963124.pdf](http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ963124.pdf)

Hawkins, Kosterman, Catalano, Hill, & Abbott, 2005; Izard, E. (2016). *Teaching children from poverty and trauma*. National Education Association, Washington, DC. Retrieved from [https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/20200\\_Poverty %20Handbook\\_flat.pdf](https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/20200_Poverty%20Handbook_flat.pdf)

Henderson, A., & Berla, N. (1994). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED375968.pdf>

Institute for Health and Human Potential. (2018). What is emotional intelligence (Web page)? Retrieved from <https://www.ihhp.com/meaning-of-emotional-intelligence>

Jensen, E. (2013). How poverty affects classroom engagement. *Educational Leadership*, 70(8), 24-30. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may13/vol70/num08/How-Poverty-Affects-Classroom-Engagement.aspx>

Jensen, E. (2009). *Teaching with poverty in mind: What being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/109074/chapters/How-Poverty-Affects-Behavior-and-Academic-Performance.aspx>

Jones, S., & Bouffard, S. (2012). Social and emotional learning in schools: From programs to strategies. *Society for Research in Child Development*, 26(4), 1-33. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED540203.pdf>

Katz, J., & Porath, M. (2011). Teaching to diversity: Creating compassionate learning communities for diverse elementary school students. *International Journal of Special Education*, 26(2), 29-41. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ937173.pdf>

Klem, A., & Connell, J. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health*, 74(7), 262-273. Retrieved from [http://www.viriya.net/jabref/relationships\\_matter\\_linking\\_teacher\\_support\\_to\\_student\\_en](http://www.viriya.net/jabref/relationships_matter_linking_teacher_support_to_student_en)

gagement\_and\_achievement.pdf

McLeod, S. (2016). Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Web page). Retrieved from

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

Moore, C. G., Mink, M., Probst, J. C., Tompkins, M., Johnson, A., & Hughley, S. (2005). Mental health risk factors, unmet needs, and provider availability for rural children (Web page).

A report provided by the South Carolina Rural Health Research Center. Retrieved from

<http://www.ruralhealthresearch.org/centers/southcarolina>

Mulvahill, E. (2016). 21 simple ways to integrate social-emotional learning throughout the day

(Web page). Retrieved from [https://www.weareteachers.com/21-simple-ways-to-](https://www.weareteachers.com/21-simple-ways-to-integrate-social-emotional-learning-throughout-the-day/)

[integrate-social-emotional-learning-throughout-the-day/](https://www.weareteachers.com/21-simple-ways-to-integrate-social-emotional-learning-throughout-the-day/)

Northwest Evaluation Association. (2017). About NWEA (Web page). Retrieved from

<https://www.nwea.org/about/>

NYC Department of Education. (2014). *A parent guide to supporting your child's social*

*emotional development: Learning at home and "on the go" series*. New York, NY:

Office of Early Childhood Education. Retrieved from [schools.nyc.gov/NR/...C078.../](https://schools.nyc.gov/NR/...C078.../ParentGuidetoSocialEmotionalSupportfinal13114.pdf)

[ParentGuidetoSocialEmotionalSupportfinal13114.pdf](https://schools.nyc.gov/NR/...C078.../ParentGuidetoSocialEmotionalSupportfinal13114.pdf)

O'Hare, W. (2009). Poverty is a persistent reality for many rural children in U.S (Web page).

Retrieved from <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2009/ruralchildpoverty.aspx>

Osterman, K. (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of*

*Educational Research*, 70(3), 323-367. Retrieved from [https://people.hofstra.edu/Karen](https://people.hofstra.edu/Karen_F_Osterman/Student%20need%20for%20belonging%20in%20the%20school%20community.pdf)

[\\_F\\_Osterman/Student%20need%20for%20belonging%20in%20the%20school%20comm](https://people.hofstra.edu/Karen_F_Osterman/Student%20need%20for%20belonging%20in%20the%20school%20community.pdf)

[unity.pdf](https://people.hofstra.edu/Karen_F_Osterman/Student%20need%20for%20belonging%20in%20the%20school%20community.pdf)



- Payne, R. (2008). Nine powerful practices: Nine strategies help raise the achievement of students living in poverty. *Educational Leadership*, 65(7), 48-52. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr08/vol65/num07/Nine-Powerful-Practices.aspx>
- Proctor, B., Semega, J., Kollar, M. (2016). Income and poverty in the United States: 2015 (Web page). Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.html>
- Protheroe, N. (2007, March/April). Emotional support and student learning. *National Association of Elementary School Principals*, 50-54. Retrieved from <https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/resources/2/Principal/2007/M-Ap50.pdf>
- Regoniel, P. (2013). How to reduce researcher bias in social research (Web page). Retrieved from <http://simplyeducate.me/2013/08/12/how-to-reduce-researcher-bias-in-social-research/>
- Responsive Classroom. (2017). *What is responsive classroom?* Retrieved from <https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/What-research-says-updated-12.16.pdf>
- Ruel, C. (2016). Teaching emotional intelligence (Web page). Retrieved from <https://hub.wiley.com/community/exchanges/educate/blog/2016/09/28/emotional-intelligence-can-be-learned-teaching-emotional-intelligence-to-students>
- Rimm-Kaufman, S. (2006). *Social and academic learning study on the contribution of the responsive classroom approach*. Retrieved from [https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/sites/default/files/pdf\\_files/sals\\_booklet\\_rc.pdf](https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/sites/default/files/pdf_files/sals_booklet_rc.pdf)
- Schonert-Reichl, K. (2017). Social and emotional learning and teachers. *Future of Children*,

- 27(1), 137-155. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1145076.pdf>.
- Shafritz, J., Ott, J., & Jang, Y. (2015). *Classics of organization theory*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2011-2015). Poverty status in the past 12 months (Web page). Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2017). Elementary and secondary school counseling programs (Web page). Retrieved from <https://ed.gov/programs/elseccounseling/index.html>
- United States Department of Agriculture. (2017). Rural education (Web page). Retrieved from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/employment-education/rural-education/>
- Virginia Department of Education. (2002). *Collaborative family-school relationships for children's learning*. Richmond, VA: Virginia Department of Education. Retrieved from [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student\\_family/family-school\\_relationships/collaborative\\_family-school\\_relationships.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/family-school_relationships/collaborative_family-school_relationships.pdf)
- Washington State Institute for Public Policy. (2012). Seattle social development project (Web page). Retrieved from <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/1509>
- Weissburg, R. (2011, March). *Strategies to support social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students*. Symposium conducted at the School Climate Technical Assistance Symposium: New Orleans, LA.
- Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zins, J., Weissberg, R., Wang, M., & Walberg, H. (2004). *Building academic success on social*

*and emotional learning: What does the research say?* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

## Appendix A

Email to teachers and administrators about survey:

Good afternoon,

I hope you all are having a great school year! As many of you know, I'm currently completing my doctorate, and I'm in the last phase of collecting data. I have chosen to focus my study and research on social and emotional learning and support, and its impact on students. The additional supports put in place through the grant that has funded the school counselor and social worker positions were exactly what I wanted to study.

Your participation in a very quick confidential survey will be of great assistance to the start of my data collection. The link to the survey is <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LXNY3JC>.

Thank you!  
Kristen Schebell  
(910-340-0775)  
kschebell@une.edu

## Appendix B

### UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

**Project Title:** Social and Emotional Learning and Support for Students Living in Rural Communities

**Principal Investigator:** Kristen Schebell, Doctoral Student, [kschebell@une.edu](mailto:kschebell@une.edu) (Lead

**Advisor –** Marilyn Newell, [mnewell@une.edu](mailto:mnewell@une.edu))

#### **Introduction:**

- Please read this form. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document your decision.
- You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

#### **Why is this study being done?**

- The purpose of this study is to examine the effects (academically and behaviorally) of the social and emotional learning and supports that have been put in place through the school counselor and social worker.

#### **Who will be in this study?**

- All teachers who have taught at [School] during the 2013-14 through 2016-17 academic years are invited to participate in this study as they have participated in classroom guidance lessons with the school counselor and referred students to the counselor and social worker.

#### **What will I be asked to do?**

- You will be asked to complete a survey through Survey Monkey and rate questions in relation to the impact that the additional social and emotional support had on your students and school as a whole.

### **What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?**

- There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?**

- There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. There may be a benefit to other educators, [School], and other schools who are wanting to learn more about social and emotional learning and support for students.

### **What will it cost me?**

- There is no cost.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

- Your survey responses will be confidential and only the researcher will have access to them. Responses will not be shared in any individually identifiable way.

### **How will my data be kept confidential?**

- The data from your survey will be stored in Survey Monkey and saved onto a private, password protected computer located at the researcher's home.
- Please note that the UNE Institutional Review Board may review the research records.

### **What are my rights as a research participant?**

- Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with [School].
- If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason.

### **What other options do I have?**

- You may choose not to participate.

**Whom may I contact with questions?**

- The researcher conducting this study is Kristen Schebell. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her at [kschebell@une.edu](mailto:kschebell@une.edu), or the lead advisor, Marylin Newell ([mnewell@une.edu](mailto:mnewell@une.edu)).
- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or [irb@une.edu](mailto:irb@une.edu).

**Will I receive a copy of this consent form?**

- You should retain a copy of this consent form for your records. A copy will be retained by the researcher.

---

**Participant's Statement**

**I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily. Continuing to take the survey will indicate informed consent.**

## Appendix C

### Survey Questions

1. Name: (\*this information is kept confidential)
2. How helpful do you feel the classroom guidance lessons were for your students? (select from 5 point Likert scale - not at all helpful to extremely helpful)
3. How helpful do you feel the individual counseling/therapy and/or group counseling was for your students? (select from 5 point Likert scale - not at all helpful to extremely helpful)
4. How do you think the additional supports in place through the school counselor and social worker impacted student behavior? (select from 5 point Likert scale - they didn't impact student behavior at all to they were extremely impactful on student behavior)
5. How do you think the additional supports in place through the school counselor and social worker impacted student academic performance? (select from 5 point Likert scale - they didn't impact academic performance at all to they were extremely impactful on academic performance)
6. How much impact do you feel the additional supports in place through the school counselor and social worker had on the school atmosphere as a whole? (select from 5 point Likert scale - they didn't impact the school atmosphere at all, to they were extremely impactful on the school atmosphere)
7. How important do you feel the additional supports through the school counselor and social worker are for all students? (select from 5 point Likert scale – not at all important, to extremely important)



## Appendix D

Email to teachers and administrators about focus group:

Good afternoon,

Thank you so much for completing the survey I sent out! Your feedback is very much appreciated. I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group with a small group of teachers to discuss the feedback I received from the surveys. Hearing more from you about the impact (or lack thereof) that the additional supports from the school counselor and social worker had on your students will assist with my research.

If you agree to participate, please respond to this email and let me know. I've attached the consent form to this email for you to look over and sign before our focus group.

Thank you,  
Kristen Schebell  
(910-340-0775)  
kschebell@une.edu

## Appendix E

### Focus Group Script

Hi everyone! Thank you so much for being a part of our focus group. Our discussion tonight is hopefully going to give me more insight into the survey questions and the responses I received. Again, the purpose of this study is to examine the effects (academically and behaviorally) of the social and emotional learning and supports that have been put in place through the school counselor and social worker. You all received the consent form, but just to be sure you're aware, I am recording our discussion on YouTube Live, which is set to private so only I can see it. Then I will transcribe it and share it with you all, to be sure I didn't misunderstand or leave anything out.

Alright, let's go ahead and get started.

*Question 1: Many of you stated that the classroom guidance lessons were very helpful/not so helpful (base this off of survey responses) for your students. Please share a little about the impact or lack thereof that you feel the classroom lessons had on your students and/or classroom.*

*Question 2: Some of you referred students to the school counselor or social worker for individual counseling/therapy or group counseling. If you feel like it made an impact on your student, please share what impact it made, from your standpoint. If you don't feel like it made an impact, please share how it wasn't helpful for your student.*

*Question 3: There are so many factors that go into academic performance. Do you feel that social and emotional intelligence, such as getting along with others and building relationships, understanding one's emotions, and managing stress effectively could impact academic performance? If so, how? If not, please explain.*

*Question 4: In what ways, if any, do you think the additional supports through the school counselor and social worker had on the school as a whole?*

*Question 5: Social and emotional supports from a school counselor and social worker aren't available in some schools. If it's something you feel all schools should have, please explain. If you don't think it's necessary, please explain.*