Social-Emotional Learning: Evaluating the Impact of SEL Programs on Teachers' Well-Being and Student Outcomes

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Abstract

Background: Educator well-being and social-emotional competency play an important role in creating healthy, supportive learning environments in Title I schools. Even with the growing emphasis on student SEL, limited research explores how adult SEL training impacts teacher well-being and classroom climate in underserved school communities. The purpose of this study

was to evaluate the impact of implementing a SEL framework module training series on Title I teachers.

Methods: A mixed-methods approach was used, involving pre–post surveys, reflective activities, and qualitative feedback from educators in a Wake County Public School.

Results: Results indicated no statistically significant changes in major and minor infractions, or overall school climate following SEL implementation; however, unexcused absenteeism significantly increased from pre- to post-intervention. Coding data suggested that while teachers grew in their SEL strategies and perceived personal benefits, these early-stage improvements did not show in the in-student behavior or school climate.

Conclusion: These findings suggest that SEL implementation may require a longer time frame to produce noticeable results. Continued research is needed to evaluate the long-term impact of adult SEL training on teacher well-being and student functioning in Title I settings.

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Introduction

Integrating Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) in education has gained increasing attention due to its potential to enhance student outcomes and support teacher well-being. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model emphasizes the interconnectedness of public health, education, and school health, asserting that true academic success occurs only when all aspects of a student's development are addressed (CDC, 2024). Within the WSCC's 10-step framework, the social and emotional climate plays a critical role in student engagement, relationships with peers and adults, overall well-being, and academic performance (CDC, 2024). SEL programs help foster these

outcomes by equipping students with essential life skills such as emotional regulation, relationship-building, and responsible decision-making (Durlak et al., 2015).
Many school districts, including the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS), have implemented structured SEL curriculum like the Second Step program, which supports students from kindergarten through junior high as they navigate social, emotional, and developmental challenges (Second Step, 2025). While much of the focus on SEL has been on student development, its benefits extend beyond the classroom.

Educators and school staff also gain from SEL strategies that promote emotional resilience and mental well-being while mitigating teacher burnout. Mental health among educators has become an increasing concern, particularly as teaching is one of the most stressful professions in the U.S. A 2017 study by Mental Health America found that 61% of teachers reported their job as stressful, more than double the rate of non-teaching professionals. Additionally, 58% of educators indicated that high stress levels negatively impacted their mental health (Educator Quality of Work Life Survey, 2017). As teacher burnout continues to rise, it not only affects educators but also the social-emotional development of students, highlighting an urgent need for a more comprehensive approach to SEL that supports both students and teachers. This growing concern over mental health in schools reflects broader national trends. Mental health challenges are prevalent across the U.S., affecting individuals of all ages, including educators and students. To understand the urgency of implementing a SEL framework it is important to examine the current health challenge that mental health has created in the United States.

Background

Mental illnesses are prevalent in the United States and globally, affecting millions of individuals each year. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), more than one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness, totaling approximately 59.3 million people in 2022 (NIMH, 2024). Mental health conditions are categorized into any mental illness (AMI) and serious mental illness (SMI), with AMI encompassing a broad spectrum from mild to severe impairment, while SMI significantly disrupts major life activities (NIMH, 2024). The prevalence of mental health disorders has increased in recent years, particularly following the COVID-19

pandemic. By 2019, nearly one in four women sought mental health support, with AMI being more common among females (26.4%) compared to males (19.7%) (NIMH, 2024). These rising rates highlight the need for interventions that promote emotional resilience and well-being, particularly in educational settings where both students and educators face growing mental health challenges.

Title I Schools and the Importance of SEL

Title I schools often serve communities with high levels of socioeconomic stress, and educators working in these environments experience unique pressures. Burnout, secondary trauma, and emotional exhaustion are common among school staff. Prioritizing adult SEL can lead to improved teacher retention, greater job satisfaction, and a more supportive atmosphere for students. Title I schools are defined as public educational institutions that receive federal funding under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Department of Education, 2025). Title I funding aims to provide additional resources to schools serving high percentages of students from low-income families, ensuring that all children, regardless of socioeconomic background, meet rigorous state academic standards. While Title I programs have traditionally been associated with urban schools, increasing poverty rates in suburban areas have led to more suburban schools qualifying for this funding, reflecting broader demographic and economic shifts.

School-based public health interventions aim to address various health concerns, including mental health, nutrition, and social well-being. Integrating SEL into these interventions can provide students with coping strategies that promote long-term wellness and academic success (Greenberg et al., 2017). Title I schools often face challenges such as limited resources, high stress levels among students and teachers, and academic disparities. These schools benefit significantly from SEL programs, which can help reduce stress, enhance coping mechanisms, and improve overall school climate (Durlak et al., 2011).

A growing body of research highlights the interconnection between teacher well-being, student health, and overall community outcomes (Taylor et al., 2017; Oberle et al., 2022). Teachers experiencing high levels of stress and burnout are less effective in the classroom, leading to lower student engagement and academic achievement. Conversely, when educators are supported through SEL training, they can foster more inclusive and nurturing learning environments that promote student success. Schools that implement SEL programs report lower

disciplinary incidents, reduced dropout rates, and improved graduation rates (Taylor et al., 2017). These outcomes can contribute to healthier and more harmonious communities that will give students the emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills needed for future success. Teachers' emotional support pertains to teachers' ability to show caring behaviors toward students' emotional and social needs and encompasses three dimensions: positive climate, teacher sensitivity, and regard for the adolescent perspective (Oberle et al., 2022).

Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is a structured process that helps children develop the skills to understand and manage their emotions, build strong interpersonal relationships, make responsible decisions, and navigate social challenges effectively. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identifies five core competencies of SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). Self-awareness involves recognizing emotions and understanding how they influence behavior. Self-management includes regulating emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations (CASEL, 2020). Social awareness emphasizes empathy and understanding diverse perspectives, while relationship skills focus on building and maintaining healthy connections with others (CASEL, 2020). Lastly, responsible decision-making requires individuals to make ethical and constructive choices based on their well-being and that of others (CASEL, 2020).

Strong evidence supports the effectiveness of SEL in promoting mental health and academic success. Research indicates that students who develop strong SEL skills tend to perform better academically, establish healthier relationships, and experience greater well-being in adulthood (Jones et al., 2017). According to Taylor et al. (2017), SEL fosters emotional intelligence, which enhances students' ability to manage stress, collaborate with peers, and successfully navigate social and academic challenges. While much attention has been given to student SEL, there is an emerging need to address SEL among adults—teachers, administrators, and support staff—who play a major role in fostering a positive learning environment.

One evidence-based framework that supports both student and adult SEL development is Conscious Discipline, created by Dr. Becky Bailey. Conscious Discipline integrates social-emotional learning, discipline, and self-regulation within a relationship-based model emphasizing safety, connection, and problem solving (Bailey, 2015). Unlike traditional behavior-

management systems that rely on external control, Conscious Discipline encourages educators to model emotional regulation, build a sense of belonging, and use conflict as a teaching opportunity. The framework aligns closely with CASEL's five competencies and the WSCC model, making it particularly relevant for addressing teacher stress, classroom management challenges, and overall school climate.

Funding for SEL

Despite the well-documented benefits of SEL, many Title I schools face challenges in fully integrating these programs due to limited resources, high-stress environments, and the unique socio-emotional needs of their student populations. During the 2021-2022 school year, 76% of principals and 53% of educators reported implementing SEL programs or using SEL curriculum materials in their schools (CASEL, 2022). However, only 29% of educators received ongoing training in SEL throughout the year (Will, 2020). Many students in Title I schools experience adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as poverty, family instability, and community violence, which can significantly impact their emotional regulation and behavior. At the same time, educators in these environments often face burnout and high stress, making it difficult to effectively implement SEL strategies. Research has shown that a strong SEL foundation can help mitigate these challenges by improving student behavior, reducing disciplinary incidents, and fostering a more positive school climate. However, the success of SEL programs in Title I schools is closely tied to the social-emotional competencies of educators.

Educators trained to manage their emotions and stress are better equipped to create supportive learning environments that promote student engagement and success. Given these considerations, this study seeks to explore the broader impact of SEL implementation on both student behavior and school climate in Title I settings.

Behavioral Challenges in Title I Schools (Referrals and Suspensions)

SEL plays an important role in fostering emotional resilience, reducing stress, and enhancing job satisfaction among educators (Jennings et al., 2017). Research highlights the positive impact of SEL on student behavior, indicating its great potential. Promotion of these skills has been associated with increased academic engagement, improved behavior, greater attachment to school, protection for at-risk youth, and improved academic achievement (Green et al., 2020). Long-term benefits include improved academic performance, prosocial behavior, and positive attitudes months and even years after implementation (Green et al., 2020). Children in

under-resourced and marginalized communities face a higher risk of behavioral, mental, and academic challenges due to limited access to resources and exposure to adversities such as poverty, maltreatment, community violence, and structural racism (Calhoun et al., 2020). Incorporating Conscious Discipline strategies within SEL initiatives can be particularly beneficial in Title I environments where behavioral challenges are more prevalent. By teaching educators to respond to misbehavior with empathy and structure rather than punishment, Conscious Discipline transforms classroom management into an opportunity for skill building. Teachers learn to use self-regulation techniques such as composure breathing, positive intent statements, and safe-place routines, which in turn help students mirror these behaviors. This proactive approach reduces referrals and suspensions while strengthening relationships and trust across the school community (Bailey, 2015; Bailey & Ross, 2019).

An analysis of more than 200 studies of programs that teach students social and emotional skills found that these efforts significantly improved student behavior, feelings about school, and, most importantly, achievement—making schools safer (Nation of Hope, 2018). Young people who have stronger social, emotional, and cognitive skills are more likely to enter and graduate from college, succeed in their careers, have positive relationships, and enjoy better mental and physical health (Nation of Hope, 2019). When teachers poorly manage the social and emotional demands of teaching, students demonstrate lower performance and on-task behavior (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

SEL and School Climate

According to recent national surveys, teacher stress and burnout have reached historically high levels, with nearly 60% of teachers reporting frequent job-related stress and more than half reporting symptoms of burnout (RAND Corporation, 2022). This highlights the importance and urgency of addressing school climate and overall teacher burnout. Although many teachers begin their careers with high levels of enthusiasm and commitment, ongoing stressors such as workload, emotional demands, and insufficient support can erode teacher motivation over time (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). In Title I schools, burnout in high-stress environments is especially important to address because teachers' social-emotional skills directly affect their ability to create supportive classrooms and effectively implement SEL strategies with students (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Improving classroom practices is important because it benefits not only teachers and students but also the overall school environment. A teacher's burnout and mental health can influence other key factors in the school (Jones et al., 2017). For example, when teachers experience burnout and poor mental health, it can trigger a "burnout cascade effect." A burnout cascade effect is when students' social and emotional needs go unmet, leading to more disruptive behavior. This can create a toxic classroom environment, increasing stress for the teacher and worsening the burnout cycle (Oberle et al., 2019). In turn, this lack of job satisfaction creates numerous challenges for schools. Teachers experiencing dissatisfaction often have diminished morale, which can negatively affect the overall school climate over time (Gottfried et al., 2024).

Conscious Discipline extends the impact of SEL by offering educators practical tools for cultivating emotional safety and connection in the classroom. Research shows that teachers trained in Conscious Discipline experience lower stress, improved classroom management, and stronger relationships with students (Hoffman et al., 2020). When integrated into a whole-school SEL framework, these practices can create a ripple effect that enhances teacher morale, reduces burnout, and promotes a culture of compassion and accountability throughout the school.
Given these challenges, it is critical to explore whether implementing a structured SEL framework can improve school climate by reducing teacher burnout and supporting positive student behaviors. Research suggests that SEL interventions not only enhance student well-being but also contribute to teacher resilience and job satisfaction, ultimately leading to a more positive school climate (Collie et al., 2018). Understanding the relationship between SEL strategies, teacher well-being, and student outcomes will provide valuable insights into creating more sustainable and supportive learning environments.

Hodge Road Elementary School

Hodge Road Elementary School, located in Knightdale, North Carolina, is a suburban public institution that serves approximately 510 students from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The school's demographics are diverse, with 55% Hispanic, 23% African American, 16% White, 4% identifying as two or more races, and 2% Asian students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023–2024). Established in 1995, Hodge Road Elementary has a history of focusing on the social, emotional, and physical development of its students. The school's mission emphasizes nurturing the "whole child" by addressing academic, emotional, social, and physical needs (WCPSS, 2025). This holistic approach aligns with the principles of SEL, which focuses

on developing students' abilities to manage emotions, set goals, show empathy, maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

At Hodge Road Elementary, elements of the Conscious Discipline framework were incorporated into the Adult SEL modules I developed for my master's thesis. These modules guided teachers through self-awareness and emotional regulation exercises, integrating breathing techniques, reflection prompts, and relationship-building strategies designed to promote composure and connection in both personal and professional contexts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the impact of implementing a SEL framework

Research Questions

This study aims to examine how implementing a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) framework can affect student behavior and the overall school environment in a suburban Title I school. The following research questions will help explore this impact:

1. Is there a significant difference between major infractions before and after integration of the SEL framework?

2. Is there a significant difference between minor infractions before and after integration of the SEL framework.

3. What effect does the integration of an SEL framework have on student unexcused absenteeism in Title I schools?

4. What effect does the integration of an SEL framework have on school climate?

Methodology

Participants

Elementary school teachers with 15 years or less of teaching experience who currently work at the Title I: Hodge Road Elementary School. A desired sample size of 70 teachers. Additionally, all enrolled students (N = 510) will have their administrative behavioral charts reviewed.

Procedures

Teachers will be contacted about this research through their Wake County Public School System email. There will also be mini flyers (Appendix A) placed in every teacher's mailbox that currently meet the criteria listed in the participant's section. Participants will complete informed consents (Appendix B) and pre-surveys (Appendix C) online utilizing a google form link. SEL training will take place independently on staff's own time with videos and presentations that are provided to them via a google calendar with a suggested timeline. The training will be available for them for one complete month August 1-31st. To determine if the training has been complete there will be small activities the individuals have to do at the end of each module. On the last module there will be a certificate of completion. Post-surveys will be sent to participants on google forms, via the same google calendar with a request that they be completed by October 16th. Reminders will be sent every week until the due date in October. Participants will then be expected to implement SEL into their professional practice.

Secondary data will also be utilized in this study. Data on absenteeism, office referrals and minor and major infractions will be analyzed for the the middle five weeks of the school year prior to the SEL training. The same measures will be analyzed six weeks post implementation of SEL. All data will be de-identified by coding. Hodge Road Elementary School has given permission to access these charts (Appendix D).

SEL Intervention: The Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) framework will be introduced to teachers through video-based training sessions, which will be developed using CASEL's Adult SEL framework (CASEL, 2020). These sessions will be designed to facilitate independent implementation by educators. The SEL program consists of a series of video presentations covering CASEL's five core competencies (CASEL, 2020):

- Self-Awareness – Recognizing emotions and stress management.

- Self-Management – Coping strategies and resilience-building.
- Social Awareness – Enhancing empathy and perspective-taking.
- Relationship Skills – Conflict resolution and communication techniques.
- Responsible Decision-Making – Ethical reasoning and goal setting.

Each video module is approximately 20–30 minutes long, Teachers are encouraged to apply strategies in their classrooms and document their experiences (Appendix E).

Analysis

Basic statistics will be used to describe the group of people in the study. We will look at how often things happen (frequencies) and use t-tests and Wilcoxon to compare different groups to answer the research questions. For the written answers, we will look for common ideas and themes that come up to better understand how people feel about the school's climate. These themes will help us see patterns in how students and teachers experience social and emotional learning (SEL). By combining both the numbers and the written answers, we can get a better overall picture of what's happening at the school.

Results

A Wilcoxon test was conducted to determine whether major and minor disciplinary infractions changed between pre and post SEL. The results indicated no statistically significant difference in major or minor infractions following SEL implementation. Results showed W = 8.5, p = .469. major and W= 4, p=.715 for minor incidents. This suggests that major and minor behavior incidents remained relatively stable across grade levels during the study period. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether unexcused absenteeism changed following implementation of the SEL framework. Results showed that unexcused absences increased significantly from pre-SEL (M = 63.43, SD = 27.88) to post-SEL (M = 118.00, SD = 52.09), $t(6) = 3.49$, $p = .013$. The effect size was large (Cohen's $d = 1.32$), indicating a increase in absenteeism across grade levels during the study period. The pre- and post-survey results were calculated by the sum of the Likert scale questions for school climate. Results showed that school climate ratings increased slightly from pre-SEL (M = 53.67, SD = 12.51) to post-SEL (M = 55.17, SD = 12.81); however, this difference was not statistically significant, $t(11) = 0.60$, $p =$

.563. The effect size for this change was small, Cohen's $d = 0.17$, suggesting that the SEL framework did not produce a large shift in teachers' perceptions of school climate.

Discussions

This study evaluated the impact of implementing a SEL framework on student outcomes in a Title I school. In this research, major and minor disciplinary infractions did not show statistical significance following the implementation of the SEL framework. This can be shown through research suggesting that behavioral improvements often are attempted with sustained and constant SEL implementation and consistent staff practices (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones & Kahn, 2017; CASEL, 2020) Major infractions tend to occur infrequently and are often concentrated among a small number of students with intensive behavioral needs, making short-term changes difficult to detect. Minor infractions, while more common, are highly sensitive to classroom management, teacher stress, and schoolwide consistency, which change throughout the school year. Additionally, the small sample size and the presence of zero-inflated data reduced the sensitivity of statistical analyses. Together, these findings suggest that SEL may influence underlying skills and relationships before producing observable changes in discipline trends, and that longer-term implementation may be necessary to see meaningful behavioral improvements.

The significant increase in unexcused absenteeism found in this study must be interpreted within the broader social, political, and educational context affecting families in North Carolina and across the United States. National data show that chronic absenteeism has risen sharply since the COVID-19 pandemic, with approximately 28–31% of U.S. students classified as chronically absent in recent years. At the same time, schools nationwide continue to face severe teacher shortages, with more than 400,000 positions either unfilled or staffed by under-qualified educators (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023; García & Weiss, 2022). These shortages disproportionately impact Title I schools, which often rely on a smaller, overextended workforce to provide consistent support, relationship-building, and attendance monitoring. In addition to these national pressures, families in certain North Carolina communities may also face heightened concerns related to immigration enforcement. Periods of increased Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity, including high publicized actions, can create fear among immigrant and mixed-status households, leading some caregivers to keep children home to avoid public exposure. Schools serving diverse, multilingual, and economically vulnerable

populations are particularly sensitive to these dynamics. As a result, the observed rise in absenteeism may reflect the intersection of national attendance trends, staffing instability, economic hardship, and community-level fear rather than any direct effect of SEL implementation. These findings highlight the need for SEL efforts to be paired with broader structural supports, family engagement strategies, and policies that strengthen trust and stability within school communities.

The lack of significant change in school climate scores following SEL implementation is not unexpected and aligns with research indicating that school climate is a multidimensional construct that evolves slowly over time. School climate is shaped by trust, relationships, communication patterns, educator workload, and the overall stability of the school environment factors that typically require sustained and consistent interventions to shift meaningfully. In this study, climate data were collected over a relatively short period and with a small sample of educators, which limits the ability to detect subtle changes. Educators also feared results would be shared with administration and did not feel like they could be completely honest even with the information being completely private. Additionally, the early stages of SEL implementation often focus on individual skill building and teacher self-awareness rather than immediate schoolwide transformation. Title I schools, where staff turnover, high student needs, and limited resources add difficulty to daily operations, the process of improving climate may require not only SEL training but also structural support, collaborative planning time, and stronger systems for staff communication. Therefore, the absence of significant change in climate scores may reflect the realities of early-phase implementation rather than the ineffectiveness of SEL practices. Longer-term, consistent, and well-supported SEL initiatives may be necessary to influence teachers' perceptions of climate at the schoolwide level.

Public Health Implications

SEL aligns closely with public health goals as it can strengthen the emotional well-being, coping skills, and relational health of both students and educators. SEL can be on a population level prevention strategy capable of improving mental health outcomes, reducing behavioral risks, and fostering healthier, more resilient school communities. SEL directly contributes to this climate by giving teachers and students the emotional regulation, communication, and problem-solving skills necessary for learning, relationship-building, and overall well-being.

In Title I schools, the public health significance of SEL is even more pronounced. Educators working in high needs and stress environments experience emotional and mental turmoil. These conditions not only affect teacher health but can also influence classroom climate, student behavior, and academic engagement. Adult SEL training helps to provide educators with tools to manage stress, respond to student behavior with empathy and structure, and create emotionally safe classrooms. Strengthening teachers' SEL competencies can improve mental health, increase retention, and enhance their capacity to model self-regulation for students. In this way, adult SEL represents a preventive public health intervention targeting the workforce responsible for shaping youth development.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of considering other social determinants of health when assessing SEL outcomes. The significant increase in unexcused absenteeism, while not directly related to SEL implementation, shows community stressors that influence school engagement. Chronic absenteeism has emerged as a nationwide public health concern, rising dramatically since the COVID-19 pandemic. For many families, fear of immigration enforcement, economic instability, limited access to health care, and transportation challenges can all contribute to inconsistent school attendance. These factors reflect multiple social determinants of health that also affect students and teachers' everyday activity. SEL alone cannot eliminate these barriers, but it can help build trust, connection, and emotional safety, supporting family engagement and mitigating some of the anxieties that may keep students home.

Teacher shortages also represent a public health concern affecting schools across the country, including Title I settings. Staff instability reduces the continuity of relationships between educators and students—relationships that are foundational to SEL and school engagement. When classrooms lack consistent adults or rely heavily on substitutes, students experience disruptions in routine, support, and emotional connection. These disruptions weaken the protective factors SEL could attempt to build. The shortage of mental health personnel, social workers, and counselors further limits a school's ability to respond to high socio-emotional needs. From a public health perspective, addressing these shortages is important for ensuring that SEL and other prevention efforts can be fully implemented and successful.

Integrating SEL with broader public health strategies can help schools respond more effectively to these systemic challenges. When SEL is paired with structural supports that address these

social determinants of health, schools are better positioned to promote equitable outcomes. Long-term SEL implementation can build protective factors that extend beyond the classroom into students' homes and communities. SEL contributes to improved emotional regulation, healthier relationships, stronger conflict-resolution skills, and greater academic engagement—all of which are key predictors of lifelong health outcomes.

By strengthening adult SEL in Title I schools, districts can indirectly influence community wellness by improving the relationships and environments that shape children's development. Although the study found few changes in the four weeks, these outcomes show the need for long term, well supported SEL efforts. SEL is not a quick intervention; it requires constant commitment and consistent implementation to shift school culture and student outcomes. The early-stage qualitative gains reported by teachers, such as improved emotional awareness and increased use of co-regulation strategies, indicate that SEL is building foundational skills that may lead to larger population-level public health benefits over time.

Overall, the public health implications of this study suggest that adult SEL is important but has not been fully implemented to support Title I schools. SEL must be connected with supports. These supports could include community, political, and structural resources to address the full range of stressors that affect students and families in Title I schools. With continued investment, collaboration, and prioritization of educator well-being, SEL can contribute to healthier, more equitable, and more resilient school communities. SEL and public health can improve individual well-being and community health outcomes. By addressing the emotional needs of teachers and students, SEL can create a more positive and supportive school environment that encourages resilience, academic success, and long-term well-being (Jones et al., 2017). Schools implementing SEL programs report improved teacher retention, enhanced student engagement, and reduced behavioral incidents, contributing to healthier communities (Jones et al., 2017).

Limitations

This study does have some limitations. The small sample size of 12 participants makes it difficult to draw strong conclusions. Second, the behavioral and attendance data used in this study were taken from the school’s existing reporting system, which can vary in accuracy depending on how different staff members record incidents, classify behaviors, and document absences.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations can be made to strengthen the implementation and impact of SEL within a Title I school settings. First, the school should focus on improving the fidelity and consistency of SEL practices across classrooms. Although some educators completed the SEL training modules, helping teachers to establish SEL routines, shared instructional language, and protected time for SEL instruction may help create a more effective schoolwide community. Ongoing professional development is also recommended. SEL requires continuous practice, reflection, and coaching in order for educators to internalize and apply strategies consistently. Providing follow-up training, peer collaboration opportunities, and regular modeling or observation cycles may enhance the long-term impact of adult SEL training. Finally, the school should also consider the impact of ongoing teacher shortages, which may limit consistency in classroom climate, relationship-building, and instructional routines. Additionally, improving overall school climate may require longer-term efforts, such as staff wellness initiatives, collaborative planning time, and transparent communication from leadership.

Conclusion

SEL remains a powerful framework for addressing the mental health needs of both students and educators. By encouraging open dialogue about emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills, SEL has the capacity to strengthen classroom environments, reduce teacher burnout, and promote positive academic and behavioral outcomes. When adopted as a schoolwide initiative with professional development and supported by policy, SEL can help cultivate a more connected, supportive, and resilient educational community. However, the findings of this study indicate that SEL implementation does not always produce immediate, measurable improvements in behavioral data or perceptions of school climate. In this case, major and minor infractions and school climate scores did not show statistically significant changes following the training. These results suggest that early phases of SEL implementation may influence educators' self-regulation, reflective practices, and relational awareness before those shifts are visible. Future research should examine the multi-year effects of adult SEL training, incorporate qualitative perspectives from educators and families, and explore how SEL interacts with community contexts and systemic barriers. With a collaborative approach to school

wellness, SEL holds the potential to enhance educator well-being and foster student success, particularly within Title I school environments.

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Appendices

Appendix A- Informed Consent

Appendix B – MPH Competencies

Appendix C- Principal Consent

Appendix D- Pre-Survey

Appendix E- CASEL Framework

- Introduction to Adult SEL- Overview of Slides
- Self-Awareness – Recognizing emotions and stress management.
- Self-Management – Coping strategies and resilience-building.
- Social Awareness – Enhancing empathy and perspective-taking.
- Relationship Skills – Conflict resolution and communication techniques.
- Responsible Decision-Making – Ethical reasoning and goal setting

Appendix F- Mini Flyers

HODGE ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Calling All Teachers!

We need your help with a impactful SEL research study!

🧠 **WHAT YOU'LL DO:**

✓ **TAKE A PRE AND POST SURVEY**

✓ **COMPLETE SELF PACED MODULES PERTAINING TO THE FIVE TIERS OF SEL**

✓ **SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE STUDENT WELL-BEING**

💡 **WHY PARTICIPATE?**

✓ **ENHANCE STUDENT EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING**

✓ **SUPPORT IMPORTANT SEL RESEARCH**

✓ **MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN EDUCATION!**

⏳ **TIME COMMITMENT: 4- 10 HOURS (SELF PACED MODULES)**

🔗 **SIGN UP TODAY! SCAN THE QR CODE AND TAKE THE PRE SURVEY**

📩 Questions? Contact Tenesha M. McDuffie, CHES at tmcduffie@wcpss.net or (919) 374-0582

You will be entered into a raffle to win a $100, $75, $50, $25, $5 gift card once the final survey is completed!

Appendix G- Post Survey