TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES IN TEACHING
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILLS: A CASE STUDY

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This study investigated the beliefs of teachers at a particular elementary campus in North Texas during its first year of implementation of a social emotional curriculum regarding teaching social emotional skills and the influence of those beliefs on their classroom practices. The study drew from the works of Dewey and Bandura in the development of a framework for teacher decision making.

A case study design incorporating multiple cases within the case study utilized a mixed-methods approach for data collection and analysis. Ten teachers volunteered and participated in the quantitative data collection, and four of those ten participated in the qualitative data collection through interviews and classroom observations. Data collection methods also included a demographic survey, a questionnaire on teacher beliefs about social emotional learning, and a self-ranking scale of practices related to teaching social emotional skills.

Results indicated that although all participants believed social emotional skills instruction was part of their duties as teachers, their practices in teaching social emotional skills varied. Additionally, there was a mismatch between participants’ self-identified practices and the practices that were observed during the study. Administrative support for program implementation was high, but did not necessarily translate to effective practices during the first year of implementation of a particular program. While not significant in this study, variation in teacher characteristics may be important.
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First, I thank God for the vision, strength, and wisdom to pursue and complete this degree. It is by His grace that I am able to accomplish all things.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research supports the teaching of social emotional skills to enhance student success in the general curriculum (CASEL, 2003a; Elias & Weissberg, 2000; Kress, Norris, Schoenholz, Elias, & Seigle, 2004; TXCEDS, 2010). Social emotional skills are considered as those skills that are employed as people regulate their own affect, relate to other people, and make decisions that will lead to positive outcomes. Results of a meta-analytic study of 213 school-based, universal social and emotional learning programs involving 270,034 students in kindergarten through high school indicated that social emotional learning programs were associated with significant positive effects on students’ social emotional skills; improved attitudes about themselves, school, and others; decreased problem behaviors; and improved academic performance on achievement tests (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

There is a shift in focus on what students should be taught in schools. In 2001, the National Conference of State Legislators called for a change in schools, emphasizing the importance of including social-emotional skills instruction with academic instruction (CASEL, 2003). In Texas, a group of school superintendents who had grown dissatisfied with the accountability system collaborated to put forth a document outlining a new vision for education. In the visioning document, reference is continually made to the “whole child,” and emphasis is placed on ensuring that all facets of learning (including social emotional skill learning) are addressed (Texas Association of School Administrators, 2008). The Texas Collaborative for Emotional Development in Schools (TXCEDS) was initiated in the 2006-2007 school year as a statewide project of the Texas Education Agency’s division of IDEA Coordination to develop a guiding policy to promote the mental health and well-being of Texas public school students. Its
vision statement reads, “All children will learn, grow, and develop into academically, physically, socially, and emotionally competent individuals” (Texas Education Agency, 2008). Thus, on the national scene and at the state level, there is increasing interest in social emotional learning for students.

Research suggests that teacher beliefs tend to predict their classroom processes, behavior, and instructional strategies (Clements, 1980; Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Sadik, Sendurur, & Sendurur, 2012). Because of this, teacher beliefs and attitudes toward incorporating social skills instruction into the curriculum may play an important role in the success of any social emotional learning program or initiative. Teachers are the frontline professionals charged with providing students with instruction on the curriculum standards set by their states and adopted by their districts and campuses. Despite this, almost no research has been done investigating teachers’ beliefs about their responsibility for teaching social and emotional skills, thereby creating a gap in the literature.

Theoretical Rationale for the Study

Social-cognitive learning theory was formulated by Albert Bandura (Schunk, 2012). According to Puckett and Black (2005, p. 198), this theory is an outgrowth of the behaviorist philosophy, and it “emphasizes the role of imitation in cognitive development.” Social cognitive principles derived from Bandura’s theory have been applied to the learning of cognitive skills, social skills, motor skills, and self-regulation skills (Schunk, 2012).

Social-cognitive learning theory stresses the idea that learning occurs in a social environment through the observation of others (Schunk, 2012). Through observations, “people acquire knowledge, rules, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes” (pg. 118). Through observations of social models, people also learn whether certain behaviors are useful and
appropriate to different situations and what consequences are likely. Thus, people behave in

certain ways based on their beliefs about their own capabilities and the expected consequences of

their actions.

According to Bandura (2006), social-cognitive theory adopts an agentic perspective
toward human learning. He says that an agent intentionally influences his/her functioning and
life circumstances. Bandura outlines four core properties of human agency. They are:
intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. Intentionality is the
formation of intentions that include plans of action and strategies to realize them (Bandura,
2006). Forethought involves the visualization of a future, goals, and anticipated outcomes so as
to guide and motivate efforts. Self-reactiveness refers to the ability of an agent to construct an
appropriate course of action, motivate him/herself, and regulate the execution of the decided
upon action. Self-reflectiveness refers to the examination of one’s own functioning. Through
self-reflectiveness or functional self-awareness, agents “reflect on their personal efficacy, the
soundness of their thoughts and actions, and the meaning of their pursuits, and they make
corrective adjustments if necessary” (p. 165). In short, the agentic perspective of social cognitive
theory suggests that people make choices, plan, act, and evaluate their behavior toward an end.

Dewey states in his Experience and Education (1938) that the educator is responsible for
knowledge of subject-matter that will enable activities to be selected which lend themselves to
social organization. He describes social organization as an organization in which all individuals
have an opportunity to contribute something. Dewey was a firm believer that students’
experiences in school were more important and significant than content knowledge or subject
matter, and he emphasized the role of the teacher in creating experiences that nurtured the
student’s creativity, sense of self, and learning. He stated that growth can be either positive or
negative, in that students can grow in good habits, or they can grow in bad habits. Again, he said that it was the educator’s chief job to create and guide experiences that resulted in positive learning for students.

Dewey’s view was that education must first address the psychological needs of the child as an individual, and secondly address the sociological needs of the child as a member of society. He contended that to properly prepare a child for an unknown future, the child had to be educated to have “command of himself” (Flinders & Thornton, 2009, p. 35). Dewey proposed that the school is a social institution, not a preparatory lab, and suggested that all activities related to the school should be representations of real life and relevant to students’ everyday life experiences (Flinders & Thornton, 2009). Dewey also believed that education had to stem from a child’s social life experiences and had to be relevant to the child’s life, rather than introduced as distinct units of study to be memorized, and he suggested that the natural law of learning for children was based first in action, then in reflection.

These beliefs create the framework for this research study. That is, it is the teacher’s chief duty to ensure that activities that occur in the classroom not only increase student knowledge of subject matter and content area, but also increase student efficacy, sense of self, and ability to manage emotions and social situations. Teachers as agents, thus, should reflect on their behavior, choices, and beliefs to create an environment where students gain mastery of subject matter, content area, emotional insight, emotional regulation, social insight, and social competence.

Background for the Study

Research on social-emotional skills has addressed factors that influence or hinder teacher implementation of social-skills curricula (Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobson, 2009), the efficacy of such curricula (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Durlak,
Dymnicki, Taylor, Weissberg, & Schellinger, 2011; Fox & Lentini, 2006), and teachers’ perceptions of the benefits of social-emotional skills on student behavior and achievement (Poulou, 2005). Ransford et al. (2009) studied teacher implementation of the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) social emotional curriculum. Through the use of various rating scales, they found that teacher efficacy levels, perceived administrative support, and prior training were related to quality of implementation of the social emotional curriculum. Fox and Lentini (2006) offered reasons why children engage in challenging behaviors and provided strategies for teaching, maintaining, and generalizing social emotional skills. Meta-analytic studies of a number of social-emotional curricula demonstrated that explicit teaching of social emotional skills is correlated to increased student achievement, increased student social-emotional competence, and decreased problem behaviors (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Weissberg, & Schellinger, 2011). Poulou’s survey of 427 elementary school teachers showed that the teachers surveyed identified emotional recognition, emotional expression, assessment of emotional intensity, and manipulation of emotions as the most important social skills that students needed in order to be successful (Poulou, 2005). Thus, there is some evidence in the literature relating to teachers’ perceptions of the importance of social emotional skills, the effect of social emotional skill instruction on student performance, and factors that impact implementation of a social skills curriculum.

Marlow, Bloss, and Bloss (2000) conducted a survey of 500 school counselors and elementary and middle school teachers and found that respondents reported collaborating to teach specific social emotional areas of problem solving, decision making, understanding others’ perspectives, developing self-awareness and positive attitudes toward life, using effective verbal communication and understanding the perspectives of others. However, there is a lack of
research on teachers’ perceptions of who is primarily responsible for teaching social-emotional skills, be it parents, counselors, teachers themselves or other personnel.

Great Expectations (GE) is a professional development program that follows a model proposed in 1991 by Charlie Hollar, a retired insurance executive. The GE program aims to provide teachers and administrators with the skills needed to create an educational atmosphere filled with excitement and harmony so as to inspire students to pursue academic excellence (Great Expectations, n.d.). Following its tenets purportedly creates an environment that promotes improved student self-esteem, discipline, and attendance. According to Denison (2006), the Great Expectations program supports an eclectic approach to teaching, drawing from many different learning theories and educational research. The “main focus is to increase students’ knowledge, self-esteem, and social competence” (p. 4). Developed in Oklahoma, the program is currently being heavily marketed in North Texas and has been adopted by some schools in the North Texas region.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my dissertation was to investigate the perceptions that teachers in a specific elementary school in a large suburban school district in Texas held regarding their responsibilities related to teaching social-emotional competencies, the influence those perceptions had on their teaching practices as they related to the implementation of a specific social skills curriculum, Great Expectations, and other factors that those teachers identified as having an impact on their ability to implement a social skills curriculum. My interest in this topic was influenced by my work as a licensed specialist in school psychology (LSSP) in a large suburban school district in North Texas. As an LSSP, I conduct psychological evaluations to determine whether a disability exists that consequently leads a student to need special education
services, typically for autism, emotional disturbance, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Additionally, in my role, I provide mental health counseling to students, training on disabilities and effective interventions to parents of students with disabilities, and consultation with teachers and other school staff about students with behavior disorders. I have found that my duties have increasingly been to develop interventions for teachers to implement in their classrooms to help students manage their emotions, increase pro-social behavior, and decrease problem behaviors. I have encountered some resistance from teachers when it concerns teaching basic social skills to individual students. This resistance has led me to question whether teachers have certain beliefs about social emotional skills, the instruction of those skills, and the place for the instruction of those skills in schools.

Research Questions

The immediate goal of this study was to explore whether and how teacher beliefs may influence implementation of a school-wide program and to determine what specific recommendations could be made to ensure that the social-emotional curriculum was being fully implemented. To that end, the following research questions were investigated:

Research Question 1

What are the demographic characteristics of the teachers at the case study school and how do they compare to those of the subgroup of teacher participants at that school?

Research Question 2

How do the social emotional learning practices of the teachers at the case study school compare to those of the subgroup of teacher participants at that school?

Research Question 3

What relationships may exist between the demographic characteristics of teachers and
their approaches to teaching social emotional skills?

*Research Question 4*

What is the current status of (a) teachers’ beliefs about social emotional learning and (b) teaching practices related to social emotional learning with respect to teachers in the subsample?

*Research Question 5*

What is the relationship, if any, between teachers’ beliefs about social emotional learning and their teaching practices related to social emotional learning with respect to teachers in the subsample?

Although the study was limited to one school and to a subgroup of teachers within that school, this research has the potential to contribute to consideration of the larger questions of the role that teacher beliefs have in the implementation of school-wide social emotional learning programs.

**Assumptions**

The main assumption that underlies this research study is that the Great Expectations program can be considered a social emotional curriculum as defined by the literature on social emotional learning programs. This assumption stems from the fact that GE does not purport to be a social emotional curriculum in the strict sense. Its mission statement is “to motivate, inspire, and challenge individuals to achieve excellence in learning and living” (Great Expectations, n.d.). In the next chapter, I discuss the research on social emotional learning programs, list the criteria for a quality social emotional curriculum, and discuss the Great Expectations program in detail. Justification for considering the Great Expectations program a social emotional curriculum is also provided in the next chapter. Although the Great Expectations program is not marketed as a social emotional curriculum, it was selected for use in this study due to the difficulty experienced
by the researcher in locating a campus implementing a school wide social emotional program in
the immediate geographic region. Although a few campuses in school districts in the local
geographic region were identified by the researcher as implementing other social emotional
curricula or Great Expectations for a number of years, access to those sites was not granted to the
researcher due to lack of response from the campus administrators.

Research Methods

This study used a case study framework with multiple case studies within the overarching
case study. Within the case study, a mixed methods approach was utilized to answer the research
questions. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) define mixed method research as “the class of
research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research
techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study” (p. 17). They state
that mixed methods stems from the pragmatist philosophy as it legitimates the use of multiple
approaches in answering research questions, rather than restricting the researchers’ choices. If
the research questions call for it, mixed methods may offer “the best chance to obtain useful
answers” (p. 18). The participants for this study were teachers from a specific elementary
campus within a large suburban school district in the North Texas area. This campus had begun
implementing the Great Expectations program in the 2013-2014 school year.

Data collection methods used to answer the research questions were mainly descriptive
and correlational. Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were conducted to
gather rich descriptions of subgroup participants’ beliefs, perceptions, and practices. A
demographic survey, self-ranking form, and rating scale were used to gather quantitative data
from all participants. Descriptions of the individual case study participants were provided based
on inductive analysis of interview and classroom observation transcripts and tallies. Descriptive
data such as percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to provide descriptions of the characteristics and espoused beliefs of the whole group and subgroup, and comparisons were made between the groups. Multiple regression analyses and correlation coefficients were analyzed to determine the relationship among variables for both groups.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined as follows:

*Social emotional learning*

Social emotional learning is the teaching and/or learning of skills necessary for adequate social and emotional regulation including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal relationships, and responsible decision making. In literature and in this study, the following terms are used interchangeably but denote the same definition, social emotional learning, social-emotional learning, social and emotional learning, social emotional skills, and social emotional competencies.

*Teacher perception*

Teachers’ descriptions of their thoughts and opinions on their role in implementing curricula, or their espoused beliefs.

*Comfort*

Teachers’ comfort with teaching social emotional learning skills as one of the factors identified by the SEL rating scale (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012).

*Culture*

School or campus support for social emotional learning instruction as one of the factors identified by the SEL rating scale (Brackett at al., 2012).
Commitment

Teachers’ desire to develop social emotional skills in their students as one of the factors identified by the SEL rating scale (Brackett at al., 2012).

Whole group

The total group of participants who volunteered to participate in the study and completed the Demographic Survey, Teacher Self-Ranking of Social Emotional Practices form, and Social Emotional and Learning (SEL) Scale for teachers. This also includes the participants who participated in the interviews and observations.

Opt-out group

The group of participants who completed the Demographic Survey, Teacher Self-Ranking of Social Emotional Practices form, and Social Emotional and Learning (SEL) Scale for teachers, but did not volunteer or were not selected to participate in the interviews and observations.

Subgroup

The group of participants who completed the Demographic Survey, Teacher Self-Ranking of Social Emotional Practices form, and Social Emotional and Learning (SEL) Scale for teachers, and volunteered to participate in the interviews and observations.

Training preparation

This is a variable category created to measure the amount of training in social emotional skills teachers completed through their teacher preparation programs.

Professional development

This is a variable category created to measure the amount of training in social emotional skills in-service teachers completed through continuing education or professional development
training workshops.

Limitations

Although this study was undertaken to add to the literature relating to social emotional instruction and teachers’ contribution to said instruction, there are certain limitations that apply. First, as this study was a case study examining the experiences of teachers from only one elementary campus in a specific school district in the North Texas area, it has limited generalizability. As such, demographic variables such as teacher experience, teacher educational background, student population, etc. may not translate readily to other populations for generalization. Also, the responses of these elementary teachers may not be indicative of those that would be made by middle or secondary teachers.

Second, the type of social-emotional curriculum being utilized in this study may limit generalization. Although Great Expectations is a social emotional curriculum that has been evaluated in some research, the specifics of the program may make difficult comparison of the results from this study to results of a similar study using a different social emotional curriculum.

Third, due to the ambiguous nature of some of the wording on the teacher self-ranking tool, there is a possibility of a mismatch in the reporting and observation of certain practices by subgroup participants. Terms were not defined for participants, nor was there an attempt to assure common understanding of the terms explored. This may have contributed to the disparity between rankings and observation.

Finally, classroom observations were conducted only once by one observer for each participant. Multiple observations by multiple observers might have yielded richer data and more robust descriptions of participants’ practices with more opportunity, perhaps, for triangulation of the data.
Delimitations

Although the number of participants was relatively small, which limits generalizability, the case study framework allows for a deeper examination of a phenomenon, as it occurs within a real-life context (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Thus, in using a case study framework, the issue of generalizability is minimal in importance and pales in comparison to the richness of descriptions that can be gained through an in-depth look at the lived experiences of members of the case study.

Significance of the Study

Through this study, I aim to add to the knowledge about the quality of implementation of social emotional curricula. Prior research has looked at factors associated with implementation quality including teacher competence due to training received, perception of administrative support, teacher burnout, and coaching support. However, ownership of the responsibility to teach social emotional skills, as measured by teachers’ beliefs about their role in teaching those skills has not been investigated in the literature. This case study has the potential to add to the literature regarding social emotional program implementation at the school level as it not only adds to the literature regarding teacher beliefs about teaching social emotional skills, but also provides descriptions of teachers’ practices in the first year of implementation of a social emotional program.

Summary

In sum, although research supports the inclusion of social emotional learning curriculum in schools, little research on teachers’ beliefs about their role in implementing the curricula has been done. This current research study draws from the work of Bandura and Dewey in the development of a framework for teacher decision making. This study investigated teachers’
perceptions of their role in implementing a social emotional curriculum by interviewing teachers at an elementary school in a large suburban school district in the North Texas area and by analyzing data gathered from classroom observations, a teacher beliefs scale, and demographic surveys. The methods selected stemmed from the theoretical framework. The interview questions and surveys selected supported Bandura’s social-cognitive theory that states that the agentic perspective includes self-reflectiveness. Observations were selected for use due to Dewey’s suggestion that students’ school experiences were more important than content or subject knowledge. Thus, observation of the teachers’ practices in the learning environment stemmed from the theoretical framework.

This study furthers knowledge in the field related to social emotional curricula implementation by examining the effect that teacher beliefs have on program implementation and the extent to which a social emotional program is implemented in the first year of implementation. Prior research addresses other factors related to program implementation such as burnout, administrative support, and teacher efficacy, but there is no research on teachers’ beliefs about their responsibility to teach social emotional skills.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the relevant research related to social emotional learning, teacher beliefs regarding social emotional learning, variables associated with teacher beliefs, the Great Expectations program, and research related to the Great Expectations program. It begins with a definition of social emotional skills and their importance, followed by a discussion of the literature surrounding teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about teaching social emotional skills. Then it details research on variables that influence teachers’ beliefs. Next it reviews literature on the relationship between teacher beliefs and program implementation. Finally, it illuminates the Great Expectations program, the relevant practices that are related to social emotional learning, the research that has been conducted on the Great Expectations program, and concludes in discussion of the Great Expectations program as a social emotional learning curriculum.

Social Emotional Skills: Introduction and Definition

Daniel Goleman, in his book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, defines emotional intelligence as “abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope” (Goleman, 1995, p. 34). He posits that when people have well-developed emotional skills, they are more likely to be effective and content, and to master the habits of mind that allow them to be productive. Likewise, those who are unable to exert control over their emotional lives are reduced to fighting inner battles that impede their ability to focus on work and think clearly.

The Texas Collaborative for Emotional Development in Schools (TXCEDS, 2010) developed a social/emotional wellness model that focuses on the whole child and promotes
academic, behavioral, emotional, and social success for all students and staff. To this end, the social/emotional wellness model proposes that social and emotional learning must happen for all students.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a collaborative organization of researchers and educators, founded in 1994 by Daniel Goleman and philanthropist/educator Eileen Rockefeller Growald to promote the practice and science of school based social emotional learning for children (CASEL, 2003a). In its first years, CASEL focused on establishing a body of rigorous scientific research evidencing the benefits of social emotional learning on students’ academic success, peer and family relationships, and general well-being, and in later years it expanded its focus to provide practical information about various social emotional learning programs and their implementation. CASEL defines social and emotional learning as “the process of developing the ability to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, and handle challenging situations effectively” (CASEL, 2003a, p. 1). Zins and Elias (2006) are members of CASEL and they define social and emotional learning as “the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others” (p. 234). Social and emotional learning is defined by TXCEDS, as the process by which people develop core skills, knowledge, and values that will provide the necessary foundation for success in school and life. Those skills, knowledge, and values that are taught by the social/emotional wellness model include awareness of self and others, responsible decision making, relationship management skills, empathy and social awareness, self-management, and self-motivation (TXCEDS, 2010). These are almost identical to the five domains cited by Goleman (1995) of knowing one’s emotions, managing emotions, motivating
oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships. CASEL identified eight essential social and emotional skills which include communicating effectively, ability to work cooperatively with others, emotional self-control and appropriate expression, empathy and perspective taking, optimism/humor/self-awareness, ability to plan and set goals, problem solving and non-violent conflict resolution, and bringing a reflective and learning-to-learn approach to all domains of life (Elias and Weissberg, 2000). TXCEDS indicates that social and emotional learning is important for students as it helps them connect with teachers and the school, increases engagement in learning, increases motivation to learn, improves behavior, decreases anxiety related to the school routines, improves performance on tests of achievement, and results in better grades (TXCEDS, 2010). To this end, TXCEDS recommends explicit instruction in specific social and emotional skills and creating a learning environment that is safe for all students.

Social and emotional learning is defined as “the process of acquiring the skills to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations effectively” (Durlak & Weissberg, 2011). Students who demonstrate deficits in these skills typically have difficulty meeting the demands of the school environment (Whitted, 2011). When students receive direct instruction on these skills, have the opportunity to practice the skills within a safe environment, and are reinforced for using the skills, they typically experience improved social relationships with peers and adults, decreased disciplinary placements, and gains in academic subjects (Bradshaw, Debnam, Koth, & Leaf, 2009; CASEL, 2003; Durlak & Weissberg, 2011; Horner, Sugai, Smolkowski, Eber, Todd, Nakasota, & Esperanza, 2009; Whitted, 2011).
According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2003), effective social and emotional learning programs begin at an early age and continue through high school and focus on developing five core social and emotional competencies in students: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Whitted (2011) writes that social skills curricula aim to improve students’ social and emotional competence by teaching them: management of feelings, empathy skills, problem-solving skills, and self-control. Well-developed social and emotional curricula utilize structured approaches to teaching social and emotional skills. These approaches include first identifying the skill to be taught and creating/discussing the rationale for its use in students’ lives. Then, the components and integration of the skill are taught and modeled. Next students are provided with opportunities to practice the skill and are given feedback on their use of the skill. Finally, prompts and cues that can help students use the skills in other situations are established (Elias & Weissberg, 2000; Fox & Lentini, 2006). Zins and Elias (2006) report that effective social emotional learning instruction must be systematic, integrated with academic curriculum, provided over multiple years, and supported by school-family-community partnerships.

Meta-analytic studies of school-based universal social and emotional learning programs and after school social skills programs have indicated the effectiveness of such programs (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Specifically, based on 213 school-based social and emotional learning programs included in the meta-analysis, data indicated that they were associated with significant increases in students’ self-perceptions, pro-social behaviors, school grades, and achievement tests. Many of these same programs are included in CASEL’s handbook, and 22 of them meet CASEL’s
“select” rating. To receive the designation of “Select SEL” program by CASEL the programs must meet three criteria: Outstanding instruction covering the five essential social and emotional competence areas; evidence of effectiveness as documented by at least one rigorous and well-designed evaluation study; and outstanding professional development that provides support beyond the initial teacher training and includes on-site observation and coaching (CASEL, 2003).

Social-emotional competencies not only strengthen students’ abilities to understand, express, and manage the social and emotional aspects of life, but many are subsumed within academic standards in subjects such as social studies, language arts, health, etc. In a study conducted by Kress, Norris, Schoenholz, Elias, and Seigle (2004), educators were able to draw parallels and identify overlap between social-emotional learning goals and academic and curriculum standards. For example, in the history and social science domain of the Massachusetts State PreK-4 Curriculum Framework, one general standard to be taught states, “Students will retell stories that illustrate honesty, courage, friendship, respect, responsibility and the wise or judicious exercise of authority and explain how the characters in the stories show these qualities” (Kress et al., 2004, p. 83). This standard focuses not only on comprehension skills, oral expression skills, and recall, but also includes emotional recognition/awareness and perspective taking. A similar standard in the comprehensive health domain of the PreK-5 Curriculum Framework states that students will acquire knowledge about physical health and emotions, how to manage emotions, the development of personality and character, social awareness, and will also learn the necessary skills to promote self-acceptance, make responsible decisions, adequately cope with stress, and suicide prevention (Kress et al., 2004).
Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes toward Teaching Social Emotional Skills

Research conducted by Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, and Merrell (2009) indicated that teachers strongly believed that social-emotional learning was important for students to succeed in school and life endeavors. The teachers surveyed also agreed with the notion that having social-emotional learning skills enhanced student academic outcomes. However, despite the fact that almost all teachers surveyed expressed the opinion that social-emotional learning was important for students, only a little over half of those surveyed admitted to implementing some sort of social-emotional program in their classrooms.

Along those lines, in a study conducted by Maria Poulou (2005), teachers were surveyed so as to determine what social-emotional skills they thought that students needed to possess in order to be successful and prevent the occurrence of emotional and behavioral difficulties. The skills identified by the teachers that students needed to have the most were: “recognize and identify emotions,” “expression of emotions,” “assessment of emotional intensity,” “manipulations of emotions,” “impatience control,” “impulsivity control,” “anxiety reduction,” and “acknowledgement of differences between emotions and actions.” Interestingly, the skills listed as the least important were “non-verbal skills” (including eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, etc.) and “verbal skills” (including careful listening, resisting negative influences, helping others, etc.). For these teachers, skills that were classified as “emotional skills” (such as recognizing emotions, expressing emotions, and assessing emotional intensity) were categorized as more important than those classified as social skills (such as making eye contact, voice tone, facial expressions, helping others, and participating in peer groups) for students to learn in order to be successful.
Although a number of studies have indicated that teachers believe social emotional skills are important for student success (Buchanan et al., 2009; Poulou, 2005; Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), the methods by which teachers address social emotional skills deficits vary. Some teachers implement specific social emotional training programs such as the RULER approach, Incredible Years Dina Dinosaur Classroom Curriculum, and Second Step (Brackett et al., 2012; Baker-Henningham & Walker, 2009; Saeki et al., 2011), while others utilize more indirect methods such as positive and negative responses to individual behavior, positive and negative responses to group behavior, preventive strategies such as classroom rules and structure, and school-wide strategies such as rewards (Tillery, Varjas, Meyers, & Collins, 2010).

The RULER approach uses a skill-based system to foster social, emotional, and academic competence in children by integrating formal lessons and opportunities to practice specific skills in regular classroom instruction (Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, & Salovey, 2012). Five key emotional literacy skills are taught: recognizing emotions in oneself and others; understanding the causes and consequences of emotions; labeling the full range of emotions using a rich vocabulary; expressing emotions appropriately in various contexts; and regulating emotions effectively so as to achieve goals and foster healthy relationships (Brackett et al., 2012; Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, & Salovey, 2012). A pre-and post-test quasi-experimental design was used to examine the impact of the RULER approach after 30 weeks of implementation. Fifteen fifth and sixth grade classrooms across three schools in the northwest were randomly assigned to intervention or control groups. Eight classrooms used the RULER approach while seven did not. Results indicated a significant increase in adaptive skills and higher grades in English/language arts for
students in the intervention classrooms as compared to the control group (Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, & Salovey, 2012).

The Incredible Years Dina Dinosaur Classroom curriculum is a social and emotional curriculum that consists of seven units to be delivered over a school year (Baker-Henningham & Walker, 2009). The units cover the following topics: “(i) learning school rules; (ii) learning how to do your best in school; (iii) understanding and detecting feelings; (iv) problem-solving skills; (v) anger management; (vi) learning how to be friendly; and (vii) learning how to talk with friends (Baker-Henningham, Walker, Powell, & Meeks Gardner, 2009). A pilot study of the Incredible Years teacher training program and curriculum was conducted using five pre-schools in Jamaica. Three schools (15 classrooms) were assigned to the intervention while two schools (12 classrooms) were assigned to the control. The intervention teachers received training once a month for seven months, and starting from the third month, they implemented lessons from the curriculum. Results indicated that intervention teachers displayed 50% fewer negative behaviors and 4.5 times more positive behaviors than at baseline. They also provided students more opportunities to share and help each other, and displayed more warmth than those in the control group. Children in intervention classrooms exhibited more appropriate behavior, enthusiasm, and interest in class activities than their peers in the control group (Baker-Henningham et al., 2009).

Second Step is a social-emotional skills curriculum that focuses on teaching skills for learning, empathy, emotion control, problem solving skills, and bullying and substance abuse prevention (Frey, Nolen, Edstrom, & Hirschstein, 2005). An action research project was conducted in a Southern California suburban elementary school. The Second Step curriculum was implemented with 55 third grade students as a universal intervention, and specific lessons from the impulse control unit within the curriculum were taught to nine students identified as
needing more intense instruction (Saeki et al., 2011). Intervention effectiveness was measured using pre- and post-test scores on the Knowledge Assessment for Second Step (KASS)- a self-report measure designed to assess knowledge in social skills, and on the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)- a multi-rater assessment used to observe changes in attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs. Results indicated that most of the students (81%) in the universal intervention demonstrated increased scores on KASS. The authors reported that half of the students in the intense instruction group demonstrated gains on the KASS, while six of the nine demonstrated increased scores on the SSRS, but they neglected to report the pre- and post-test scores on the KASS or the effect size of the mean score change.

Tillery et al. (2010) conducted a survey of general education teachers to assess their perceptions of behavior and the management strategies that they employed. The teachers perceived student behavior to be either negative or positive, influenced by external factors such as setting and interactions with others, and falling within certain developmental stages. The teachers in the study perceived themselves as having the strongest influence on student behavior (within the classroom setting) and stated that the students’ behavior development was highly dependent on their interaction with the children. Teachers described negative behaviors as those that were antisocial/disruptive (aggression, defiance, noncompliance with rules), and positive behaviors as those that were pro-social and rule-compliant (kindness, sharing, respect). Developmental issues such as maturity were also cited as factors that affect behavior, although the teachers indicated that when students exhibited misbehaviors that were typical for their developmental level, it was not as concerning as atypical behaviors.

Behavior management strategies employed by the teachers in the Tillery et al. (2010) study fell into six categories: positive individual strategies, negative individual strategies,
positive group strategies, negative group strategies, preventive strategies, and school-wide strategies. Positive individual strategies focused on validating and responding to acceptable behavior exhibited by individual students and were typically comprised of praise and rewards such as stickers, candy, and privileges like free time. Negative individual strategies, conversely, focused on responding to unacceptable behavior exhibited by individual students and typically involved warnings, reprimands, and loss of privileges. Like the positive individual strategies, positive group strategies focused on responding to acceptable behaviors of groups of students. Students collectively worked toward planned group incentives (such as an ice-cream party or extra recess time at the end of the week) either in small groups or as the whole class. Likewise, negative group strategies were responses to negative behavior exhibited by more than one student. Typically, this involved warnings and loss of privileges. Preventive strategies included structuring the classroom environment so as to minimize the possibility for misbehavior, providing clear behavioral expectations, consistently and fairly enforcing classroom rules, avoiding known triggers for misbehavior, and providing a positive atmosphere. Finally, school-wide strategies included school rules and expectations, school rewards, and daily agendas.

Interestingly, none of the teachers cited specific social emotional skill instruction as a preventive or reactive strategy for individual students or the group.

Teacher Beliefs and Associated Variables

Teachers’ beliefs about teaching social-emotional skills are influenced by various variables such as the grade level of students they teach, administrative supports, their own social-emotional competence, student gender, and educational preparation. The following subsections discuss research related to these variables.
Teachers’ perceptions of their role in teaching social emotional skills are influenced by teacher emotional geography or “the spatial and experiential patterns of closeness and/or distance in human interactions and relationships that help create, configure and color the feelings and emotions” experienced (Hargreaves, 2000). Hargreaves (2000) conducted a study of over 53 teachers and found that teachers at the elementary level characterized their role as having physical and professional closeness with their students, which creates greater emotional intensity and is linked to emotional understanding which lends itself to social-emotional curriculum implementation. Teachers at the secondary level characterized their role as having greater physical and professional distance, which leads to teachers’ viewing emotions as intrusions in the classroom; thus, they are less likely than elementary teachers to implement a social-emotional curriculum. Elementary teachers reported feeling rewarded and validated in their work when students showed affection and regard toward them and demonstrated that they enjoyed learning. Due to the value placed on emotions and relationships, the classrooms of elementary teachers in the study were described as more emotionally intense. The elementary teachers tended to have more incidences of being angry at or frustrated with their students than their secondary counterparts. Secondary teachers, on the other hand, tended to view students’ emotions as interfering with learning and attempted to be aware of and responsive to students’ emotions. Although they reported being willing to make individual allowances and interventions for emotional disturbances, the teachers were unwilling to change their core classroom processes to be more responsive to all students’ emotional needs.

In contrast, research by Lasky (2005) indicated that secondary teachers reported having a dual responsibility as teachers. The first was to teach the curriculum and academic skills, while
the second was to teach the whole child. The teachers’ job satisfaction came from the feeling that they had “some kind of positive influence on students’ academic, social, and emotional development” (Lasky, 2005, p. 906). However, it is important to note that Lasky’s research consisted of only four participants and cannot be considered a representative sample of all secondary teachers.

Administrative Support

In other research, Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, and Jacobson (2009) found that teachers who perceived that their administrators did not provide them support for school-based curricula and those who considered themselves as experiencing burnout were least likely to implement with fidelity a social and emotional learning curriculum. Thus, teachers’ likelihood of implementing a social emotional learning curriculum is dependent not only on their perceptions of their role in implementation, but also on their perceptions of the supports necessary to implement the curriculum.

Teacher Social-Emotional Competence

Another factor that is related to teachers’ perceptions of their roles in teaching social-emotional skills is teachers’ own social and emotional competence. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) proposed a model of a pro-social classroom that emphasizes the importance of teachers’ own social and emotional competence and well-being in relation to their ability to develop and maintain supportive student-teacher relationships, implement with fidelity and integrity a social-emotional learning program, and provide consistent and appropriate classroom management. They conducted an extensive review of literature on topics including teacher social emotional competence, emotional stress, teacher burnout, teacher effects on student outcomes, effective social emotional learning program implementation, effective classroom management skills,
emotional intelligence training, mindfulness based interventions, and programs enhancing teachers’ commitment to teaching. This research highlighted the importance of teachers’ not only knowing how to teach social-emotional skills to students, but of teachers’ having those social-emotional competencies themselves.

*Student Gender*

Gender plays an important role in teacher attitude and behavior. Specifically, research has looked at the difference in teacher behavior towards boys and girls in relation to different subject areas such as science, reading, and physical education (Clark & Trafford, 1995; Hoffman, 2002; Ennis, 1999; Fisette, 2011; Allen, Cantor, Grady & Hill, 1997; Rodrick & Tracy, 2001). However, there is a paucity of research exploring teacher beliefs about teaching social emotional skills and how student gender affects it. McClure (1999) studied gender bias and made recommendations for language arts teachers to help minimize it, but this study looked mainly at how students are socialized differently through literature, not at how student sex/gender influenced teacher decisions to teach social emotional skills.

*Teacher Preparation*

It is also important to note that many institutions of teacher education do not provide future teachers with the necessary skills to teach social emotional competencies, which contributes to teachers’ perceptions of their responsibility in teaching social emotional skills. Marlow and Inman (2001) conducted a survey of approximately 68 colleges or universities, looking at the mission statements, admission policies and courses of the schools/colleges of education to determine whether there was an emphasis on social and emotional competencies. The results of the study indicated that over 60% of the institutions surveyed did not directly address social emotional competencies in either the mission statement or admission policy, and
fewer than half had courses that were explicitly dedicated to social-emotional competencies and learning.

The Relationship Between Teacher Beliefs and Program Implementation

Researchers have attempted to study whether teacher beliefs are associated with their classroom practices and implementation of a curriculum (Clements, 1980; Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Sadik, Sendurur, & Sendurur, 2012; Gay, 2010; Van Driel, Bulte, & Verloop, 2007). Clements (1980) conducted a study of 51 seventh and eighth grade teachers. Data collection methods included classroom observations and teacher questionnaires that covered details of instructional emphases, teacher concerns, teacher beliefs, behavior management and classroom organization. A canonical correlation analysis was used to answer the question as to how teacher beliefs and management effectiveness were related, and how strong the relationship was. Results indicated a statistically significant relationship between teacher beliefs and management effectiveness. Specifically, teachers who had high scores in role separation, integrative learning and low scores on social emotional concerns had related high academic on-task behavior, high residual achievement gain, and low ratings from students. Conversely, teachers who had high scores in social emotional concerns and low scores in role separation and integrative learning were more likely to have high student ratings but low academic on-task behavior and low residual achievement gains. In sum, teachers who believed an emphasis should be placed on academics demonstrated more task demanding activities while those who believed an emphasis should be placed on social emotional concerns demonstrated more relationship building activities. Clements concluded that there was a relationship between a composite of several beliefs and certain processes and suggested that a profile of teacher beliefs may be helpful in predicting teacher behavior and management effectiveness.
Van Driel and colleagues conducted an exploratory study of chemistry teachers in the Netherlands to explore the relationship between teachers’ general educational beliefs about teaching and learning, their domain specific beliefs about learning chemistry, and their implementation of an upper secondary chemistry curriculum (Van Driel, Bulte, & Verloop, 2007). Their study included 348 chemistry teachers. Data were collected using a questionnaire that was designed to measure the respondent’s view of the chemistry curriculum and to determine general beliefs about teaching and learning. A series of t-tests was performed to investigate whether there were differences in teachers’ scale scores with respect to their general characteristics. Then, an exploratory technique PRINCALS (similar to principal components analysis) was used to explore the possible relationships between and within the respondents’ domain specific and general educational beliefs.

Results indicated that there were no statistical differences in scores of teachers with different characteristics- years of experience, Ph.D. versus master’s degree, chemistry major versus chemical engineering major. PRINCALS was used to biplot the respondents’ scores, and they fell within four general clusters across two belief structures or orientations. One belief structure was chemtechsoc-learner, characterized by an emphasis on the importance of chemical knowledge for students’ daily lives, and had a learner centered focus with an aim of critical thinking, social skills, and teaching students to become responsible for their own learning. The other belief structure was fundchem-subject, characterized by an emphasis on the fundamentals of chemistry, concepts, and skills important for further education and careers in chemistry. This structure had a subject centered focus. Analysis of results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the cluster subgroups in relation to teacher characteristics or curriculum
implementation. The authors suggested a flexible curriculum that would allow the possibility for teachers to make choices according to their own preference.

Ertmer and colleagues used a multiple case study design to examine the technology practices of 12 teachers and to determine whether there existed similarities and differences among their practices and pedagogical beliefs (Ertmer et al., 2012). The participants selected had been identified as award winning technology teachers. They were selected specifically to answer the research questions due to their pre-established technology use and integration. Data collection was done through the use of interviews, document analyses of the teachers’ websites, and rating scales.

Analysis of data collected indicated that teachers’ beliefs aligned with their practices (Ertmer et al., 2012). All of the teachers reported having strong beliefs about the importance of technology use in the classroom, and also reported high levels of efficacy in regard to technology integration and instruction. When asked to identify barriers to technology integration and use, the participants listed external barriers such as lack of administrative support or lack of access to equipment as barriers for their students, but also reported finding ways to work around the barriers. When asked to identify barriers that students of other teachers in their schools experienced, the participants listed the other teachers’ beliefs and attitudes as the most impactful barrier to student technology use. The participants stated that other teachers were either intimidated by the technology, lacked the desire to integrate the technology, lacked the knowledge necessary to integrate the technology, or lacked the desire to learn how to integrate the technology. When asked to identify the biggest enablers of their technology use, five of the participants listed their own attitudes and beliefs, four listed their professional learning networks, while the other three listed administrative support and student motivation.
Great Expectations

The Great Expectations program (GE) is a professional development model that provides teachers and administrators with the skills needed to create an exciting and harmonious educational atmosphere so as to inspire students to pursue academic excellence (Great Expectations, n.d.). It started as the Great Expectations Foundation in 1991 with the mission to develop a teacher training model to be disseminated to teachers throughout the state of Oklahoma. Its founder was a retired insurance executive named Charlie Hollar. During its first six years, it provided free training to teachers during summer institutes, and then after its board of directors convinced the state legislature of the merits of the program, funding was appropriated for scholarships for educators to attend the training institutes. The program has been adopted by many schools and districts throughout Oklahoma over the years, and has grown from 366 schools in 141 school districts in 1998 to 410 schools in 151 school districts in 2010.

Training for adopting schools can take place either during GE’s summer training institute or on site during a four day training session. Campuses are provided with the methodology handbook and access to coaching consultants. Distance learning opportunities are available as well, and refresher courses or training on specific topics can be provided on request. Materials available for purchase include several training DVDs, posters, and music DVDs.

According to Biscoe and Harris (2005), GE’s main objective is to increase students’ intellectual knowledge, self-esteem, and social competencies. In order to accomplish this, GE focuses on the transformation of educators through the use of professional development, and the transformation of schools through organizational change (Biscoe and Harris, 2005). There are six basic tenets around which GE practices and principles are grouped (Great Expectations, n.d.). They are:
1. High expectations
2. Teacher attitude and responsibility
3. Building self-esteem
4. All children can learn
5. Climate of mutual respect
6. Teacher knowledge and skill

From these tenets emerge eight expectations for living and 17 classroom practices (Great Expectations, n.d.). The eight expectations for living are as follows:

1. We will value one another as unique and special individuals.
2. We will not laugh at or make fun of a person’s mistakes nor use sarcasm or putdowns.
3. We will use good manners, saying “please,” “thank you,” and “excuse me,” and allow others to go first.
4. We will cheer each other to success.
5. We will help one another whenever possible.
6. We will recognize every effort and applaud it.
7. We will encourage each other to do our best.
8. We will practice virtuous living, using the life principles.

The rationale provided for the 17 practices include quotes from books, articles, and influential historical and modern figures such as Sir Francis Bacon, Gerald Ford, Henry Ford, and George Eliot (Great Expectations, 2010). Appendix E is a list of the 17 classroom practices. Of the 17 practices, I think that seven address social emotional skills: Practices 1, 5, 9, 12, 14, 16 and 17. They are defined as follows.
Practice 1: The teacher models desired behaviors and attitudes such as those set forth in the life principles and the eight expectations for living is based on the ideas that students learn naturally by imitating models; through imitation of adults students learn appropriate behavior and develop character; and students need to develop positive attitudes, personal values, and high ideals of character to enhance their future employability (Great Expectations, 2010).

Practice 5: Critical thinking skills are taught is supported by literature that shows that higher order thinking results in greater student engagement; training students in the use of problem-solving strategies helps them reduce problem behaviors and develop a sense of responsibility for how the classroom is managed; and using deductive reasoning helps students see the underlying assumptions and patterns that govern human knowledge (Great Expectations, 2010, p. 12).

Practice 9: The magic triad, a positive and caring environment, and discipline with dignity and logic are evident has as its rationale that the quality of teacher-student relationships stems from teachers’ efforts to build rapport with students, and this leads to better academic and career success for students (Great Expectations, 2010, p. 20).

The rationale for Practice 12: Students assume responsibility for their own behavior. Their choices determine consequences is from literature on self-actualization, responsibility, and motivation. When students take responsibility for their own learning and behavior, they are more likely to increase motivation and learning, and decrease problem behaviors (p. 27).

Practice 14: All students experience success. The teacher guarantees it by comparing students to their own past performance, not the performance of others. Students are showcased, and past failures are disregarded. This practice is based on the rationale that when students experience success they are more likely to have high rates of achievement. It is also related to the
idea that when students’ work is displayed by different means, it not only taps into different intelligences, but also fosters a sense of identity and enhances the sense of community (Great Expectations, 2010, p. 30).

Etiquette, interpersonal skills, motivation, and cooperative learning provide the rationale for Practice 16: Each classroom has a student who greets visitors and makes them feel welcome and comfortable (p. 34).

Finally, the rationale for Practice 17: Teachers and students celebrate the successes of others is based on the idea that empathy, social competence, and self-esteem are increased when achievements are celebrated, and this leads to increased motivation to achieve at high levels (p. 36 and 37).

Although the relationship of the principles to research is made explicit in each of the principles, no supporting research was cited on the Great Expectations website in support of the principles at the time of this study. The Great Expectations program has received some mention in research. The Southwestern Educational Development Laboratory conducted a year-long study of Great Expectations (Turner & Shapley, 2001). The study compared achievement on standardized norm-referenced assessments before and after the implementation of GE, and utilized classroom observations of teacher practices. The results of the study, conducted in six elementary schools in Oklahoma, revealed that GE training promoted teaching strategies that positively impacted student engagement in learning activities, substantially impacted teachers’ instructional strategies, and impacted teachers’ beliefs about their teaching responsibilities. Additionally, the SEDL study showed that teachers who implemented GE practices at a high level used whole group instruction interwoven with small-group and individual instruction; created learning communities in their classrooms; felt high degrees of professional growth,
collegial support, and positive attitudes; engaged their students in critical higher order thinking; and incorporated students’ prior knowledge and experience in their interdisciplinary lessons.

Biscoe and Harris (2005) conducted a quasi-experimental study to determine whether students in Great Expectations classrooms demonstrated greater gains in achievement on a standardized test than their peers in a control group. The study included 1150 students and 78 teachers in 46 elementary schools in Oklahoma. Data collection methods included classroom observations; teacher, parent, principal, and student surveys; and pre-and post-test language, math, and reading tests. Comparisons of GE classrooms to non-GE classrooms indicated that GE classrooms were more likely to: have a student greet visitors, provide evidence that recitations and writing occurred daily, document daily recitation of or reflection on a creed, exhibit use of word identification skills for expanding English language use, and provide evidence that students assumed responsibility for their own behavior and understood that their choices determined consequences. Additionally, students in GE classrooms were rated significantly higher on demonstrating critical thinking skills than their non-GE counterparts. The skills considered were knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Finally, the researchers found significant gains in reading, language and mathematics composite scores for GE students as compared to their non-GE counterparts.

Denison (2006) conducted a case study of Great Expectations as a school-wide professional development model. Teacher attendance rates, student attendance rates, teacher retention rates, and state achievement test scores were analyzed to determine campus stability and student achievement. Student, parent, teacher and other staff survey data provided perceptions of the impact of GE on campus climate. Results indicated that implementing the GE model was associated with statistically significant increased student attendance, a 3.8% increase.
in teacher attendance and 100% retention rate after three years, an 80% decrease in student
discipline referrals, 33.5% improvement in academic achievement, and teachers, parents, and
students had positive perceptions of the impact of GE on campus climate.

Sikes (2009) applied brain based teaching techniques to the Great Expectations
methodology. The study included 101 fifth grade students in six classrooms. Two classrooms
used GE methodology, two classrooms used GE methodology as well as specific brain based
teaching techniques, and two classrooms received neither GE methodology nor brain based
teaching techniques. Students were assessed using a standardized pretest and posttest measure in
math and reading. The results indicated that applying brain based teaching methodology to GE
methodology was not associated with significant differences in mathematics or reading
achievement, although the brain based classrooms employed more brain based teaching
techniques than the GE only or the non-GE classes.

Although GE does not purport to be a social emotional curriculum, and indeed does not
promote itself as a curriculum for any particular subject area, it may be considered a social
emotional curriculum in a broad sense. Of the six basic tenets, two are specific social emotional
competencies agreed upon in the literature- self-esteem and climate of mutual respect. Self-
esteeom is a product of self-awareness, while climate of mutual respect is a product of social
awareness and relationship skills. Additionally, the eight expectations for living have at their
core the five social emotional competencies identified by CASEL and TxCEDS as important for
learning; self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible
decision making. Expectations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 teach social awareness and relationship skills.
Expectation 6 teaches social awareness, self-management, and responsible decision making.
Expectation 8 teaches self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision making. In its
publication *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader’s Guide to Evidence Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs*, CASEL outlined the four main criteria that were used to include social emotional programs in their review (CASEL, 2003). The criteria are:

- The program is school-based and has sequenced lessons intended for a general student population.
- There are at least eight lessons in one of the program years.
- There are either lessons for at least two consecutive grades or grade spans, or a structure that promotes lesson reinforcement beyond the first program year.
- The program is nationally available, and the distributors provided CASEL with curriculum materials to review.

The programs reviewed are outlined in the publication, and some of them were rated as “Select SEL” according to CASEL’s standard of excellence in three areas: outstanding instruction, evidence of effectiveness, and outstanding professional development (CASEL, 2003). Outstanding instruction was described as a program that provides coverage of the five essential social emotional learning skill areas. Evidence of effectiveness was defined as the program’s having at least one well-designed and rigorous evaluation study that provided evidence of the program’s effectiveness. Outstanding professional development required that the program provide on-site professional development, support, and coaching beyond the initial training workshop. Although GE does not meet the criteria for inclusion in the review - sequenced lessons, at least eight lessons in a program year, lessons for two consecutive grade spans, it certainly meets two of the “Select SEL” standards - evidence of effectiveness and outstanding professional development.
Although CASEL reviewed SEL programs that had lesson plans and sequenced lessons, it also included information about five other programs that fell outside of its initial criteria. The programs are Caring School Community, the Responsive Classroom, High/Scope, SOAR, and Tribes. The rationale given for including these programs in the guide was that the programs could be categorized as school or classroom climate programs; their major goal was to change classroom climate and teaching methods to enhance social emotional learning; the methods advocated by the programs include cooperative learning groups, morning meetings, and proactive classroom management; they had high quality research demonstrating their effectiveness, and they complemented lesson-based social emotional instruction by ensuring that students used social emotional skills throughout the day (CASEL, 2003). By these same rationale, Great Expectations can be considered a social emotional learning program as it aims to improve the classroom climate so as to enhance academic and social emotional learning; its practices include celebrating others’ successes and group recitation of a creed; there has been research conducted that provides evidence for its effectiveness; and its practices ensure that students have the opportunity to use social emotional skills throughout the day.

Summary

This chapter reviewed literature regarding social emotional learning, teacher attitudes toward social emotional learning, the relationship between teacher beliefs and program implementation, and the Great Expectation professional development model. Social emotional learning was identified as being an important set of skills necessary for academic and social success, and the research indicated that inclusion of social emotional learning competencies in the school curriculum is associated with improved student academic achievement, increased positive behaviors and self-efficacy, decreased discipline referrals, and improved school climate.
Research illustrated that teachers saw the importance of social emotional skills for student success in school and life. Variables associated with teacher beliefs such as student gender, teacher preparation, administrative support, and teachers’ own social emotional competence were discussed. Additionally, research on the relationship between teacher beliefs and their implementation of a program demonstrated that in some instances teacher beliefs influence their classroom practices. Finally, the Great Expectation professional development program was discussed. Although it is not marketed specifically as a social emotional learning curriculum, justification for its consideration as such based on standards set forth by leading experts was provided.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods utilized to explore the relationship between teachers’ beliefs about teaching social emotional skills and their classroom practices related to teaching social emotional skills within a school implementing a social emotional curriculum. The specific research questions addressed in the study included:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of the teachers at the case study school and how do they compare to those of the subgroup of teacher participants at that school?

2. How do the social emotional learning practices of the teachers at the case study school compare to those of the subgroup of teacher participants at that school?

3. What relationships may exist between the demographic characteristics of teachers and their approaches to teaching social emotional skills?

4. What is the current status of (a) teachers' beliefs about social emotional learning and (b) teaching practices related to social emotional learning with respect to teachers in the subsample?

5. What is the relationship, if any, between teachers' beliefs about social emotional learning and their teaching practices related to social emotional learning with respect to teachers in the subsample?

The rationale underlying the methods chosen, the participants, setting, interview methodology, instruments, and data analysis are discussed and described in the following subsections.
Study Design

This research study utilized multiple cases within a case study. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) multiple case study research “involves studying multiple cases that share a commonality.” The cases of four individual teachers examined here can be considered representative or exemplifying cases because they were chosen to allow the researcher to examine certain social processes and they provided a suitable context for the research question to be answered (Bryman, 2008). Stake (2005) recommends four to ten cases, and suggests certain criteria for the selection of the individual cases: the case should be relevant to the larger group of cases; the cases should provide diversity across contexts, and the cases should provide good opportunities to gain insight into the complexity and contexts. The criteria for participant involvement within the case study are detailed in the Participant subsection further on in this chapter.

Within the case study design, I used a mixed methods approach for data collection and analysis. According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) mixed methods research can simultaneously address a range of exploratory and confirmatory questions using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This approach provides the opportunity for a greater collection of differing views, and provides stronger inferences. This approach was selected so as to better answer the research questions as it not only provided numerical data to indicate teachers’ levels of commitment to a social emotional learning program and variation amongst them, but also allowed for in-depth narratives of the teachers’ perspectives. The methods used for collection of data included interviews, classroom observations, self-report rating and ranking questionnaires, and demographic survey. Each of these data collection tools is discussed in detail in separate subsections later on in this chapter.
The research methods for this study were mainly descriptive and correlational. Data analysis involved seeking descriptions of the whole group of participants and subgroup of teachers examined as cases by considering means, standard deviations, tallies, percentages, and themes from interviews. The term “whole group” refers to the total group of participants who volunteered to participate in the study; whereas the term “subgroup” refers to the four participants who volunteered and were selected to participate in the interviews and classroom observations. Multiple regression and correlation coefficients were used to examine the relationship between certain variables within and across groups; while interview and observation data were inductively analyzed using recursive reflexive reading.

Setting

The setting for this research study was an elementary school (Grades K-5) in a suburban North Texas school district. According to the 2012-2013 Texas Education Agency Texas Academic Performance Report (TEA TAPR) which was the most recent report available at the time of data collection, the campus had a total student enrollment of 728, with 670 (92.0%) classified as economically disadvantaged. The ethnic makeup of students enrolled at the campus consisted of 66 African American (9.1%), 590 Hispanic (81.0%), 47 White (6.5%), 7 American Indian (1.0%), 11 Asian (1.5%), and 7 two or more races (1.0%). Of the 728 students, 436 (59.9%) were classified as English language learners (ELL) while 650 (89.3%) were classified as at-risk.

According to the same report, there were 64 total staff: 49 teachers, 5 professional support personnel, 2 campus administrators, and 8 educational aides. The teachers had varying degrees of experience. Five (10.2%) were beginning teachers, 10 (20.4%) had 1 to 5 years of
experience, 13 (26.5%) had 6 to 10 years of experience, 14 (28.6%) had 11-20 years of experience, while 7 (14.3%) had over 20 years of experience.

The campus was in the first year of implementation of Great Expectations. In a preliminary interview, the principal disclosed that curriculum materials had not yet been purchased for all staff members, but she was going through the process of getting GE on the school district’s vendor list so that purchases could be made. The principal reported that she and the leadership team which consisted of grade level leaders, instructional specialists, and other key faculty members had attended the summer training institute provided by GE in the summer preceding the start of the school year and had decided to adopt it as the professional development model for the campus. It is unknown whether any of the study participants were also members of the leadership team which attended the training. This stemmed from the campus’ decision to “transform” based on their self-identified needs for their students. The principal reported that the campus had not had serious discipline issues in the past, but that she and many of the staff members recognized that their students had a need for a different approach to academic and social emotional instruction. Additionally, the school district had rolled out a three-strand improvement plan, urging campuses to adopt practices that aligned with one of three strands that included academic conversations, critical thinking, or reading and writing across the disciplines. According to the principal, the campus leadership team made the decision to adopt the GE program as they considered it adequate to fit the Academic Conversations strand.

The campus began implementing GE Practices 1, 6, 9, 13, 14, and 15 at the start of the school year, began implementing Practices 2, 10, 11, 16, and 17 in the middle of the fall semester, and Practices 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 12 at the end of the fall semester. See Appendix E for the list of all 17 practices. Staff development days were devoted to professional development
regarding GE practices and tenets, and monthly staff meetings included rotating breakout sessions where teachers received targeted instruction on specific GE practices from their peers and instructional specialists. Additionally, the staff provided feedback on their implementation of the practices every six weeks using a Google document self-reflection tool. This tool was developed by the leadership team and included on it the practices that were targeted for implementation. Teachers rated their use of the different practices from rarely to almost always. They also had the opportunity to provide narrative reflection on their practices. This tool was created to provide baseline data on practice implementation, and to help the team identify areas or practices that needed re-teaching or reinforcing. Since this was the first year of implementation for this campus, the principal reported that she would not be evaluating teachers on their implementation of the practices. She reported that for the 2014-2015 school year, the target implementation goal would be 70% of the practices being implemented by 70% of the staff.

Participants

Ten of the possible 51 teachers agreed to participate in the study. Nine of the volunteers were female and the other was male. None of the participants was a beginning teacher. One teacher had less than 5 years of experience (10%), two teachers had 6 to 10 years of experience (20%), three teachers had 11 to 20 years of experience (30%), while four had over 20 years of experience (40%). One teacher taught a bilingual Kindergarten class, one teacher taught first grade, one teacher taught second grade math and science, one teacher taught fourth grade, two teachers taught fifth grade, two of the teachers were special education teachers, and two teachers taught physical education for Grades 1 through 5.
Five of the 10 respondents volunteered to participate in the interviews and observations in addition to completing the demographic survey, teacher self-ranking of social emotional practices form, and the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Scale for Teachers questionnaire. Two of the five were PE teachers so they were both assigned identification codes and one code was randomly chosen. Thus, four teachers participated in the interviews and observations. Of the four, three were female and one was male. Two of the participants held master’s degrees while the other two held bachelor’s degrees. The grade levels and/or subjects taught by the four subgroup participants were first grade, second grade, fourth grade, and physical education.

Interview Methodology

In-depth interviews were used to gain rich qualitative data from the four participants. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), in-depth interviews are useful when there is a particular topic that a researcher wants to gain information about and focus on. They state that in-depth interviews typically occur with one interviewee in one session (although multiple sessions can also be used) so as to gain rich qualitative data on a specific topic from the interviewee’s perspective. In the design of in-depth interviews, the level of structure may vary from highly structured, where the respondents are limited to only the questions asked, to low-structured, where the conversation goes wherever the respondent wants it to go (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). This study, utilized a semi-structured interview with pre-determined questions serving as a guide, but the researcher also probed deeper depending on the participants’ responses. Appendix A is a copy of the interview guide with the structured questions that were used.
Data Collection Instruments

Four instruments were used to systematize data collection in this study: a demographic survey, a classroom observation rubric, a teacher self-ranking of social emotional practices form, and the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Scale for Teachers (Brackett et al., 2012). Descriptions of the instruments follow.

Demographic Survey

The purpose of the demographic survey was to collect data that would provide information about the participants’ levels of experience, background knowledge and training, current assignment, and other variables so as to present enough information to provide an accurate description of the participant and to delineate differences among participants. The demographic survey also had a notation where the participant could volunteer or decline to participate in the interview and observation sessions. Appendix B is a copy of the demographic survey instrument.

Social Emotional Learning Observation Rubric

The observation rubric was used to measure frequency of specific teaching strategies/behaviors to promote social emotional learning as supported by the social emotional practices of the GE program. The rubric was developed by the researcher and colleagues using the GE developed common core crosswalk (retrieved from http://www.greatexpectationsok.org/pdf/GECrosswalk.pdf). The common core crosswalk is a list of the 17 GE classroom practices, and includes practices that teachers ought to engage in to meet the expectation. To establish content validity for the use of this instrument in a study of social emotional learning, the researcher asked three licensed specialists in school psychology (LSSPs) and two special education counselors to independently review the common core
crosswalk practices and select practices that they felt met the following two criteria: (1) can be easily and readily observed, and (2) are practices that would be used to teach social emotional skills. The LSSPs each had a minimum of 15 years of experience in their roles and had served as intern supervisors and trainers in the past. Additionally, two of the three LSSPs were also certified teachers. The special education counselors were asked due to their expertise in behavior management and social emotional skills training. The special education counselors’ job duties included social emotional skills training, and both were also former teachers. Both counselors also serve as school psychology intern counseling supervisors. The recommended practices that were identified by the LSSPs and counselors were compared, and the practices that were selected by three or more people were included in the observation rubric. This process was used to establish validity of the instrument and also of the self-ranking instrument on which it depends. Appendix C is a copy of the social emotional learning observation rubric that was developed for this study.

Teacher Self-Ranking of Social Emotional Learning Practices

The teacher self-ranking of social emotional learning practices was developed by the researcher to determine teachers’ perceptions of their use of specific practices. The form lists the 11 practices included on the observation rubric and asks the respondent to indicate which four practices he/she engages in the most frequently and which four practices he/she engages in the least frequently. This tool was developed to provide information to support the social emotional learning observation rubric. Specifically, it was developed for use in obtaining teachers’ perceptions of their practices related to teaching social emotional skills. This instrument differs from the campus’ self-reflection tool as it only ranks the practices in order of most and least performed, where the campus’ self-reflection tool allows for gradient rating and narrative
reflection on each practice. Appendix D is a copy of the teacher self-ranking of social emotional learning practices tool.

The Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Scale for Teachers

The Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Scale for Teachers is a 12-item questionnaire for which responses are made through a 5-point Likert-type scale (Brackett et al. 2012). It consists of three domains which were labeled comfort (teachers’ comfort with teaching social emotional skills), commitment (teachers’ desire to develop social emotional skills in their students) and culture (school support for social emotional skills instruction). The scale was developed by Brackett et al. (2012) by identifying four domains of teachers’ beliefs evident in the literature regarding factors affecting implementation of social emotional learning programming. The four domains included comfort level with teaching social emotional skills, commitment to learning about and teaching social emotional skills, beliefs that student success and learning would benefit from social emotional skills instruction, and opinions about how much support the culture of the school lends to social emotional instruction. The authors initially wrote 32 items, eight for each identified domain, then had four experts in social emotional learning independently review the items and offer feedback on content and wording. After this, the survey was pared down to 25 randomly ordered items. The survey was completed by 905 teachers who attended a series of social emotional learning workshops, before the commencement of the workshops. Exploratory factor analysis using principal axis factor analysis for the items, and confirmatory factor analysis using chi-square, root mean square error of approximation, standardized root mean residual, comparative fit index, and the Tucker-Lewis index yielded a 12-item scale with internal consistencies for the Comfort, Commitment, and Culture scales.
Brackett et al. (2012) used the SEL Scale for Teachers in conjunction with the Maslach Burnout Inventory- Educators Survey (MBI-ES), Adaptive Efficacy Scale, and Administrator Support Scale to investigate whether concurrent validity existed between the scales in regard to different constructs including teacher burnout, teaching efficacy, and teacher perceptions of administrative support. The MBI-ES is a 22-item scale that assesses how frequently teachers experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of personal accomplishment. The Adaptive Efficacy Scale is a 5-item scale that measures teachers’ beliefs in their ability to modify their teaching methods and have a positive effect on student achievement. The Administrator Support Scale is a 10-item scale that measures teachers’ perceptions of their relationships with their administrators. Eighty-eight fifth and sixth grade teachers from 62 schools in a Catholic district in New York participated in the study. Forty-one teachers taught in schools that were assigned to use the RULER approach- a social emotional learning curriculum, while 47 taught in control schools. Participating teachers completed the survey instruments at the beginning and end of the school year. The RULER teachers attended training workshops and worked with RULER coaches periodically throughout the year; and they taught lessons from the RULER curriculum throughout the year. Correlations between the three SEL scales and the other scales were examined; and correlations between pre- and post- implementation responses on the SEL Scale for Teachers were also examined. Results indicated that the comfort scale of the SEL Scale for Teachers significantly correlated with the Adaptive Efficacy Scale as well as the depersonalization and personal accomplishment burnout scales. The culture scale correlated negatively with the emotional exhaustion burnout scale and positively with the Administrator Support Scale. The commitment scale correlated moderately with the Adaptive Efficacy Scale.
Concurrent validity was established, and Cronbach’s alphas for the comfort, commitment, and culture scales were .86, .93, and .84 respectively (Brackett et al. 2012).

Results of the Brackett et al. (2012) study also indicated that the beginning of the year comfort scale was moderately to highly correlated with teachers’ end of year attitudes about the RULER approach in that teachers who were more comfortable with social emotional learning were more open to the program, had greater buy-in, perceived the program as more effective, enjoyed the program more, and were more confident in their ability to teach the program than teachers who were less comfortable with social emotional learning (Brackett et al., 2012).

The current study utilized the SEL Scale for Teachers to investigate which of the three factors it measures informed teacher implementation of social emotional learning practices in their classrooms for the 10 teachers from whom data were collected.

Data Collection Procedures

Upon receipt of approval from the Institutional Review Board, I e-mailed the principal of the campus to set a date and time to meet to discuss data collection methods and timelines. A time and date were set, and on the agreed upon date we met. An upcoming staff development/student holiday was identified as the ideal time to collect initial quantitative data, as all campus staff would be available. The principal requested a script detailing the purpose of the study and proposed procedures to be shared with the campus so as to notify the teachers in advance of my coming. I e-mailed her the script, which included the amount of time and procedures to be used, and she forwarded it to the campus staff. On the agreed upon day, I arrived at the campus at the agreed upon time. The staff members were in a faculty meeting. At the conclusion of the faculty meeting, I met with the principal again briefly to review the procedures and find out where I was to set up for distribution and collection of packets. She
reported that she had reminded the campus staff during the meeting that I would be collecting data for my study that day. I was escorted to the cafeteria where I laid out my consent and questionnaire packets. The principal made an announcement over the school’s PA system that I was set up in the cafeteria and that all who were interested in participating in my study could find me there. A few teachers came by and were given the study packets that contained an IRB approved consent form, the demographic survey, the teacher self-ranking of social emotional learning practices form, and the SEL Scale for Teachers. Some completed the questionnaires in the cafeteria and returned the completed packets, while others took the packets with them and brought them back later. Forty-five minutes later, the principal made a reminder announcement over the PA system that I was collecting data in the cafeteria. She made one final announcement forty-five minutes after that, stating that those who were still interested and had not yet participated should join me in the cafeteria as I would be leaving after thirty minutes. In total, ten packets were completed and returned.

Packets were sorted into two groups, interview and opt-out, based on the indicator on the demographic survey. Five participants indicated willingness to participate in the interviews and observations. Two of the participants taught physical education, while the other three taught different grade levels. The two PE teachers were assigned identification codes, and then one code was randomly picked for participation in the qualitative portion. The four participants were notified via e-mail of their selection. The e-mail included dates and times for the participants to select for interviews and observation. Interviews and observations were conducted within a four school week window. All initial interviews were conducted face-to-face using the interview questions in Appendix A. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Participants were asked to select times when they were most likely to be observed while engaged
in instruction and interaction with the students. Thus, observation times were not during their conference periods or lunch times. Classroom observations were conducted at scheduled times after the interviews. Each classroom observation lasted 45 minutes. Classroom observations were conducted using the observation rubric in Appendix C as an assessment tool.

After the interview and observation data were transcribed, analyzed, and recorded, the subgroup participants were contacted for brief follow up interviews to gather clarifying data. Three of the four agreed to participate in the follow up interviews. Two participated by phone while the other asked that the questions be sent to her via email. She responded likewise.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed and reported by creating a profile for each subgroup participant. As each subgroup participant is a case study within the multiple case study framework of the research design, a detailed description of each subgroup participant including demographic data, scores on the SEL Scale for Teachers, themes emergent from the interview, and description of the observation was developed to create a subgroup participant profile/ case study description. All information known about each participant was included in these profiles, which constitute cases within the case study of school implementation of social emotional learning.

Scores from the SEL Scale for Teachers demonstrate the teachers’ levels of comfort and commitment as well as their view of the campus culture supporting social emotional learning. The possible scale responses are strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree. The items were scored accordingly: strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neither agree nor disagree = 3, agree = 4, and strongly agree = 5. Item 10 is negatively worded, and its scoring was reversed so that strongly disagree = 5, disagree = 4, neither agree nor disagree = 3, agree = 2, and strongly agree = 1. Thus, for each domain, total domain scores
could range from 4 to 20. For this study, domain scores were further classified thusly: very low (4-6), low (7-9), neutral (10-13), high (14-17), and very high (18-20). The classifications were created to provide a description for the scores.

In addition to providing a description of teachers’ comfort, commitment, and view of campus culture, the SEL Scale for Teachers provides overall scores. The results from this instrument were analyzed using multiple regression and comparison of mean scores and standard deviations. The subgroup participants’ mean scores were compared to the larger group’s to determine the extent to which the subgroup participants were representative of the larger group. The participants’ mean scores on the SEL scale were compared with demographic variables including years of experience, education level, and social emotional learning preparation to determine the relationship among variables for the whole group and the subgroup.

Interview transcripts were analyzed using inductive coding to identify themes that emerged in regard to teacher beliefs about social emotional learning. Inductive coding followed the following process. Transcripts were closely read and considered for multiple meanings within the text; text segments that contained meaningful units were identified; a label for any new category to which the text segment would be assigned was created; additional text segments were added to relevant categories; descriptions of the meaning of categories were developed; and categories were linked to other categories in various relationships (Thomas, 2006). Thomas (2006) outlines the following procedures for the inductive analysis of qualitative data: preparation/formatting of raw data files; close reading of text; creation of categories; overlapping coding and uncoded text; and continuing revision and refinement of category systems. This approach was used to create a small number of summary categories that captured the key aspects of the themes identified in the raw data. Interview data were reported to provide descriptions of
teachers’ beliefs about social emotional learning, and were compared to observation data to determine the relationship between espoused beliefs and practices.

The observation rubric data were analyzed to identify the number of practices that each teacher engaged in during the observation. The total tally for each practice was recorded, and the data gathered were compared to other information obtained via interview, demographic survey, and rating scale to illuminate the relationship between espoused beliefs and practice.

Summary

This chapter detailed the instruments, procedures, and data analysis techniques that were used to answer the research questions. The study design utilized mixed methods data collection in a multiple case study format. Participants were teachers with varying degrees of experience at an elementary school in a large suburban north Texas school district. Semi-structured face to face interviews, classroom observations, and survey questionnaires were collectively utilized to gather data to address the research questions. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and reflexively coded. Coded data were explored to identify themes that emerged. Observations were conducted using a pre-developed rubric, and the number of occurrences of specific teacher behaviors related to teaching social emotional skills were compiled and compared. Finally, SEL scale data was analyzed using means, standard deviations, correlation coefficients, and multiple regression to determine whether there existed a relationship between variables and SEL scale scores for the whole group and subgroup participants.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purposes of this chapter are to discuss the results of analysis of the data collected to describe teachers at a particular elementary school in a large suburban school district in the North Texas area and to explore possible relationships among demographic variables, teachers’ perceived beliefs about social emotional skills, and their teaching practices related to social emotional learning. Discussion of the results is organized into five sections. First, the demographic characteristics of the research study participants are presented and discussed. Then, profiles of four of the participants are presented, detailing information obtained from the demographic survey, SEL scale, self-ranking scale, and interviews, as well as a comparison of the behaviors observed compared to their selections on the self-ranking scale. Next is presented a discussion of the themes that emerged from analysis of the interview and observational data across all participants. Then, the results of the ratings on the SEL scale are presented and discussed. Finally, results of the data analysis examining the relationship between demographic variables and results on the SEL scale for teachers for the whole group and subgroup are presented and discussed. The chapter ends with a summary of the results.

Demographic Characteristics of Teachers

According to the Texas Education Agency’s 2012-2013 Texas Academic Performance Report for the elementary school of the study participants, there were 49 teachers at the campus. Forty-two were female and 7 were male. Their ethnic breakdown was listed as 6.1% African American, 51% Hispanic, 40.8% White, 2% Asian, and 0% American Indian, Pacific Islander, and two or more races. The report also provided years of experience for teachers at the campus.
as 10.2% beginning teachers, 20.4% with 1 to 5 years of experience, 26.5% with 6-10 years of experience, 28.6% with 11-20 years of experience, and 14.3% with over 20 years of experience.

Ten teachers consented to participate in the present study and are referred to as the whole group. Five participants agreed to participate in the interview and observation portion of the study, while five opted not to. Out of the five who agreed to participate in the interviews and observations, four were selected. They are henceforth referred to as the case study subgroup. All other participants are referred to as the opt-out group. The whole group included nine female and one male. Two participants identified themselves as African American, two were Hispanic, four were White, and one participant was listed as Other, while the last participant did not identify an ethnic category. In regard to years of experience, none of the respondents was a beginning teacher. One teacher had four years of experience, two teachers had 6 to 10 years of experience, three teachers had 11 to 20 years of experience, while four had over 20 years of experience. One teacher taught a bilingual Kindergarten class, two teachers taught fifth grade, two teachers taught physical education for Grades 1 through 5, two of the teachers were special education teachers, one teacher taught fourth grade, one teacher taught first grade, and one teacher taught second grade math and science.

The case study subgroup consisted of three females and one male. No participant was African American, two were Hispanic, one was White, and one was listed as Other. One teacher had 6 to 10 years of experience, two had 11 to 20 years, and one had over 20 years of experience. The case study subgroup consisted of a first grade teacher, a second grade teacher, a fourth grade teacher, and a physical education teacher.

Table 1 displays the comparison of the demographic characteristics of the teachers at the campus, the whole group of study participants, and the case study subgroup.
Table 1

Comparison of Demographic Characteristics of Campus, Whole Group, and Case Study Subgroup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>Whole Group</th>
<th>Case Study Subgroup</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>20.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+ years</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data reported is in percentages. Campus data were retrieved from the 2012-2013 Texas Education Agency Texas Academic Performance Report. Whole group and subgroup data were retrieved from the demographic survey instrument.

In comparing the whole group of participants to the TEA report, there is similarity in the gender makeup and years of experience of the whole group and the total campus. When comparing the subgroup to the whole group, accurate comparisons could not be made as there was only one male respondent and he was also part of the subgroup. Thus, the percentage of male participants changed as the size of the group changed. In regard to the ethnic makeup of the participants, the percentage of White participants was similar to the percentage of White teachers in the whole campus, but there was an over representation of African Americans and underrepresentation of Hispanic and Asian participants in the participant group as compared to the total campus numbers. The subgroup was even less representative of the campus as a whole. This is most likely due to the fact that the subgroup consisted of only four participants.
Participant Profiles

This subsection provides detailed descriptions of the case study subgroup participants. The information presented was gathered from participant responses on the demographic questionnaire, self-ranking on the practices ranking scale, scores on the SEL scale, interviews, and observations. Each participant profile is presented separately with a discussion of the observational and interview data. A summary of the four subgroup participants is included at the end of this subsection, and it includes a comparison table of the demographic characteristics of the subgroup participants, a comparison matrix of the observational data, and a table detailing the number of observed practices for all subgroup participants.

Participant 1

Participant 1 (from here on referred to as Ms. Mary Mack) is a 57 year-old white female who has been teaching for 36 years total, with four years at the current campus. She currently teaches 4th grade. She has a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and special education, and a master’s degree in educational administration. She reported that she received no training in social-emotional skills through her teacher preparation program at the university, but that she has received some training in social-emotional skills, totaling about two or three days, through professional development workshops. On the SEL scale she received the following scores on the subscales: comfort- 16 (high), commitment- 14 (high), culture- 20 (very high). Ms. Mack ranked the following four practices in order from highest to lowest as the practices that she most frequently engages in: teacher listens intently and empathetically to student; teacher notices and encourages individual student strengths; teacher encourages and affirms students throughout the learning process; teacher verbally affirms students.
Mary described social-emotional competencies/social-emotional skills as “how you cope.” She stated that it is the way a person copes with his or her environment, learning, family life, and interactions with others, and it is how a person controls emotions. She stated that the responsibility for teaching social skills falls on everyone. In her words, “I think we all have to be responsible. I don’t think it’s any one place… I’m not too much to put ‘this is your job this is my job.’ I just feel we have to work together.”

In regard to how she structures her social-emotional skills lessons, Ms. Mack reported that the school counselor comes once a week to teach a lesson, and that she (Mary) tries to capitalize on different situations to talk about social skills rather than creating a specific lesson to teach a specific skill. She reported that she did not have the time to teach a discrete lesson, but gave an example of how the academic curriculum was being utilized to teach social-emotional skills. She stated that one of the assignments that she gave her students involved watching one hour of the Olympics and then journaling what they learned about the athletes profiled. She reported that she and the students discussed during breakfast what they learned. She gave another example of how they were reading a particular book about the Nazi invasion of Denmark and how she and the students talked about the social aspect. In her words, “And so we talk a lot about the social [experience] of that. What does it take for a nation to pull together and help people that are different from them, and you know…just try to do it different like that.”

Mary Mack listed time as the greatest hindrance to teaching social-emotional skills, but stated that the campus administration had been supportive of teaching social skills by training the campus staff on Great Expectations and by supporting its use. She stated, “We just had an in-service the other day for an hour, two hours, I don’t know what it was… to kind of remind us to keep doing that. She [the principal]’s very supportive of it. I think she believes strongly in it.
And I think we’re trying to incorporate it. I think we’ll get better. This was our first year.” When asked what other things needed to take place or be changed to ensure that students received adequate social-emotional skills training, Ms. Mack stated that parents needed to be more involved, but also admitted that she did not know how to do that.

Ms. Mary Mack was observed during a whole class reading lesson. When the observation began, students were entering the classroom from lunch. Ms. Mack greeted the students as they entered the room and directed them to their seats. The students settled quickly and Ms. Mack began the lesson, reading aloud a chapter from a book. She engaged the students in a discussion about the story, linking parts of the story to the students’ lives, and to previous discussions. After the discussion, Ms. Mack instructed the students to begin a writing assignment. She modeled on the overhead projector how to edit the text, calling on students to explain why she made certain edits. When the observation ended, the students were working independently at their desks, while Ms. Mack was seated at a table near the blackboard, grading papers. During the observation, Ms. Mack was observed using all of the practices on the observation matrix except: teacher models enthusiasm and a positive attitude. Although Mary was positive in her interactions with the students, she did not overtly model enthusiasm or a positive attitude about social emotional skills by making explicit positive statements about social emotional skills. The practices that she used the most were: teacher listens intently and empathetically to students; teacher acknowledges student input and provides positive feedback; teacher verbally affirms students; and teacher greets students using magic triad, models it throughout the day. The practices she was observed using the least were: teacher empowers students with positive dialogue about their potential successes, rather than their failures; teacher gives immediate feedback and coaches students toward mastering their goals; teacher encourages and affirms students throughout the learning
process; teacher notices and encourages individual student strengths; teacher uses praise, acknowledgement, and affirmations; and teacher assists students in appreciating others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments.

Mary Mack was observed listening intently and empathetically to different students 13 times during the observation. She stopped whatever she was doing to look at the student speaking and always responded, verbally or non-verbally with a head nod or hand gesture. She acknowledged student input and provided positive feedback 10 times during the observation. Examples of feedback provided include, “Your mom takes you to the best historical places” in response to a student’s report on an outing that she had been on, “Well that is true. Everyone is good at something” in response to another student’s comment, and “I don’t know if they would have been able to get hair color products back then, but I like that” in response to another student’s input to the class discussion. She verbally affirmed students 4 times during the observation saying things like “Thank you” and “Right.” At one point a student was reading aloud and made an error. When he self-corrected Ms. Mack responded “Yes!” She was observed using the magic triad three times during the observation. For example, one time she held one student’s head in her hands while maintaining eye contact with the student as the student talked to her.

All other observed practices were observed only once during the observation. Mary empowered a student with positive dialogue about his potential success rather than his failure when the student was asked by another teacher about a missing homework assignment. That student reported that he did not remember if he had done the assignment or not. Ms. Mack said to the student, “You have to do better. When you get home today I want you to look into your backpack and think about all your classes. Who do you have first? Next? What do you need for
that class? Think about all of that. I want you to do better.” She assisted students in appreciating others’ accomplishments when she redirected two girls who were chatting while their peer was talking. She also gave immediate feedback and coached a student toward mastering his goal when she said, “Yes, but let’s not interrupt my teaching for that tomorrow,” in response to a student asking permission to get something while she was talking to the class.

Based on Ms. Mary Mack’s rating on the SEL scale, she considers herself as having high comfort with and commitment to teaching social emotional skills. She ranked four practices in order of her relative competence and regularity in performing them. The observational tallies results showed that her highest ranked practice was also observed to be the practice that she most frequently engaged in. However, the two practices that she ranked second and third were observed to be engaged in least frequently. In comparing the number of instances of each observed practice, the practice that Ms. Mack ranked fourth was observed to be her third highest practice. The self-ranked and observed practices are presented in Table 4 on page 76.

Participant 2

Participant 2 (referred to as Mr. Michael Montero from here on) is a 48 year-old Hispanic male who has been teaching for 11 years total, with two years at the current campus. He currently teaches 1st grade. Mr. Montero has an MBA. He obtained his teaching certificate through an alternative certification program. He did not indicate on the demographic survey how much training he received in social emotional skills through his teacher preparation program, but he indicated that he had received some training in social-emotional skills totaling about two or three days through professional development workshops. On the SEL scale he received the following scores on the subscales- comfort- 15 (high), commitment- 17 (high), culture- 19 (very high). Michael ranked the following four practices as those that he most frequently engaged in -
teacher empowers students with positive dialogue about their potential successes, rather than their failures; teacher gives immediate positive feedback and coaches students toward mastering their goals; teacher encourages and affirms students throughout the learning process; teacher assists students in appreciating others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments. He ranked the following two practices as those that he least frequently engages in - teacher greets students using magic triad and models it throughout the day; and teacher uses praise, acknowledgement, and affirmations.

Mr. Montero defined social emotional competence as “the ability the student has to put in practice his social skills and emotional skills into the learning.” He stated that the responsibility for teaching social emotional skills had three parts: parents, teacher, and the students themselves. He stated that the parents had to start from when the child was an infant to teach the values of the home, that when the student came to school the teacher was responsible for the academic and educational part, while the student was also responsible for his or her own learning. Michael did not define how he structured social emotional skills lessons, but stated that he always takes into account the student’s ability level when considering the student’s performance. In his words, “If a student has not the academic part well established I need to take this into account in order to get him successful or her successful without being shy because he doesn’t know and he doesn’t want to participate.” So, for this teacher, the student’s social emotional competence was related to his or her academic abilities.

When asked what hindered him in teaching social emotional skills, Mr. Montero stated that it was when one of the three parts previously identified didn’t do its work. He stated that sometimes the teacher might be in a hurry, thereby omitting something from the lesson plan, or
that the parent may not want to cooperate or be able to cooperate due to problems within the family, or that the student may not want to do his or her part in the process.

In regard to the campus administration, Michael Montero stated that the administration had provided training in social skills, created a campus pledge, disseminated materials that could be displayed in the classrooms, and was daily incorporating certain aspects of the Great Expectations program such as reciting the pledge. When asked what other things needed to take place or be changed to ensure that students received adequate social emotional skills training, Michael stated that he would like to have more frequent parent conferences. In his words, “I would love to have a 6 week meeting with most of my parents just to talk about the educational process and what is coming and talk also about the classroom expectation. This kind of stuff. That can help us to teach the students successfully.” Mr. Montero was also asked his opinion on how technology and media affect students’ social-emotional skills. He replied that students need to be exposed to different educational views so as to have different ways of communicating.

Mr. Montero ranked the following four practices as his strengths: teacher empowers students with positive dialogue about their potential successes, rather than their failures; teacher gives immediate positive feedback and coaches students toward mastering their goals; teacher encourages and affirms students throughout the learning process; and teacher assists students in appreciating others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments. Of these, only teacher encourages and affirms students throughout the learning process was observed in high frequency during the observation. Two of the highly ranked practices- teacher empowers students with positive dialogue about their potential successes rather than their failures; and teacher gives immediate feedback and coaches students toward mastering their goals- were not observed at all during the observation. The other highly ranked practice- teacher assists students in appreciating
others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments - was observed once. Of the two practices ranked low - teacher greets students using Magic Triad, models it throughout the day; and teacher uses praise, acknowledgment, and affirmations - only the praise and acknowledgement practice was observed.

Mr. Montero was observed during a writing lesson. When the observation began, students were seated at their individual desks. Mr. Montero was standing and presenting instruction to the whole class. He stood near a projector as he talked, engaging students in discussion as he demonstrated the writing skills on the projector including capitalization, punctuation, and word attack strategies for spelling. After the whole group instruction, Mr. Montero assigned the students independent seat work. He moved about the classroom monitoring student performance and offering feedback to students as they worked. When the independent work time ended, he called the students to a corner of the room to discuss their writing assignments, calling on different students to share their stories with the class.

The most frequently observed practice was: teacher listens intently and empathetically to students. This practice was observed 13 times. Mr. Montero stopped what he was doing, looked directly at students, and nodded or shook his head when they talked to him. Although this was the most frequently observed practice, Mr. Montero did not include it in his self-ranking of the practices. Two other practices that were observed somewhat frequently but were not included in the self-ranking were: teacher verbally affirms students and teacher acknowledges student input and provides positive feedback. There were six observed instances of Michael verbally affirming students. For example, he said “Oh I like this” in response to a student’s sentence on a composition task. Another time he said, “Okay. Keep going” as a student paused briefly in the telling of a story. There were four observed instances of the practice: teacher acknowledges
student input and provides feedback. This practice was observed during the setup portion of a writing activity. Students were seated at their individual desks and writing in their workbooks.

Mr. Montero walked around to different students asking them what their topic sentences were. As students answered, he gave them feedback on their sentences.

Michael Montero ranked the practice- teacher encourages and affirms students throughout the learning process- high. This practice was observed four times during the observation. Examples of this practice include when Michael said, “Okay. Keep going. You’re almost finished” to a student who was working on an assignment. He said, “Okay. You’re almost done. Alright” to another student, and “Come on,” nodding his head to a student who had paused mid-sentence while answering a question.

Although Mr. Montero ranked the practice- teacher assists students in appreciating others’ by acknowledging others’ accomplishments- high, this practice was only observed once when Michael said, “I like the way ‘K’ listed all the ideas in order” to the class. He ranked-teacher uses praise, acknowledgement, and affirmations- low, and this practice was observed twice during the observation. The practice- teacher models enthusiasm and a positive attitude- was observed once, even though it was not ranked by Mr. Montero.

In sum, although Michael Montero had high scores on the SEL scale in regard to his comfort with and commitment to teaching social skills, his self-ranked practices differed from the observed practices. See Tables 3 and 4 on pages 75 and 76 for tally counts of observed practices and comparison matrix of ranked practices versus observed practices.

Participant 3

Participant 3 (from here on referred to as Ms. Sunny Sanders) is a 40 year-old female of unidentified race. She has been teaching for 17 years total, with 15 years at the current campus.
Ms. Sanders currently teaches physical education (PE) to students in Grades 1 to 5. She holds a bachelor’s degree in education with a minor in health and emphasis in physical education. She reported that she taught health exclusively in the elementary grades for five years and taught one year of physical education and health at the secondary level before taking this current position. Sunny indicated that she received two or three classes in social emotional skills through her teacher preparation program at the university and some training in social emotional skills totaling about two or three days through professional development workshops. She received the following scores on the SEL scale subscales- comfort- 17 (high), commitment- 14 (high), culture- 16 (high). Sunny Sanders ranked the following four practices as those she engages in the most- teacher listens intently and empathetically to student; teacher verbally affirms students; teacher uses praise, acknowledgement, and affirmations; and teacher assists students in appreciating others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments. She ranked the following three as those she engages in the least- teacher empowers students with positive dialogue about their potential successes, rather than their failures; teacher greets students using magic triad and models it throughout the day; and teacher acknowledges student input and provides positive feedback.

Ms. Sanders defined social emotional skills as the student’s knowing how to handle different situations with different people. She stated that the responsibility for teaching social emotional skills falls on both the school and the parent. She stated, “The parents because that is their value that is being reflected in the social and emotional skills and a reflection of their family…And then there are certain situations at school that they are not going to encounter in their home…and so I think it needs to be the responsibility of both.” She stated that her social emotional skills lessons happen naturally within the structure of the PE lessons. In her words, “It
works out really naturally within just choosing groups, talking about sportsmanship and how we treat other people. In game times, in selecting teams, in encouraging each other when we’re working on skill development. And, also within the PE, we deal with the health and part of that is the mental and emotional health.”

A hindrance that Sunny Sanders cited as getting in the way of teaching social skills was the students’ lack of previous knowledge. She stated that the students have been coming to school with no knowledge of basic greetings and manners. She stated, “Maybe in the last ten years it’s been more apparent that we need to teach them everything from basic manners to basic greetings as well as the more complex social dynamics.” She reported that the campus administration has supported the teaching of social emotional skills by making it a campus wide initiative. She also reported that the counselors were working with the students in smaller groups within the classrooms to work on social emotional skills.

When asked what needed to be changed or take place to ensure that students received adequate social-emotional skills training, Ms. Sanders replied that follow-through by teachers so that they were incorporating it into every-day lessons was necessary. She also stated that she thought that general education teachers needed training on how to teach social skills. In regard to technology and its impact on student social skills, Sunny reported having mixed feelings. She stated that on the one hand, students have become so accustomed to communicating via technology that they no longer know how to communicate in person, but she also stated that some other students might feel more comfortable communicating through technology and would therefore begin conversations with others where they would not in person.

Ms. Sunny Sanders’ self-ranking of the practices coincided closely with the observational data. Three of the four highly ranked practices were also three of the high observed practices.
Two of the three practices ranked low were also observed to be low occurring. The differences between self-ranking and observation occurred with the practices: teacher assists students in appreciating others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments; teacher empowers students with positive dialogue about their potential successes rather than their failures; and teacher notices and encourages individual student strengths. The first was rated high but in observation was low, the second was rated low but in observation was medium, and the third was not rated by Sunny but was low in observation.

The observation of Sunny Sanders began as students stood in line in the hallway outside the gymnasium. Ms. Sanders instructed the students on how to behave as they entered the gymnasium, reminding them that another class was leaving the adjacent gymnasium. She followed the students into the gymnasium and directed them to sit in a particular formation on the gymnasium floor. Ms. Sanders described the games that would be played and went over the rules of the games with the students. As the students played, Ms. Sanders stood to the side observing, yelling encouragement, and listening to some students who went up to talk to her. She occasionally paused the games to remind the students of the rules, to offer encouragement, to offer suggestions on how students might play better, and to correct misbehavior. At the end of the class period, Ms. Sanders reviewed with the students the lessons they learned during the game, had them line up, and escorted them into the hallway to await their classroom teachers.

There were ten observed instances of the practice: teacher uses praise, acknowledgement and affirmations. This practice was ranked high by Sunny and was the highest occurring practice. Examples of statements made include, “You did a good job with elbow tag and you did a good job with bowling,” “I saw you taking turns. This is excellent,” and “I saw one team cheering on their teammates and I like that.” The practices: teacher listens intently and empathetically to
students and teacher verbally affirms students, were both ranked high by Ms. Sanders and there were seven instances observed of each practice. Ms. Sanders moved closer to students to hear them better, maintained eye contact and nodded when students talked to her, and turned her body toward students when listening to them. Examples of verbal affirmations observed include, “You got it ‘O’ Good,” “You were right ‘G’,” “Awesome,” and “Excellent.”

The practices: teacher greets students using Magic Triad, models it throughout the day and teacher acknowledges student input and provides positive feedback were both ranked low by Sunny and were observed only once each during the observation. Although Ms. Sanders ranked high the practice: teacher assists students in appreciating others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments, this practice was only observed once when Sunny said, “‘G’ thank you for helping ‘E’.”

In sum, Sunny Sanders’ ratings on the SEL scale suggested high comfort with and commitment to teaching social emotional skills. Sunny’s practice rankings closely coincided with observational tallies.

Participant 4

Participant 4 (from here on referred to as Ms. Susan Salas) is a 31 year-old Hispanic female who has been teaching for seven years total, all at the current campus. She currently teaches 2nd grade math/science. Susan Salas holds a bachelor’s degree in social work and indicated that she obtained her teaching certificate through alternative certification through the Education Career Alternatives Program also known as ECAP. ECAP is a privately owned alternative teacher certification program in Texas. She indicated that she received two or three classes in social emotional skills through her teacher preparation program and some training in social emotional skills totaling about two or three days through professional development
workshops. On the SEL scale subscales she received the following scores- comfort- 16 (high), commitment- 16 (high), culture- 18 (very high). Ms. Salas ranked the following practices as those that she engages in frequently and or does well- teacher models enthusiasm and a positive attitude; teacher empowers students with positive dialogue about their potential successes, rather than their failures; teacher gives immediate feedback and coaches students toward mastering their goals; teacher listens intently and empathetically to student; teacher verbally affirms students; teacher encourages and affirms students throughout the learning process; teacher acknowledges student input and provides positive feedback; teacher notices and encourages individual student strengths; teacher uses praise, acknowledgment, and affirmations; and teacher assists students in appreciating others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments. She ranked the following practice as the one that she engages in the least or is least competent at- teacher greets students using Magic Triad and models it throughout the day.

Susan defined social-emotional competencies as the ability to “function in society”. She talked about students’ ability to work together and resolve conflicts effectively on their own. She stated that the responsibility for teaching social-emotional skills starts at home with the parents. In her words, “Of course it has to start at home. It’s the parents.” She added that teachers also had a responsibility, but emphasized that it had to start with parents.

Ms. Salas stated that she does not have specific lessons but rather responds to different situations as they arise. She stated, “I really don’t have a lesson; it’s just something that you try to catch them on and then praise them when they actually do something nice.” She stated that hindrances she has found in teaching social-emotional skills are the egocentricity of her students and the parents’ actions. In regard to their egocentricity she stated, “It’s still all about me, me, me, and you try to open their minds to, you know, it’s the classroom and sometimes they don’t
get it. So I think a lot of it could also do with the age.” In regard to the parents she stated, “I think sometimes it still has to do with the parents. Being here, teaching them one way, and yet the parents. So that kind of trying to balance that well. You really aren’t their parents and you can’t tell them ‘Your parents are wrong.’ So I think that also is a big issue.”

In response to the question about administrative support, Ms. Salas reported that the campus had adopted the Great Expectations program and the teachers were being encouraged to follow the expectations such as praising and accepting mistakes. She stated that parent involvement was something that needed to take place to ensure that students received adequate social-emotional skills training. In her words, “I think it would be nice to have the parents involved in what we’re doing. Like in PTA we’ll talk about it, but I’m like, they put us through this training through summer. Like, it would be nice for the parents. I think that would help out a lot the kids.”

When asked her opinion of the impact of technology on student social skills, she reported that she felt it was necessary to teach students how to properly utilize the technology. She stated, “Teaching them what to do, what not to do. It’s public. A lot of kids don’t understand that. So we’ve talked to them about, if you put something mean on there, it’s going to stay on there.”

Ms. Susan Salas was observed during a math lesson. When the observation began, Ms. Salas was teaching a lesson on fractions to the whole class. She engaged the students in discussion about reducing fractions and determining equivalent fractions. She stood near an overhead projector working some problems, and occasionally called on students to go up to the projector and solve problems as well. At the end of the lesson on fractions, Ms. Salas assigned students in groups to different centers to play different math games. Some students worked in pairs, some worked in groups of threes, and some worked in groups of four. Some students were
at computers playing math games, others played board games, while others worked out of textbooks. Ms. Salas walked around the room checking on the groups of students and talked quietly with them about the games they were playing.

Susan ranked all practices high except the magic triad practice. In observation, however, only four practices were ranked relatively high, two were ranked low, and five were not observed. The practice: teacher verbally affirms students, was observed five times. Examples of verbal affirmations from Ms. Salas included “Yeah, that’s fine” and “Yep, you’re right.” There were four instances each of the practices: teacher listens intently and empathetically to students and teacher uses praise, acknowledgement, and affirmations. Susan moved around the room to different student desks, leaning in close to the students and listening closely to the students as they talked to her. Affirmations included phrases such as “Good job,” “Right,” and “Yes.” Three instances of the practice: teacher gives immediate positive feedback and coaches students toward mastering their goals, were observed. For example, when settling an argument between two boys who were playing a math game Susan Salas said to one, “Remember, say ‘You get one more chance’ please.”

Although Ms. Salas ranked the practices: teacher acknowledges student input and provides positive feedback and teacher assists students in appreciating others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments, high, each practice was only observed once during the observation. Susan acknowledged a student’s answer and provided positive feedback when she said, “Yes. It is an equal fraction. But, I want you to see it a different way.” She appreciated two students when she said, “Thank you ‘F’ and ‘K’ for sitting quietly.”

In sum, Ms. Susan Salas’ scores on the SEL scale suggest high comfort with and commitment to teaching social emotional skills. Although Ms. Salas ranked herself high on all
but one of the practices, she was observed practicing only seven of the practices, and only five of them more than once. Observational data compiled did not coincide with Ms. Salas’ ranking of her practices.

**Summary of Participant Profiles**

In summary, all subgroup participants were experienced teachers with a minimum of seven years of experience. Two of them were graduate degree holders. The subgroup taught different grade levels and subjects.

Table 2 summarizes case study participant teacher demographics.

Table 2

**Demographic Characteristics of Case Study Subgroup Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Total Years teaching</th>
<th>Total years at current campus</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Grade level/subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1. Mary Mack</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2. Michael Montero</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3. Sunny Sanders</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>1-5 P.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4. Susan Salas</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>2nd Math/Science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. P1, P2, P3, and P4 represent Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4.

None of the participants stated that he or she taught specific social emotional skill lessons, but instead they stated that they taught social skills as situations arose naturally within the classroom. All teachers indicated that they had administrative support from the principal, and that the campus was implementing the Great Expectations program. All teachers indicated that parental support was necessary to ensure that students developed social emotional competence. All of the participants cited lack of parental support as a hindrance in teaching social skills, while one also cited as a hindrance the lack of time to teach social skills within the school day in addition to all other state required standards.
All subgroup participants had scores in the high range on the Comfort and Commitment scales of the SEL scale, suggesting high comfort with and commitment to teaching social emotional skills. In comparing the participants’ self-rankings of practices related to teaching social emotional skills and their observed practices, there was variability in consistency. One participant’s self-ranking corresponded closely with observational data. Two of the participants’ self-rankings corresponded somewhat to observational data, while the last participant’s self-ranking was not at all related to observational data. All teachers listened intently to students and verbally affirmed them at a high frequency. Tables 3 and 4 provide the number of instances of each observed practice for all subgroup participants, and a comparison matrix of the participants’ ranked practices and the observed practices from the observations.

Table 3

*Number of Instances of Observed Practices for Each Subgroup Participant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher models enthusiasm and a positive attitude</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher empowers students with positive dialogue about their potential successes, rather than their failures</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher gives immediate positive feedback and coaches students toward mastering their goals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher greets students using Magic Triad, models it throughout the day</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Teacher listens intently and empathetically to students</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher verbally affirms students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher encourages and affirms students throughout the learning process</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher acknowledges student input and provides positive Feedback</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher notices and encourages individual student strengths</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher uses praise, acknowledgement, and affirmations</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher assists students in appreciating others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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Table 4

Comparison of Ranked Practices and Observed Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>O.P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>O. P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>O. P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>O. P4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher empowers students with positive dialogue about their potential successes, rather than their failures</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher gives immediate positive feedback and coaches students toward mastering their goals</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher greets students using Magic Triad, models it throughout the day</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher listens intently and empathetically to students</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
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<td>Teacher verbally affirms students</td>
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<td>H</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher acknowledges student input and provides positive feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher notices and encourages individual student strengths</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher uses praise, acknowledgement, and affirmations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher assists students in appreciating others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. P1, P2, P3, and P4 represent rankings provided by Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4. O.P1, O.P2, O.P3, and O.P4 represent the observations of Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4. H stands for High and L stands for Low.

Emergent Themes

This section discusses the themes that emerged from the interviews and observations regarding teacher beliefs about social emotional learning. The discussion targets themes that
emerged in the following areas: definition of social skills, who is responsible for teaching social emotional skills, the way that social emotional skill lessons are structured, barriers or hindrances in teaching social emotional skills, perception of administrative support for teaching social emotional skills, and the impact of technology on social emotional skills.

**Definition of Social Emotional Skills**

The definition of social emotional skills varied from participant to participant. For one participant the focus of social emotional skills was social or group focused, while for another it was focused on the individual. For one participant it was future oriented, while for yet another it was related to academic success. Although social emotional skills encompass all those things, the participants saw only one aspect of social emotional skills, and interestingly all saw different aspects. One participant stated that it is “The student knowing how [to handle] different situations with different people.” Another stated, “I think it is how you cope. You cope with your environment, your learning, your family life. It’s basically how you control your emotions.”

One of the participants viewed social emotional skills as necessary for group functioning, but more so for future functioning. In their words, “I see social emotional that you can function in society. So yeah, I try to always have real life situations. They’re kids but they need to start learning that they need to socially function in real life or they won’t have a good job.”

The final participant saw social emotional skills as necessary for learning and academic success stating, “Social emotional competence for me is the ability the student has to put in practice his social skills and emotional skills into the learning. I think the student should have the adequate level of emotional education and sometimes this came from home, in order to be successful in school.” Thus, each participant had a slightly different view of what social emotional skills are and what their purpose is.
Responsibility for Teaching Social Emotional Skills

The participants all agreed that parents were responsible for teaching social emotional skills. They also all agreed that the school should bear some responsibility as well. The degree to which each part bore responsibility varied somewhat among participants with three stating that the responsibility was pretty equally shared between home and school, and one emphasizing the parents’ role more greatly than the teacher’s role. One participant also included the student as having a responsibility. The participants made statements such as “I think it’s a little bit the responsibility of both the parents and the school.” “I think we all have to be responsible. I don’t think it’s any one place.” “I think there is three part of responsibility… In this way the three part are responsible.” “It starts at home. It has to start at home because we were taught by parents. And then of course the teachers also have to…So yeah, of course, it has to start at home with the parents.” Thus, although all participants saw teachers as having some responsibility for teaching social skills, they did not see it as solely the responsibility of teachers.

The Structure of Social Emotional Skills Lessons

None of the participants stated that he or she taught specific structured discrete social emotional skills lessons. Two of the participants stated that they addressed situations as they arose and used them as teachable moments. One of the participants stated that social emotional skills were automatically worked into the lessons as a part of the curriculum (PE), while the other stated that they took into consideration the student’s academic ability level when encouraging participation. Two of the participants also stated that the school counselor taught social emotional skills in the classes.

Examples of statements made by the participants who stated that they taught social emotional skills as situations arose included: “And so I try to use real life. Something these kids
will understand. Sometimes it’s a situation that happens in here. We’d often have a 30 minute lesson on why that was right and why that was wrong.” And “I don’t have a lesson. It’s more of a, I guess, it just depends on the situation… I really don’t have a lesson. It’s just something that you try to catch them on.”

The participant who stated that social emotional skills were part of the lesson stated, “It works out naturally within just choosing groups, talking about sportsmanship and how we treat other people in game times, in selecting teams, in encouraging each other when we’re working on skill development…It works really well into our lessons.”

In considering the students’ ability levels, one participant explained it thusly, “I always take into account the ability of the students. I believe that a student that has confidence in his own knowledge has confidence in participating in class because he or she knows that he knows and he’s able to participate without hesitation. If a student has not the academic part well established, I need to take this into account in order to get him to be successful or her successful without being shy because he doesn’t know and he doesn’t want to participate because ‘I don’t know enough of this and I don’t want everyone to see and laugh at me’.”

Two of the participants indicated that the school counselor taught social emotional skill lessons in the classes. One stated “I think that the counselors work with the classes in smaller groups to kind of work on a lot of those skills;” while another stated, “We have a counselor that comes once a week and really does stuff.”

Thus, although none of the participants taught discrete units on social emotional skills, they reported incorporating social emotional skill lessons into the classroom either as situations arose or as part of other lessons.
Barriers to Teaching Social Emotional Skills

The participants all cited different hindrances to teaching social emotional skills. The differences related either to external factors or to student factors, and in one case, both. Hindrances that were cited included time constraints due to testing demands, family troubles, differences in parent values or skills, egocentricity of students due to age, lack of pre-knowledge or basic skills, and lack of motivation.

Time constraint was a hindrance cited by two participants. One stated that the testing demands for students in that grade level made teaching anything other than the tested curriculum nearly impossible. In her words, “Time. It’s just flat time. We don’t have time to teach it…Let’s add some hours to our days or let’s do something because I feel like we’re throwing a lot of things out for the STAAR test.” Another also stated that time was a factor but did not relate it to the state mandated testing; instead he related it to oversight, stating “Sometimes we’re in a hurry we doesn’t [sic] have the time to put certain things in the lesson plan.”

Another hindrance that was reported related to parental differences in values or inability to teach the needed skills for whatever reason. Participants made comments including “Sometimes the parent doesn’t want to cooperate. Maybe because the family structure or the nuclear family is passing through some problems, you know, as parent divorces.” “Like, we are not getting the parents who are teaching the kind of basic skills and manners.” And “I think sometimes it still has to do with the parents. Being here teaching them one way, and yet the parents. So that kind of trying to balance that well. You really aren’t their parents and you can’t tell them ‘Your parents are wrong.’ So I think that also is a big issue.” Participants indicated the need for parents to be more involved in the campus’ social skills initiative.
Finally, student factors were cited as a hindrance. The participants acknowledged that certain factors within the students made teaching social skills somewhat difficult including a lack of motivation, egocentricity, and a lack of pre-knowledge. They said things like, “Sometimes the student doesn’t want to do his part in the process.” “They are not coming in with any pre-knowledge. In the last ten years it’s been more apparent that we need to teach them everything from basic manners to basic greetings as well as the more complex social dynamics.” And “I guess I’ve noticed they’re very egocentric and so it’s still all about me, me, me, and you try to open their minds to, you know, it’s the classroom, and sometimes they don’t get it.”

In sum, the participants cited student factors, parental factors, and teacher time constraints as their major barriers to teaching social emotional skills.

*Administrative Support for Teaching Social Emotional Skills*

All participants cited the campus’ adoption of the Great Expectation program as an example of the administrative support they received for teaching social emotional skills. They indicated that they received training at the outset of adoption of the program, continued to receive on-going training, and that the campus administration had fully embraced the program as demonstrated through a change in the discipline structure, the adoption of a campus creed/school pledge, and regular reminders to use the tenets. For example, one participant stated “I think they have made it a school-wide initiative through the classroom creeds and school creeds that they recite frequently about how to work with each other. The consequence structure seems to be based on how to treat other people and how to deal with other people instead of just straight discipline.” Another stated, “Well, we did start Great Expectations and that’s very much a social program, and we got some pretty good training on it. She [the principal] really tries to bring it back to us. We just had an in-service the other day for an hour two hours I don’t know what it
was; to kind of remind us to keep doing that. She’s very supportive of it. I think she believes strongly in it.” And yet another stated “The campus administration has provided us with training in social skills. We have created a pledge for the school that we recite every day, to the students’ being proud of being [school name] students. We also have 17 principles that you can see right here on the wall that we call classroom expectations that we recite every day.”

*The Impact of Technology on Social Emotional Skills*

The participants’ responses varied somewhat on their views about the impact of technology on social emotional skills. Two participants had mixed feelings stating that they thought it helped but also hurt students; one participant disliked technology and considered it impersonal and thought that it hampered social skill development; while one thought that it was good and stated that students needed exposure as it has become more prevalent in their world.

Those who had mixed feelings stated that on the one hand, students hide behind technology and miss opportunities to interact face to face with others, but that on the other hand, some students might find it freeing to communicate via screen where talking in person might be much more intimidating. One stated, “You’ll see a lot of kids that they don’t know how to communicate with somebody face to face because they are so used to communicating via text and via computers, and so they don’t know how to talk to somebody face to face…But then you see other kids who seem to be more comfortable where they might not know how to approach somebody. If they can approach them through a message or a google doc where they are communicating through that, they might have that interaction with somebody that they might not normally do.” The other stated, “Especially having them at a young age, teaching them what to do, what not to do. It’s public. A lot of kids don’t understand that. So we’ve talked to them
about, if you put something mean on there, it’s going to stay on there…So it’s also a good thing and a bad thing, you know, just depending on what.”

One participant disliked technology and stated that it was cold. She said, “They don’t have to talk. They don’t even have to have real friends. They can meet people on the Internet…It’s not very personable. You know, it really isn’t. It isn’t build great friendships over texting people. Maybe I’m old. Maybe the young generation can build friendships that way. It’s just kind of cold to me.” However, another really liked it and said, “Well, they love the media. They love to work with the Ipad, the Internet. They love it, and they are very interested with this. I think they need to be exposed to different educational views because the more they will get this the more they will have a lot of communication. Wireless communication, Internet, computers, application, so far.”

In summation, participant views on the use of technology and its impact on social skills varied.

SEL Scale Results

This section provides the results of the data analysis of the SEL scale for the whole group, the opt-out group, and the case study subgroup.

The mean score on the comfort scale was 17 (n = 10) for the whole group of participants, 16 (n = 4) for the case study subgroup, and 17.67 (n = 6) for the opt-out group. The standard deviation on the comfort scale was 1.76 for the whole group, thus, the opt-out group and subgroup were comparable in their performance on this scale. All three means fell in the high classification range.

The mean score on the culture scale of the SEL scale was 18.7 (n = 10) for the whole group of participants, 18.25 (n = 4) for the case study subgroup, and 19 (n = 6) for the opt-out
group. The standard deviation on the culture scale was 1.57 for the whole group, thus, the opt-out group and subgroup were comparable in their performance on this scale. All three means fell in the very high classification range.

On the Commitment scale of the SEL scale, the mean score was 16.2 (n = 10) for the whole group, 15.25 (n = 4) for the case study subgroup, and 16.83 (n = 6) for the opt-out group. The standard deviation on the Commitment scale was 1.75 for the whole group. The opt-out group and subgroup had comparable means on this scale, and all three means fell within the high range of classification.

Table 5 compares the means of the groups on the three different scales.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Whole group M (SD)</th>
<th>Case Study Subgroup M</th>
<th>Opt-out group M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>17 (1.76)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>18.7 (1.57)</td>
<td>18.25</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>16.2 (1.75)</td>
<td>15.25</td>
<td>16.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relationship Between Various Demographic Variables and SEL Scale Scores

Comfort

A multiple regression was run to predict comfort from total years teaching, teacher preparation programs, training programs, education level, and professional development for the whole group. Total years teaching refers to the total number of years that the participant indicated that they had been teaching. Teacher preparation program refers to the type of program from which the participants indicated receiving their teaching credentials, either a university or alternative certification. Training program refers to the amount of training in social emotional skills the participant indicated receiving while enrolled in their teacher training courses be it
through the university or alternative certification program. Education level refers to the highest
degree earned. Professional development refers to the amount of training in social emotional
skills the participant indicated receiving through professional development activities. The
assumptions of linearity, independence of errors, homoscedasticity, unusual points and normality
of residuals were met. These variables did not statistically significantly predict comfort, $F (5,2) =
0.373, p = .838 >.005, R^2 = .482$. Regression coefficients and standard errors can be found in
Table 6.

Table 6

*Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for the Comfort Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SEB</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>13.479</td>
<td>14.465</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Yrs Teaching</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>-.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Preparation Program</td>
<td>-1.485</td>
<td>3.335</td>
<td>-.327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Programs</td>
<td>.880</td>
<td>2.341</td>
<td>.284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>-.81</td>
<td>2.409</td>
<td>-.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>1.951</td>
<td>2.284</td>
<td>.630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. B is the unstandardized regression coefficient, SEB is the standard error of the unstandardized regression
coefficient, and Beta is the standardized regression coefficient.

For the subgroup, a Pearson’s product moment correlation was run to assess the
relationship between scores on the comfort scale and the various demographic variables. A
correlation coefficient could not be computed for the relationship between professional
development and comfort as all respondents indicated the same level of professional
development received. Thus the professional development variable was a constant. There was
small correlation between total years teaching and comfort, $r = .191, p > .05$; large negative
correlation between education and teacher preparation programs and comfort, $r = -.707, p > .05$;
and a moderate correlation between the amount of training received through the training
programs and comfort, $r = .500, p > .05$. None of the coefficients was statistically significant.
Table 7 presents the Pearson correlations for the subgroup variables and the p-values.
Table 7

*Pearson Correlations for the Demographic Variables and the Comfort Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Teacher Preparation Programs</th>
<th>Training Preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>.191</td>
<td>-.707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Years Teaching</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td>.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Culture*

A multiple regression was run to predict culture from total years teaching, teacher preparation programs, training programs, education level, and professional development for the whole group. The assumptions of linearity, independence of errors, homoscedasticity, unusual points and normality of residuals were met. These variables did not statistically significantly predict culture, $F(5,2) = 1.455, p = .455 > .005, R^2 = .784$. Regression coefficients and standard errors can be found in Table 8.

Table 8

*Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for the Culture Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SEB</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>7.514</td>
<td>9.559</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Years Teaching</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Preparation Program</td>
<td>2.390</td>
<td>2.204</td>
<td>.515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Programs</td>
<td>-.449</td>
<td>1.547</td>
<td>-.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>1.127</td>
<td>1.592</td>
<td>.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>2.350</td>
<td>1.509</td>
<td>.741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. B is the unstandardized regression coefficient, SEB is the standard error of the unstandardized regression coefficient, and Beta is the standardized regression coefficient.

A Pearson’s product moment correlation was run to assess the relationship between scores on the culture scale and the various demographic variables for the subgroup. All respondents indicated the same level of professional development received, thus the professional development variable was a constant. Therefore, a correlation coefficient could not be computed.
for the relationship between professional development and culture. There was moderate
correlation between total years teaching and culture, \( r = .475, p > .05 \); large correlation between
education and culture, \( r = .845, p > .05 \); small correlation between teacher preparation programs
and culture, \( r = .169, p > .05 \); and a large negative correlation between the amount of training
received through the training programs and culture, \( r = -.866, p > .05 \). None of the coefficients
was statistically significant. Table 9 presents the Pearson correlations for the subgroup variables.

Table 9

*Pearson Correlations for the Demographic Variables and the Culture Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Total Years Teaching</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Teacher Preparation Programs</th>
<th>Training Preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>.475</td>
<td>.845</td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>-.866</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Commitment*

A multiple regression was run to predict commitment from total years teaching, teacher
preparation programs, training programs, education level, and professional development for the
whole group. The assumptions of linearity, independence of errors, homoscedasticity, unusual
points and normality of residuals were met. These variables did not statistically significantly
predict commitment, \( F (5,2) = 0.217, p = .927 > .005, R^2 = .352 \). Regression coefficients and
standard errors can be found in Table 10.
Table 10

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for the Commitment Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SEB</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>10.040</td>
<td>19.781</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Years Teaching</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>.356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Preparation Program</td>
<td>.605</td>
<td>4.561</td>
<td>.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Programs</td>
<td>1.051</td>
<td>3.201</td>
<td>.278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>-.823</td>
<td>3.295</td>
<td>-.217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>1.532</td>
<td>3.123</td>
<td>.405</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. B is the unstandardized regression coefficient, SEB is the standard error of the unstandardized regression coefficient, and Beta is the standardized regression coefficient.

To assess the relationship between scores on the commitment scale and the various demographic variables of the subgroup, a Pearson correlation was run. As with the comfort and culture scales, a correlation coefficient could not be computed for the relationship between professional development and commitment as the professional development variable was a constant. There was large negative correlation between total years teaching and Commitment, $r = -.722$, $p > .05$; small correlation between education and commitment, $r = .192$, $p > .05$; statistically significant large positive correlation between teacher preparation programs and commitment, $r = .962$, $p < .05$; and a moderate correlation between the amount of training received through the training programs and commitment, $r = .500$, $p > .05$. Table 11 presents the Pearson correlations for the subgroup variables and the commitment scale.

Table 11

Pearson Correlations for the Demographic Variables and the Commitment Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Total Years Teaching</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Teacher Preparation Programs</th>
<th>Training Preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>-.722</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.962*</td>
<td>.500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * Significant at $p < .05$.

The results of the statistical analysis indicated that the subgroup and whole group were comparable in terms of the mean scores on the comfort, commitment, and culture scales of the
None of the demographic variables statistically significantly predicted scores on the SEL scales for the whole group. For the subgroup, there was a statistically significant strong correlation between teacher preparation programs and the commitment scale.

Summary

In summary, the demographic characteristics of the whole group of participants were somewhat similar to the entire population of the campus in regard to gender, but varied in regard to ethnic makeup and years of experience. The case study subgroup was even less representative of the entire campus and the whole group, but this was due to the small number of case study participants (n=4). In comparing the performance of the whole group and case study group on the SEL scale subscales, both groups had comparable scores. Multiple regression run on the various demographic variables and the three SEL subscales indicated that none of the demographic variables statistically significantly predicted scores on the SEL subscales for the whole group. In looking at the demographic variables and their relationship to the SEL subscales for the case study subgroup, Pearson correlations were computed. The only statistically significant correlation that was evident was in the relationship between teacher preparation programs and the commitment scale. There was a strong positive correlation between the two.

Participant profiles were developed and described. None of the participants admitted to structuring specific social skills lessons, but rather, addressed social skills indirectly as situations arose. On the SEL scale, all subgroup participants had scores suggesting high comfort with and commitment to teaching social skills. In comparing the participants’ observed practices to their ranked practices, there was variability in consistency. Participant 1’s identified highest practice was also her observed highest practice, but her other practices were not observed in the frequency that her ranking suggested. Participant 2’s highly ranked practices were either not...
observed or were least occurring. His more frequently observed practices were not ranked by him. Participant 3 had the most closely coincidental rankings and observations. The practices that she ranked herself as high in were also more frequently observed, and those that she ranked herself low in were less frequently observed. Finally, Participant 4 ranked herself highly on all but one of the practices, but observational tallies indicated that she did not engage in many of the ranked practices.

Themes that emerged from the interviews were also identified and discussed. Social emotional skills were defined broadly among participants with the variability ranging from skills being for social use, individual competence, academic, and future oriented. Participants all agreed that parents and teachers shared the responsibility for teaching social skills, but the degree to which the responsibility should be shared varied among participants. All participants indicated that they did not teach discrete social skills lessons, but they indicated that they addressed social skills as the situations arose within the classroom. Different barriers to teaching social emotional skills were identified including lack of time for teachers, lack of parental input, and lack of student knowledge or skills. All participants indicated that the campus administration had provided support for teaching social emotional skills through the adoption of the Great Expectation program. Finally, participants had varying views on the impact of technology on social skills, ranging from dislike of technology to approval for its use.

The next chapter discusses the implications of these results, links the results to previous literature, and makes suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter reviews findings from the analysis of the data collected to answer the research questions and draws conclusions in light of the purposes of the study. A summary of the purpose of the study, guiding conceptual frameworks, methods employed and results found are provided early in the chapter. Then, the findings are discussed. Next, the chapter delineates the contribution of the study to the literature of social and emotional education and discusses its implications for practice. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and provides recommendations for future research.

The study investigated the relationship between teacher-espoused beliefs regarding students’ social emotional skills and the teachers’ own classroom practices with regard to teaching social emotional skills. The study was conducted in a school where a social emotional curriculum, Great Expectations, had been adopted and was being implemented. Therefore, its exploration of teacher beliefs and practices occurred in a context of support for teaching social and emotional skills and with some expectation of the researcher that the program being implemented in the school would have some influence on teacher beliefs and practices. The study’s conceptual framework was based on Bandura’s Social Cognitive theory and Dewey’s theory of teacher responsibility. These theories suggest that to address the psychological and sociological needs of the child, the teacher’s chief duty is to ensure that activities occur in the classroom that increase student efficacy, sense of self, and ability to manage emotions and social situations. The teacher should reflect on his or her beliefs, behavior, and choices, in order to
create an environment where students gain mastery of content, subject matter, emotional insight and regulation, social insight, and social competence.

Ten teachers from an elementary school in a North Texas suburban school district participated in the study. All ten participants completed demographic questionnaires about their backgrounds in education, training completed, and years of experience in teaching. They also completed a 12-item Likert social emotional self-report scale that measures comfort with, commitment to, and culture of the campus toward teaching social emotional skills; and a self-ranking scale that involved ranking their practices in teaching the social emotional skills articulated in the Great Expectations (GE) program by self-perceived frequency of implementation. Four of the ten teachers also participated in interviews and classroom observations of their teaching practices. The methods used were mainly descriptive and correlational.

Research question 1, about the comparability of the population of teachers at the school and the subgroups studied, was answered using results of the demographic survey and the 2012-2013 Texas Academic Report from the Texas Education Agency. The whole group and subgroup demographic characteristics varied somewhat in terms of gender, race and years of experience. In general, the subgroup of teachers was more predominantly male and representative of experienced teachers than the campus populations. The whole group was more similar to the campus than the subgroup in gender distribution, but included no beginning teachers, the least experienced group. Compared to the campus, the subgroup underrepresented White teachers, and the whole group underrepresented Hispanic teachers. Other variations in distribution occurred, as well, because of the smallness of the whole group and subgroup samples. In interpreting the data, lack of inexperienced teachers in the sampled group seems especially likely to be important.
Research question 2 about comparative practices among the groups was answered comparing means of SEL scale scores by group. Scores on the comfort and commitment scale for all groups fell in the High range; and in the Very High range on the culture scale. All scores fell within one standard deviation of the mean. Results were comparable across the whole group, opt-out group, and subgroup. It is possible that score for the campus population might have been lower because of its higher representation of less experienced teachers.

Research question 3 asked about the relationship between teacher demographic characteristics and their approaches to teaching social emotional skills, and was answered using the demographic survey and the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Scale for Teachers. Results of analysis of the demographic data indicated that none of the variables included in the study were significantly associated with teachers’ scores on the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Scale for Teachers. However, for the four teachers interviewed, there was a strong positive correlation between teacher preparation programs and their scores on the Commitment scale. This suggests that the traditional university or college type of teacher preparation program was associated with a teacher’s likelihood to commit to teaching social emotional skills.

To answer research question 4, about the status of the subgroup teachers’ beliefs about social emotional learning and their classroom practices, interview and observation data were analyzed. In examining teachers’ espoused beliefs and practices, none of the teachers interviewed reported that he or she taught specific social skills in discrete lessons or units, but rather, they all reported addressing social skills indirectly, as situations arose naturally in the classroom. A comparison of the observation data to the self-ranking scale data indicated variability among self-perceived practice and observed practice, with one participant’s ranked
practices corresponding to observed practice, but with the other three participants’ ranked practices differing from what was observed in their classrooms during one observation.

Research question 5, which asked about the relationship between the subgroup teachers’ beliefs about social emotional learning and their teaching practices, was answered using data obtained from the interviews, classroom observations, and the SEL scale. All four teachers in the subgroup had high scores on the comfort and commitment scales of the SEL scale. Despite having comparable scores on the scales, their classroom practices varied in regard to the amount and types of practices observed. However, consistent across all participants were their relatively high use of verbal affirmations and intent listening practices.

Discussion of the Findings

This study used case study methodology to explore the research questions. Within the case study, a mixed methods approach was used. There were multiple teacher cases within the campus case study. Qualitative methods were used to examine the data from the individual cases while quantitative methods were used to examine the data for the whole group and subgroup. These methods worked together to create a whole picture of the case study. This section discusses the findings from the qualitative data first and then the findings from the quantitative data analysis. Among the findings, those based on quantitative results are more speculative but may help to explain some of the qualitative findings.

Important themes emerged from analysis of the qualitative data. First, it is interesting to note that none of the teachers actually referenced the Great Expectations tenets in their discussion of social emotional skills or how they teach them. They did refer to GE in their discussion of the administrative support that they received, but did not refer to its principles, tenets, or expectations when talking about how they structured their lessons or classroom
practices. Although the campus administration had stressed the importance of incorporating GE practices into the classroom, even providing continual reminders and professional development about the GE principles and practices, the participants did not refer to GE. Instead they talked about teaching social and emotionally-related lessons as they arose naturally. Although this strategy is not necessarily ineffective, it does not demonstrate forethought or planning.

According to Zins and Elias (2006), effective social emotional instruction should be systematic, integrated within and throughout the academic curriculum and provided over multiple years. This suggests forethought and planning. Elias and Weissberg (2000) and Fox and Lentini (2006) outline the steps that should be followed in teaching social emotional skills. These steps include first identifying the skill to be taught, discussing the rationale behind its importance and relating it to students’ lives, teaching and modeling the specific components of the skill, providing students with opportunities to practice the skill, providing feedback on students’ use of the skill, and finally prompting students to use the skills in other situations. The participants in this study did not indicate following these steps to teach social emotional skills. It may be that the training they received did not specifically detail the steps to follow in teaching social emotional skills.

The GE training does not focus solely on social emotional skills, but instead addresses a variety of topics including promoting student engagement, cooperative learning, math skills, vocabulary, critical thinking, etc. In that vein, it may be that the GE training does not provide instruction on how to follow the steps to teach social emotional skills, or it may be that the leadership team did not include those steps in their training of GE, its tenets, and practices.

Second, it is interesting that the teachers had different opinions about what social emotional skills are. Considering that the campus was emphasizing social emotional learning and staff members were being regularly trained by the leadership team on GE practices and tenets,
one might assume that the staff would have similar views of social emotional skills and what they are or that they might cite a definition from training. Instead, each teacher focused on different aspects of social emotional skills, such as cooperating within a group or managing one’s self. This variety may be related to the fact that GE is not necessarily a social emotional curriculum as much as it is a professional development model focused on enhancing campus climate. As such, initial training may not have placed emphasis on defining social emotional skills. It is not clear whether GE, with its focus on character traits such as kindness, compassion, and honesty, provides a definition of social emotional skills. The participant who was a PE teacher was able to relate the values of sportsmanship to social emotional skills. Her background and training likely influenced her views on the subject matter. However, Susan Salas’ bachelor’s degree was in social work, and Mary Mack’s degree was a dual major in elementary education and special education. One would assume that those fields would also lend themselves to a discussion and deeper understanding of social emotional skills. Elementary education and special education typically include an emphasis on developmentally appropriate practices for students at different developmental levels, and for children in the younger grades, this includes social and emotional development or school readiness skills. According to the National Association of Social Work website, “The practice of social work requires knowledge of human development and behavior” (NASW, 2014). This would lead one to assume that a person with a degree in social work would have an understanding of social emotional skills and how they influence behavior. In light of this, Mr. Montero, whose background was in business, might have been expected to be the only participant with a surface level understanding of social emotional learning competencies.
Thirdly, in analyzing the observation data, it was readily apparent that all teachers were observed listening intently and empathetically to students, and verbally affirming them. Not only were these behaviors observed in all participants, but these were observed to occur frequently with all participants. In contrast, the two least observed of the GE practices were modeling enthusiasm and positive dialogue about successes rather than failure. Only one instance of each of these behaviors was observed for one participant, and they were not observed at all in the other three observations.

A fourth interesting finding was the mismatch between participants’ self-rankings on the GE practices and the practices actually noted during the observations. Although Sunny Sanders’ rating of herself was closely mirrored by the observational data, the other three participants’ rankings differed to varying degrees from observational data. It is possible that the types of activity being observed may have influenced the use of the different GE practices. For example, Ms. Sanders was observed teaching a PE class. She admitted that her background and training placed a heavy emphasis on social emotional skills and how they were integrated in the sportsmanship and mental health aspect of the physical education curriculum. In contrast, the other three participants, generalists working in self-contained classrooms, were observed conducting a whole class discussion, and monitoring individual or small group work. It may be that these activities lend themselves to particular practices and that the observed practices are more likely to be employed during these types of activities. It may also be possible that there was not a common understanding of the practices in spite of their being articulated as part of the GE program. This is discussed further in the limitations section.

In examining the quantitative data, I found the subgroup was comparable to the whole group and the opt-out group on the three SEL scales. Participants in all groups rated themselves
high in commitment and comfort and the campus as very high in culture which seems appropriate considering that the campus had adopted and was implementing a SEL program.

Typically, one would expect greater variation in responses on rating scales. As the scores on this scale potentially could have ranged from very low to very high, the cluster of scores in the high and very high range suggests some commonality among participants. Participants were self-selected. It may be that the characteristics that contributed to their willingness to participate in the study are similar characteristics that result in high and very high scores on the scales. Possibly, if participants had been mandated to complete the scale, greater diversity of responses would have been observed.

Although there were no statistically significant results obtained, this was due at least in part to the small number of participants. Interesting data trends did emerge. Professional development strongly correlated with culture, and somewhat with comfort, but not with commitment for the whole group. It is not surprising that professional development and culture correlated strongly, as the campus community was continually receiving professional development on the GE practices and was committed to incorporating GE practices and tenets into its very culture. What is surprising, however, is the lack of strength for the correlation between professional development and comfort or commitment. Typically, professional development programs are designed to increase teacher competence in a skill or content area, thereby increasing teacher likelihood of using the target skill. That their professional development in social emotional skills did not relate to these teachers’ comfort with or commitment to teaching social emotional skills is puzzling.

Another statistical trend that emerged from the data was that total years teaching was mildly correlated with comfort and commitment, but strongly correlated with culture for the
whole group. These results suggest that years of experience did not influence a teacher’s commitment to teaching social emotional skills nor their comfort with teaching social emotional skills, but that they did influence the campus climate in regard to the emphasis placed on the importance of social emotional skills. This posited finding counters the assumption that as a teacher gains competence through experience in teaching subject matter and in dealing with various aspects of classroom management, the teacher’s comfort with teaching such skills increases, as well. Huang and Moon (2009) conducted a study of teacher effectiveness by looking at numerous variables including number of years of experience. Their study found that additional years of experience teaching at the same grade level had a direct and positive impact on student achievement; however, there was a decline in gains after 20 years. Despite the decline, a teacher at 30 years still had performance effectiveness levels higher than those of teachers who had been teaching ten years or less. The results of the current study, however, suggest that experience alone is insufficient to bring about a commitment to or comfort with teaching social emotional skills.

For the subgroup, total years teaching and training preparation had a small and moderate correlation with comfort, but education level and teacher preparation program had a strong negative correlation with comfort. The data regarding total years teaching experience was comparable for the subgroup to the data for the whole group, in that total years teaching had a small correlation with comfort for teaching social emotional skills. Training preparation, which refers to the amount of training in the area of social emotional skills that the teacher received while earning his or her teaching degree or certification, was moderately correlated with comfort. This, too, seems appropriate, as one would expect a relationship between training received and comfort in performing the skill. What was unexpected in the data was the strong negative
correlation between education level, teacher preparation program type, and comfort. This would suggest that an increase in education level coincided with a decrease in comfort for teaching social emotional skills, and that the type of program through which one received his or her teaching certificate was also associated with a change in comfort level where those with teaching certificates obtained from universities had higher scores on the comfort scale. The advanced degrees of the participants were a masters in educational administration and a masters of business administration, neither of which places an emphasis on student social emotional skills. Subjective analysis of the data makes this phenomenon less extraordinary.

Also for the subgroup, there were small and moderate correlations between culture and teacher preparation programs and total years teaching, respectively, but a strong negative correlation of culture with training preparation and a strong positive correlation with education level. These results are quite different from the results for the whole group where total years of teaching and professional development had strong correlations with culture. For the subgroup, the type of teacher preparation program through which the participants completed their certificates had little to do with campus culture. Additionally, total years of teaching had moderate correlation with culture, unlike the strong correlation that was seen for the whole group. Interestingly, the amount of social skills training received through the certification program or university had a strong negative correlation with the campus culture. Education level coincided the most with culture. This suggests that the culture of the campus in regard to supporting social emotional learning is associated with education level with advanced degrees lending stronger support for social emotional learning.

Finally, the finding that came closest to statistical significance concerned commitment for the subgroup. There was large negative correlation between total years teaching and
commitment, moderate correlation between training programs and commitment, and small correlation between education and commitment. There was a statistically significant and large positive correlation between teacher preparation programs and commitment. The results suggested that as number of years of teaching increased, the commitment to teach social emotional skills decreased. Results also indicated that the education level of the participants had little to do with their commitment levels, while the amount of training received in the teacher preparation programs coincided somewhat with teachers’ commitment levels. However, the type of teacher preparation program significantly correlated with teacher commitment to teach social emotional skills.

Contribution to Existing Literature

No studies were located that looked at teacher espoused beliefs about teaching social emotional skills compared to their practices. Although this study was small, it can serve as a starting point. It can add to the discussion of what teachers think about social emotional skills as they are defined in literature, and what their perceptions are of the challenges involved in teaching social skills. It can also begin a discussion of whether there exists a disconnect between teacher self-perceived practice and observed practice in regard to social skills instruction and whether any gap is narrowed by professional development over time.

This study contributes to the field of literature of teaching social emotional skills in different ways. First, the results of the study suggest that teachers do in fact take partial responsibility for teaching social emotional skills. This supports research that suggests that teachers strongly believe that students require social emotional learning for success in school and life endeavors (Buchanan, et al, 2009). It also lends support to the research that indicates that teachers use a variety of strategies to influence student behavior and social emotional
development, even if they do not use a specific social emotional learning curriculum (Tillery et al., 2010).

Second, this study illuminated the differences in teachers’ perceptions of what social emotional skills were as the teachers interviewed in this study each had a different definition of social emotional skills as related to student success academically, emotionally, and socially. Poulou (2005), surveyed teachers to determine what social emotional skills they thought students needed to display or possess to be successful, and the teachers listed a variety of skills including recognizing emotions, manipulating emotions, reducing anxiety, and knowing the difference between actions and emotions. The current study adds to the body of research by suggesting that different teachers place emphasis on different skills or aspects of social emotional skills that are needed to be successful even in the context of less than one year of training in the GE program.

Third, this study offers a suggestion of correlation between the emphasis of teacher preparation programs and a teacher’s commitment to teaching social emotional skills. It is possible that teachers whose training programs placed an emphasis on social emotional skills are more likely to consider social emotional skills instruction as part of their responsibility. A study conducted by Marlow and Inman in 2001 indicated that many colleges of education do not place an emphasis in social emotional competencies. Few colleges addressed social emotional learning in their admission policies or mission statements, or offered courses explicitly dedicated to social-emotional competencies. In the current study, a PE teacher related her commitment to social and emotional learning to an emphasis of her teacher education program, evidence that supports a statistical finding.

Fourth, this study adds to the research about the role of administrative support in teaching social emotional skills. The teachers interviewed for this study all indicated that their campus
administration was fully invested in and supportive of the social emotional curriculum. Indeed, the mean score on the culture scale of the SEL scale fell in the very high range, indicating that not only did those who were interviewed perceive the campus administration as supportive, but that those who opted-out of the interviews also considered their campus supportive of the social emotional curriculum. This supports the findings of Ransford et. al., (2009) that teachers’ implementation of a social emotional learning curriculum was dependent on their perceptions of the administrative supports necessary for implementation.

Finally, although this study does not necessarily contribute specifically to the literature on the Great Expectations program or its efficacy, it does lend support to the argument that teachers appreciate the opportunity for schools to place an emphasis on social emotional learning. This study adds the experience of teachers at a GE implementation site to the general literature regarding social emotional learning skills and teachers’ perceptions of the need for them (Brackett, et al., 2012; Buchanan, et al., 2009; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Lasky, 2005; Poulou, 2005).

Implications for Practice

The results of this study suggest that training and administrative support are necessary for teacher buy-in, but may not be sufficient for teachers to include social emotional learning in their instructional practices, at least not in the first year of program implementation. In order to ensure that teachers are specifically teaching social emotional skills in the classroom, it may be necessary to provide more or longer professional development and/or to consider ways to remove other barriers that teachers cited including time constraints and inadequate or insufficient parent involvement. Teachers’ experience level and training preparation are also factors that
should be considered, but results of this study indicate that too much weight should not be placed on these facets as they did not strongly correlate to commitment levels.

Another implication for practice stemming from the results of this study is the need for the inclusion of the importance of social emotional learning and the techniques to teach them in teacher preparation programs. The results indicated that the practices of one of the participants were influenced by the training received in her teacher preparation program, which emphasized the importance of social emotional learning and its inclusion in the curriculum. This also supports the recommendation of Marlow and Inman (2001) that colleges of education include social emotional learning in their missions and courses.

Importance of the Study

This study illuminated the problem of practice versus belief. Although some studies suggest that teacher beliefs influence classroom practices and implementation of a curriculum (Clements, 1980; Ertmer et al., 2012; Gay, 2010; Van Driel et al., 2007), this study revealed that classroom practices were influenced in varying degrees by various variables. All the teachers interviewed demonstrated a belief in the necessity of social emotional skills, and in teacher responsibility for teaching them, albeit it to varying degrees. Despite their espoused beliefs, however, their opinion of their own practices did not necessarily jibe with an assessment of their practices based on one observation.

The study also revealed that the understandings of social emotional skills by teachers were relatively diverse. In order to ensure that social emotional skill instruction takes root in classrooms, it will be imperative to ensure that teacher understanding of the topic is consistent and firmly rooted in the research literature. The GE program may not have been the best program to accomplish this, as its emphasis was not on the psychology of social emotional skills,
but rather on teacher practice and instructional strategies. Adherents of Great Expectations might argue that time of implementation was insufficient in this case for classroom practice to be altered, or that professional development was improperly implemented.

Limitations of the Study

A major limitation to this mixed method study was the number of participants providing quantitative data. Although the data analyzed yielded interesting correlations in some aspects, the meaningfulness of the results was minimized due to the lack of statistical significance which was at least partially a result of the small number of participants. A larger number of participants would likely have yielded more reliable results. Considering the enthusiasm of the principal for the GE program, the researcher expected a greater participation rate from the teachers. Hypothesized reasons for the low participation rate include lack of time, incompatibility of beliefs, and fear of judgment. Although the teachers were given advance notice that the research data was to be collected on the specific day that it was, it is possible that those who did not participate chose to use their staff development day preparing lessons, grading papers, and/or preparing their classrooms rather than participating in the study, despite the little time required. Also, although the principal was enthusiastic about the adoption and implementation of the GE program, it may be that teachers on campus did not share her enthusiasm. The letter sent out prior to the researcher’s arrival detailed the purpose of the study and indicated that this specific campus had been chosen because it was implementing a social emotional program. It may be that the teachers did not share the opinion of the program with the principal and opted not to participate. Finally, it may be that more of the teachers wanted to participate, but knowing the purpose of the study and that this was their first year of implementation of the GE program, they
may have feared looking incompetent and opted out for that reason. These are all hypotheses. There is no known reason for the low participation rate.

The demographic characteristics of the participants in the study also prove a limitation of the study. Although approximately 30% of the campus’ teachers had less than five years of experience teaching, no beginning teachers were included in the study, and only one participant had one to five years of experience, but that participant was not a part of the subgroup. Thus, the data obtained did not reflect the perceptions or experiences of beginning teachers. Although the data provided rich descriptions of experienced teachers, these cannot readily be assumed to be reflective of the experiences of beginning teachers. Different challenges to implementing the curriculum might have been cited by less experienced teachers, and/or different supports might have been identified.

Another limitation to this study was the possible ambiguity of certain terms used in the ranking scales, e.g. affirmation. The terms were not defined for the participants, and their understanding of the terms was not explored by the researcher. Therefore, there is a possibility that there was a mismatch in understanding of practices. The researcher may have assumed she was observing one particular behavior while the teacher may have thought he or she was performing another. The researcher considered conducting follow up interviews with the participants to discuss the behaviors observed and possibly cross-check understanding of the terms but decided against it as there was no way to control for confirmation bias. It is possible that this may have led to the disparity between observations and rankings.

Yet another possible limitation to the study was the lack of triangulation of observational data. Participants were observed only once, by only one observer. Multiple observations across different times and/or observations by different observers might have increased reliability, and
yielded data that could have provided richer and more robust descriptions and impressions of the participants’ practices and behaviors.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies may utilize a larger number of participants, possibly across different campuses, to investigate whether certain demographic variables correlate with scores on the SEL scale. This might give better insight into what factors influence teachers’ feelings of comfort or commitment in teaching social emotional skills regardless of program implementation. It may also yield statistically significant results which might lend more credence to the conclusions drawn.

Additionally, determining whether the same variables influence the campus culture in regard to social emotional skills may prove an interesting undertaking. A study that compares a number of campuses that differ in terms of student demographic characteristics, teacher demographic characteristics, type of social emotional program being implemented, or whether a program is implemented at all may be conducted to determine (1) if the campuses vary in regard to their cultures surrounding social emotional learning, and (2) what variables influence different levels of culture/support for or disinterest in promoting social emotional learning in students.

Replicating the interviews and observations across multiple campuses using a variety of social emotional programs might also shed light on the impact of teacher perceptions and beliefs on practice. This might yield data that can be generalized or transferred to the larger population if certain trends consistently emerged across participants.

If the instruments used in this study are to be utilized in future studies, it is recommended that the instructions on the Teacher Self-Ranking of SEL Practices form be reworded for greater clarity. Participants in this study completed the form in different ways in spite of stated
directions. This would suggest lack of clarity in the directions. Instead, the directions might be worded to specifically state: “Place an H next to the four practices that you engage in the most. Place an L next to the four practices that you engage in the least. Three practices will remain and should be left blank.”

Finally, it may prove helpful to define some of the more ambiguous terms, or to inquire about participants’ own definitions of certain terms and what those behaviors look like specifically, if ranking data will be compared to observational data, so as to ensure that observational data are accurate.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings from the analysis of the results, the link to existing literature, implications for practice, and limitations to the study as well as suggestions for future research. The framework for this study was based on Dewey’s theory that a teacher’s chief duty was not only academic, but also enhanced social and emotional development; and Bandura’s social cognitive theory that teachers should reflect on their beliefs and practices in order to create optimal learning environments for students. These theories are supported by Great Expectations’ aim to provide professional development that results in teachers having skills needed to create an educational atmosphere where students are inspired to pursue personal and academic excellence.

This study highlighted the importance of different variables on teachers’ implementation of social skills curricula including their own beliefs, perceived supports, and training. More importantly, it demonstrated that for teachers, incorporating social emotional skills lessons into the regular classroom instruction is dependent upon a number of variables and cannot be accomplished merely by mandate.
I learned that adoption and implementation of a social emotional curriculum is insufficient to bring about consistent practices across teachers in a campus. Many variables interact to varying degrees and influence teachers’ practices. The emphasis placed on social emotional skills by teacher preparation programs, administrative support, type of professional development/continuing education training, and time constraints all work together to influence teachers’ practices. What this means, to me, is that if teachers are to consistently and effectively teach social emotional skills in schools, changes in how teachers are prepared for the field and supported in the field will need to be made. This includes ensuring that social emotional skills instruction is emphasized in teacher preparation programs; state testing mandates are adjusted to allow teachers more flexibility and time to teach social skills; campus administrators provide support and resources for social skills instruction; and continuing education focuses on the specific steps to be taken to teach social skills and integrate them into all curriculum areas. Although this task may seem daunting, I think that it is necessary to properly equip teachers to ensure that all facets of children’s learning are being addressed.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW STARTING QUESTIONS
What is your understanding of the term social-emotional competencies/social-emotional skills?

In your opinion, who should be responsible for teaching social-emotional skills, and why?

How do you structure your social-emotional skills lessons?

What have you found to be a hindrance in teaching social-emotional skills?

What has the campus administration done to help you teach social-emotional skills?

What other things do you think need to take place or be changed to ensure that students receive adequate social-emotional skills training?
APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY
Demographic Survey

Please complete all information.

Name: _______________________________      Date:_____________
Sex: M    F                                  Age: ______
Race: Black/African American  Asian/Pacific Islander  Hispanic  White  Other _____________

Number of years teaching total: _____________

Number of years teaching at this school: _____________

Current grade level/subject taught: ___________________________


Teacher preparation program: University/teaching degree  Alternative Certification

When you think back to your preparation to become a teacher, how much training in the area of social emotional skills did you receive?

None    A little (one class or less)    Some (two or three classes)    A lot (four or more classes)

When you think back to professional development received throughout your teaching career, how much training in the area of social skills would you say you have received?

None    A little (one day or less)    Some (two to three days)    A lot (four or more days)

Would you like to participate in the interview and observation portion of the study? Yes No

If yes, what e-mail address may be used to schedule dates and times?______________________
APPENDIX C

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING OBSERVATION RUBRIC
Participant # ______________________  Date: ____________  Time: _______ to ________

Setting ____________________________________________________

Tally the number of times each practice is observed within the minute timeframe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>0-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
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<th>26-30</th>
<th>31-35</th>
<th>36-40</th>
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<td>T. models enthusiasm and a positive attitude</td>
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<td>T. empowers students with positive dialogue about their potential successes, rather than their failures</td>
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<td>T. gives immediate positive feedback and coaches students toward mastering their goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>T. greets students using Magic Triad, models it throughout the day</td>
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<td>T. listens intently and empathetically to students</td>
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<td>T. verbally affirms students</td>
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<tr>
<td>T. encourages and affirms students throughout the learning process</td>
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<td>T. acknowledges student input and provides positive feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>T. notices and encourages individual student strengths</td>
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<tr>
<td>T. uses praise, acknowledgement, and affirmations</td>
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<td>T. assists students in appreciating others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments</td>
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Note: 8 expectations- value as unique; no sarcasm or putdowns; good manners; cheer success; help others; recognize and applaud effort; encourage others; virtuous living.

Life Principles- Attitude, Character, Charity, Commitment, Common Sense, Compassion, Cooperation, Courage, Courtesy, Dependability, Diligence, Empathy, Excellence, Flexibility, Fortitude, Friendship, Generosity, Giving, Honesty, Humility, Initiative, Integrity, Justice, Loyalty, Optimism, Patriotism, Perseverance, Propriety, Resiliency, Respect, Responsibility, Self-Discipline, Service, Temperance, Tenacious, Thankfulness
APPENDIX D

TEACHER SELF-RANKING OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING PRACTICES
Of the practices listed below, indicate which 4 practices you consider your relative strengths and which 4 practices you consider your relative weaknesses. Relative strengths can be considered the practices that you do well and regularly. Relative weaknesses can be considered the practices that you do not do so well and/or you do them infrequently.

Rank them H for high and L for low.

_____ Teacher models enthusiasm and a positive attitude

_____ Teacher empowers students with positive dialogue about their potential successes, rather than their failures

_____ Teacher gives immediate positive feedback and coaches students toward mastering their goals

_____ Teacher greets students using Magic Triad and models it throughout the day

_____ Teacher listens intently and empathetically to student

_____ Teacher verbally affirms students

_____ Teacher encourages and affirms students throughout the learning process

_____ Teacher acknowledges student input and provides positive feedback

_____ Teacher notices and encourages individual student strengths

_____ Teacher uses praise, acknowledgement, and affirmations

_____ Teacher assists students in appreciating others by acknowledging others’ accomplishments
APPENDIX E

GREAT EXPECTATIONS CLASSROOM PRACTICES
Practice 1: The teacher models desired behaviors and attitudes such as those set forth in the Life Principles and the 8 Expectations for living.

Practice 2: Students and teachers speak in complete sentences and address one another by name demonstrating mutual respect and common courtesy.

Practice 3: Students are taught as a whole group, thoroughly and to mastery, with intensive and specific modification insuring success for all.

Practice 4: Lessons are integrated, related to the real world, reviewed consistently, and connected to subsequent curricula.

Practice 5: Critical thinking skills are taught.

Practice 6: A non-threatening environment, conducive to risk-taking, is evident. Mistakes are okay. Students are taught to learn from their mistakes and to correct them.

Practice 7: Memory work, recitations and/or writing occur daily. These enhance character development and effective communication skills while extending curricula. Recitations are exuberant and full of expression.

Practice 8: Enriched Vocabulary is evident and is drawn directly from challenging writings and wisdom literature. Sources should include classic literature, myths, tables, poetry, proverbs, quotes, and other genres.

Practice 9: The Magic Triad, a positive and caring environment, and discipline with dignity and logic are evident.

Practice 10: Every student’s work is displayed in some form. Teacher provides positive commentary through oral and/or written feedback.

Practice 11: Word identification skills are used as a foundation for expanding the use of the English language.
Practice 12: Students assume responsibility for their own behavior. Their choices determine consequences.

Practice 13: A school, class, or personal creed is recited or reflected upon daily to reaffirm commitment to excellence.

Practice 14: All students experience success. The teacher guarantees it by comparing students to their own past performance, not the performance of others. Students are showcased, and past failures are disregarded.

Practice 15: The teacher teaches on his feet, engages students personally, holds high expectations of students, and does not limit them to grade level or perceived ability.

Practice 16: Each classroom has a student who greets visitors and makes them feel welcome and comfortable.

Practice 17: Teachers and students celebrate the successes of others.
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