Building Social & Emotional Competence in Early Education Classrooms through Art Therapy

by

Amber Bliss, Melissa Halici, Nadia Herman, Camille Jessie, Madeline Madison,
Melissa Washington Cross, Gaea Ray & Melanie Zarrow

A thesis paper presented to the

Faculty of the Department of
Marital and Family Therapy with Specialized Training in Art Therapy
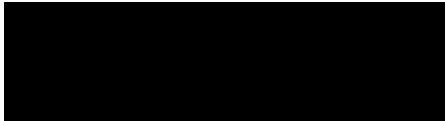Loyola Marymount University

In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Marital and Family Therapy with a Specialization of Art Therapy
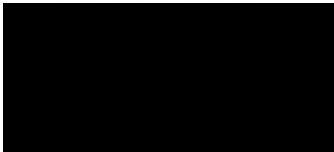

April 25, 2023

Signature Pages

_____

Amber Bliss; Researcher
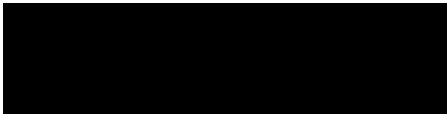
_____

Melissa Halici; Researcher

_____

Nadia Herman; Researcher

_____

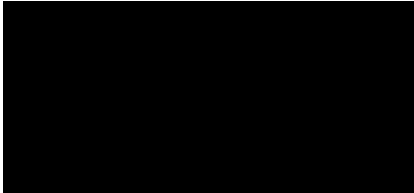Camille Jessie; Researcher

_____
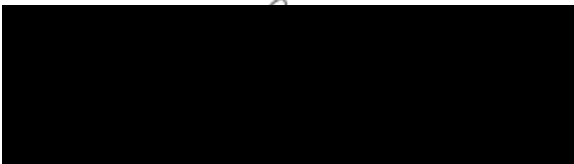
Madeline Madison; Researcher

_____

Melissa "Missy" Washington Cross; Researcher

Gaea Ray; Researcher

Melanie Zarrow; Researcher

Jessica Bianchi, EdD, ATR-BC, LMFT; Research Project Mentor

Acknowledgements

We want to express our gratitude to everyone who provided help and support for us during the research process.

Thanks to Loyola Marymount University, and our program, Marital and Family Therapy with specialized training in Art Therapy. Thanks to our department faculty for being helpful and inspiring throughout our education. Thanks especially to our mentor Jessica Bianchi for your passion, professionalism, and guidance. You have inspired us to keep faith through all the challenges in the research process.

Thanks to our loved ones, families, pets, and children. You are our anchors and support.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in our research process. Your time and effort have become valuable information in this research and will continue to influence the fields of early education and art therapy.

Amber would like to express her sincere gratitude to everyone who has supported the completion of this research project. Firstly, she would like to extend a huge thank you to Dr. Jessica Bianchi for her expertise, unwavering patience, and invaluable feedback. She has been absolutely instrumental in shaping the direction and focus of this study. Amber would equally like to thank her fellow researchers for their contributions with the extensive aspects of this project, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation as their contributions have been critical to the success of this study. Additionally, she would like to acknowledge her partner Kyle for his patience and humor throughout this entire process, as the many nights typing away on the couch became much less tedious and filled with more laughter because of him. Finally, she would like to express her gratitude to all the study participants who generously shared their time,

Abstract

This research project qualitatively explores how teachers address social-emotional learning and how educators understand and implement SEL and art therapy in early education. This research aimed to explore how art therapy theories can support teachers in their efforts to create socially and emotionally competent early education classrooms. Data collected included anonymous surveys from current kindergarten through third-grade teachers. Through data analysis, several findings suggest that art therapists, mental health practitioners, and teachers can benefit from collaboration in increasing access and training with SEL practices. These findings open new doors for further inquiry into art therapy and SEL.

Keywords: SEL, Social and Emotional Learning, Art therapy, early education, qualitative study, surveys, schools, curriculum

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

The purpose of this study set forth by researchers from Loyola Marymount University's Department of Marital and Family Therapy with specialization in Art Therapy was to examine themes regarding possible methods to provide all children with access to mental health resources through future use of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and art therapy curriculum. In order to meet this challenging objective, the study first gathered and analyzed data related to the following themes; (1) what are current understandings and usage of SEL in early education classrooms, (2) what tools are teachers utilizing in classrooms to address social and emotional health, (3) do educators have any knowledge of art therapy or do they currently make use of art when teaching students SEL, and (4) what are the barriers to implementation of SEL and/or art therapy in classrooms? To collect data, the study involved an anonymous 20 question survey created and presented by the researchers from Loyola Marymount University's Department of Marital and Family Therapy with specialization in Art Therapy. The survey wase disseminated using a snowball sampling technique to schools across Los Angeles County. These survey questions followed the themes of the study and were further guided by our research question, "How do theories in art therapy support teachers in their efforts to create socially and emotionally competent early education classrooms?"

The Study Topic

The integration of SEL into California school districts began in the early 2000s and has continued to gain momentum each year since. Loyola Marymount University's Department of Marital and Family Therapy with specialization in art therapy has been partnering and working with neighboring schools in Los Angeles County for 10 years bringing art therapy into classrooms and offering opportunities for families to experience art therapy on campus. Through

these outreach programs the intersection between art therapy and SEL had begun to be explored

by the MFT students from Loyola Marymount University, though a thorough discussion with

educators in regard to a possible marriage between Art Therapy and SEL in the classroom had

not been broached. These researchers saw a need for gathering more information to better

understand the current SEL climate and the assistance that art therapy might offer. The

researchers chose to target early childhood educators with classroom experience with transitional

kindergarten through third grade, as these early education classrooms are seen to play an

important role in exposing students to SEL and fostering their first understandings of SEL in

meaningful ways that could impact their later success academically and in life. Through this

study, the researchers aimed to explore the utilization and efficacy of SEL, as well as the interest

and perception of art therapy in classrooms currently, in hopes of finding a way forward to bring

art therapy into the classrooms with SEL curriculum in the future. Through the qualitative study,

the researchers presented the survey participants with a mix of open and closed questions. The

researchers then gathered and analyzed the clinical numerical data in the close-ended questions

and mined for any additional themes that may emerge from the participants' explanations in their

open-ended responses.

Significance of the Study

The impact of this research could be felt across varied groups such as teachers, students,

art therapists and art therapy graduate students, school psychologists, school administrators, and

the field of mental health as a whole. In finding possible means and methods to bring art therapy

and SEL into early education classrooms, Loyola Marymount's Department of Marital and

Family Therapy with specialization in Art Therapy may be able to further help in the creation of

SEL and art therapy curriculum, help teachers implement the curriculum, or create partnerships

with school districts, bringing in art therapists or art therapy graduate students to facilitate SEL based art therapy programing into the schools. With future involvement of Loyola Marymount's Department of Marital and Family Therapy with specialization in Art Therapy, additional study opportunities for art therapy graduate students would likely present themselves so that the department could continue to measure the success of such programs, altering and growing the curriculum as needed. This research could be duplicated within other universities and communities in locations outside of California taking the reach of this study to a national level creating an impact on early education across the United States. Future studies and collaborations may go on to assist educators, art therapists, mental health providers and most importantly, help to achieve the goal of positively affecting mental health access for children through school based interventions.

Background of the Study Topic

To understand how SEL is learned, the basic developmental building blocks of experiences and relationships must be understood (Farrington et al., 2019). Farrington et al., (2019) continues to say that developmental experiences and relationships correspond positively with arts education and present ample occasions for SEL development as well as social-emotional elements of art implementation. When repeatedly done in a variety of contexts, these experiences will have an impact on proficiency in SEL. Using art therapy with SEL in early education classrooms can be a powerful way to promote social emotional learning and support overall mental health. Research findings from Gruber & Oepen, (2017) state that involvement in art-making correlates more positively than other methods for mood regulation, which is a large component of SEL. Beyond the understanding of SEL and art therapy principles there is also consideration about the ability and capability of the instructor to instruct.

To implement SEL and art therapy curriculum teachers would have to be properly trained, or art therapists proficient in SEL might be brought into the classroom. The better trained the facilitator, the higher the efficacy of the program and thereby the greater success of the students. Beyond the curriculum expertise, it has been found by Schonert-Reichl, (2017) that the educators' own SEL competency affects their ability to impart SEL tools to their students. So, not only do our educators need to teach our nation's youth about SEL so that they might enjoy the benefits of higher achievements in their lives, and better relationship building in their communities, the educators must be sure to be socially and emotionally healthy and competent themselves. As Schonert-Reichl, (2017) states, teachers need the support of school districts and support staff to be able to have more stress free environments in which to self regulate and in order to teach SEL more effectively. In the scope of our study the researchers will include preliminary investigations into how to best support our early childhood educators as well as the advantages and disadvantages of facilitation of art therapy SEL programs by teachers and art therapists.

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore how theories in art therapy can support teachers in their efforts to create socially and emotionally competent early education classrooms. To examine this, this literature review begins by establishing a preliminary understanding of what SEL is and its origins by reviewing research that includes definitions of social emotional learning, the history of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) nationwide and in California, SEL frameworks, key topics in the field, and typical social and emotional development in early education. Next, the impact of COVID-19 on social emotional development in early education, how social and emotional learning is currently being implemented in classrooms, art and its relationship to SEL, and lastly, art therapy and SEL in the classroom.

Defining Social Emotional Learning

To clarify the purpose and intent of this literature review, this section will define Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as well as examine literature related to the relationship between early education SEL and the productive measurable effect on students in the areas of education, mental health, and employment later in life. According to seminal research, when social emotional learning is integrated with academic curriculum in schools, educational goals will be most successfully met (Elias et al., 1997). The importance of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) has been growing in popularity over the last three decades since the beginning of SEL's implementation in schools (Edgar, 2021), but what is SEL? How does one define SEL and the benefits that SEL contributes to the academic and mental health of children who have had access to SEL in their education curriculum?

We will use the definition of SEL set forth by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as the state of California began working collaboratively with CASEL in 2016. The fundamentals of SEL are defined by CASEL (2022) and Schlund (2021) as: The process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

Since its inception, school counselors and psychologists have found it to be self-evident that SEL teaches these fundamental skills by advancing proficiency in building relationships and handling emotions in relation to child development (Frydenberg, 2021). According to CASEL (2022), there are five social and emotional competencies. These are comprehensive and corresponding terms that encompass learning and development. They include; *self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making.*

Competency with these attributes is particularly key for children to acquire as they are credited with not only success in education, but also in life. Recent studies have found correlations between early education-based SEL and considerable productive gains in education, prosperity, and well being, as well as a reduction in crime and drug use (Steed et al., 2021). Zins (2004) suggests it is imperative to establish SEL in school settings as schools have the ability to access all children that are enrolled in both public and private education.

Figure 1a

CASEL Competencies

Note. Social & Emotional Learning Framework.

SEL History Nationwide

The consensus in the literature is that Social and Emotional Learning programs in schools can be traced to the Yale School of Medicine's Child Study Center in the Comer School Development Program, which James Comer created in the late 1960s (George Lucas Educational Foundation*,* 2011). This program focused its work on two elementary schools in New Haven, Connecticut. These schools worked to create a team of school staff and mental health care workers to assist in social programs geared towards changing school policy they believed were related to student behavioral problems, including truancy, drug use, and violence. As a result of this program, by the 1980s, the academic performance of these two schools exceeded the national average, and they experienced a decline in student behavior problems according to the George Lucas Educational Foundation (2011).

Roger P. Weissberg and Timothy Shriver, key figures during the inception of the SEL movement, worked with educators in the late eighties to establish the New Haven Social

Development program for grades K-12. Simultaneously, W.T. Grant Foundation funded a project

focused on school-based prevention and began to identify skills necessary for emotional

competency (George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2011). During this time, the literature

demonstrated a growing awareness and concern for ineffective mental health and prevention

programs throughout the United States and because of this, in 1994, the Fetzer Institute hosted a

meeting of school educators and child advocates, leading to the development of the term, "Social

and Emotional Learning." This meeting also led to the creation of CASEL, the Collaborative for

Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (Greenberg et al., 2003).

        CASEL, a not-for-profit organization based at the University of Illinois Chicago,

published the first conceptual framework for structuring social and emotional learning; and as a

result, Illinois experienced success as the first state to implement these SEL proponents (Durlak

et al., 2015). Within a few years, all 50 states created social and emotional developmental

standards, with many states integrating SEL into their academic learning standards. Advocacy

efforts to advance SEL initiatives nationwide finally secured prominence in federal policy with

the introduction of the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act, which promotes training

for school staff in SEL programming (Durlak et al., 2015).

SEL History California

        In review of the literature, many studies indicate that dedicated SEL programming began

gaining traction in California in the early 2000s. In 2002, Proposition 49 passed, which

established After School Education and Safety (ASES), helping to establish expanded learning

programs across California. Many of these programs were focused on providing supportive

spaces for students to engage in homework, tutoring, sports, and social activities in between

getting out of school and going home to caregivers in the evenings. SEL programs began to

become more relevant in school settings, as educators and mental health professionals started to

integrate ideas about emotional and social competencies into their curriculum. The California

Department of Education successfully identified SEL as a crucial learning domain for young

children; and shortly thereafter, all school districts in California were required to produce a Local

Control and Accountability Plan addressing their school's climate (Collaborative for

Academic…, 2013).

The SEL movement became more solidified as California districts developed SEL and

school climate measurements in relation to No Child Left Behind regulations (Allbright &

Hough, 2020); and in response to these federal regulations, California adopted a statewide

professional development strategy for expanded learning programs in support of SEL (Vance &

Goldberg, 2020).

California's current strategy for supporting SEL results from a collaboration of various

institutions. This collaboration includes the California Department of Education's Expanded

Learning Division, the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, the Partnership for Children and Youth,

ASAPconnect, California Afterschool Network, California School-Age Consortium (CalSAC),

and Temescal Associates (Vance & Goldberg, 2020). In addition, this collaboration founded the

Expanded Learning 360°/365 (n.d.), a current program providing SEL training and curriculum in

California (Vance & Goldberg, 2020). California joined CASEL's Collaborating States Initiative

and in 2017, the California Department of Education SEL State Team published California's

Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles (Collaborative for Academic…, 2013).

Currently, the SEL Policy at the state level includes California's Preschool Learning

Foundations, and includes SEL requirements for children. The California Department of

Education (2021) has also developed K-Adult Transformative SEL Competencies. Additionally,

the California Department of Education offers SEL tools on its website. This includes

Transformative SEL Conditions for Thriving and the SEL Guiding Principles Document

(California Department of Education, 2021).

Frameworks for SEL

As the movement towards introducing SEL to school programs nationwide advanced, the

need for theoretical frameworks that would establish parameters and goals for SEL programming

emerged (Durlak et al., 2015). Creating structure for systemic implementation of SEL programs

addresses overarching belief systems within these programs, focusing on how those programs are

implemented based on teacher pedagogical skills, as well as how SEL can be supported by the

larger educational ecosystem (Jones et al., 2021; CASEL, 2013). Several comprehensive reports

have outlined the theoretical framework for implementing and assessing SEL programming,

backed with current research and extensive resources for developers and consumers. A report

published by the Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic

Development (NCSEA) titled *From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope*, published a framework

based on six domains of learning: *cognitive, emotional, social, values, perspectives, and identity.*

The first three domains emphasize skill-building and competency that students learn through

lessons and apply to daily life. Lessons focus on cognitive skill-building, which includes

developing self-regulation, attention and inhibitory control, decision-making, planning and

problem-solving. Emotional skill-building would include knowledge, expression, and regulation

of emotions, coping with frustration and stress, as well as empathy and perspective-taking. The

report describes social and interpersonal skills as the ability to navigate social situations,

cooperate within a team, resolve conflicts, and demonstrate respect towards others while

self-advocating (Aspen Institute, 2019). The National Commission on Social, Emotional, &

Academic Development created an overarching framework to define the intrapersonal and

interpersonal concepts that influence these skill-based competencies, which includes character,

values, attitudes, beliefs, and mindsets. Research on this framework suggests that when values

such as integrity, honesty, compassion, diligence, civic and ethical engagement and responsibility

are taught and reinforced along with skill-based learning, the brain encodes these concepts

interdependently (Aspen Institute, 2019).

Navigating SEL from the Inside Out, a report published by The EASEL Lab and Harvard

Graduate School of Education in 2021, built on this framework using current research by Jones

& Bouffard (2012) including considerations for how larger influences like teacher competency,

home, culture, community, educational and socio-economic context affect short-term and

long-term outcomes of these programs (Jones et al., 2021). This report includes an in-depth

guide to 33 evidence-based SEL programs, offering information about curriculum content,

recommendations for best practices, guidance on trauma-informed approaches, and extensive

detail about program features aimed at both elementary schools and out-of-school providers

(Jones et al., 2021). *SSIS* and *RULER* are both featured in the EASEL Lab report (Jones et al.,

2021).

The CASEL framework, referenced earlier, is widely utilized across SEL programs with

most highly-rated programs addressing the core competencies within the CASEL system (Jones,

et al., 2021). As with the other guides, the CASEL publication not only intended to define goals

for development and implementation of SEL, but sought to connect educators and institutions

with well-designed, evidence-based SEL programs (Lawson et al., 2019). To do this, the guide

identified leading programs, provided research methods used for assessing each program, and

rated the outcomes of each program in four specific areas: (1) reduction in conduct problems, (2)

reduction in emotional distress, (3) improved academic performance, and (4) increased positive

social behavior (CASEL, 2013). According to the CASEL guide (2013), some of the highest

quality programs for early education settings included *Reading, Writing, Respect, and Resolution*

(4Rs), Caring School Community (CSC), and *PATHS.* Integrating approaches like *PATHS, Second*

Step Early Learning Curriculum (SSEL) is a newer curriculum adopted nationwide that focuses

on early education (Upshur et al, 2019). Referenced often in the research literature, The RULER

Approach, appears prominently in the EASEL Lab guide (Jones et al., 2021).

Approaches and Program Highlights

Research published by Bouffard et al. (2009) suggests that the most effective SEL

programs integrate four methods of implementation presented using the acronym SAFE: (1)

sequenced lessons that progressively scaffold skill-building, (2) active modes of learning that

allow children to practice each new skill learned, (3) focused with intentional time spent on each

skill, (4) explicit in defining the specific skill that is being developed. A brief description of

some of the most highly-rated SEL programs within these frameworks may indicate components

to explore when considering the addition of creative arts education and art therapy in the

classroom. *Reading, Writing, Respect, and Resolution (4Rs)* is a K-5 school-based program

incorporating social and emotional competencies into language arts curriculum. The program

recognizes the connection between academic performance and social-emotional development

(Jones et al., 2011). *Caring School Community (CSC)* is a teacher-led school program that

promotes prosocial behavior through direct teaching of social skills to build a school-wide

community. CSC focuses predominantly on social and cooperative behavior and less on

emotional knowledge and expression (Jones et al., 2021). *Promoting Alternative Thinking*

Strategies (PATHS) is a school-based program that expands on other SEL curricula to include

social cognitive skills which relate directly to environmental stressors (Domitrovich et al., 2007). According to Domitrovich et al., (2007), PATHS is based on the ABCD (Affective Behavioral-Cognitive-Dynamic) model of development put forth by Greenberg & Kusche, and uses classroom lessons to teach self-control, emotional regulation, and social problem-solving. The *RULER Approach* (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing and Regulating Emotions) was developed by researchers and educators at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and incorporates emotional intelligence theory, applied developmental emotion science, positive youth development, and ecological systems theory (Brakett et al., 2019). As a result, RULER is primarily concerned with emotional knowledge and expression. A systemic approach, the program engages the entire school community, targeting classroom instruction, staff development, and family engagement and education resources (Jones et al., 2021). Intensive professional development and training is necessary. *Second Step Early Learning Curriculum (SSEL)* is based on much of the same developmental research, but is targeted to early education. The commercial learning kit includes 28 weekly themes with scripted lessons for each day of the week. Activities provide instruction on emotional recognition and regulation, empathy and problem-solving. As with many of the programs, competency outcomes relate to the quality of those implementing the training (Reyes et al., 2012).

Understanding Key Topics in Social Emotional Learning for the Classroom

Reviewing the frameworks constructed to create structure for SEL programs center around several key topics, including regulation, coping and mindfulness. Regulation can be broadly defined as an ability to evaluate behavior and understand thought processes (Djambazova-Popordanoska, 2016; McKown et al., 2009). Cognitive regulation may focus on goal setting, metacognition, decision making, problem solving, and attention (Kamei & Harriott,

2021), while functional regulation disarms negative emotional states and stimulates positive

states (Gruber & Oepen, 2018). Emotional regulation is an important component of SEL and

consists of delaying gratification, coping with stress and controlling impulses. Poor emotional

regulation has been linked to unresolved trauma experiences. Neuropsychological research has

found that trauma can lead to dysregulation in the emotional centers of the brain, which are

harder to override with rational thinking (Schore, 2002). Repairing regulatory abilities is

signified as a primary learning domain when working with trauma-affected youth (Brunzell et

al., 2016). The benefit of having an environment where children can learn how to regulate both

emotionally and cognitively has been observed in classroom settings. Teachers report that when

students exhibit these regulatory skills they are able to follow directions and actively engage in

class, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes. Exposure to SEL during childhood not

only enhances the educational experience, but also yields positive long-term effects

(Djambazova-Popordanoska, 2016; McKown et al., 2009). According to Gruber & Oepen

(2018), art therapy may be a highly effective tool in fostering the development of emotional

regulation. Their research suggests that art can act as a mediator for emotional communication.

Artmaking can redirect and transform distressing emotional energy, and art can function as a

distraction strategy to deescalate emotional states so they can be better managed.

Another key topic that is under the umbrella of regulation is coping. Closely linked to

regulation is the ability to cope with distress. Coping refers to the various strategies and

techniques that individuals use to manage and reduce stress, anxiety and other psychological

distress (Soliman et al., 2021). Coping outcomes may result in positive or negative outcomes;

SEL endeavors to promote positive coping mechanisms such as problem-solving, relaxation

techniques and assertive communication while discouraging negative coping methods (Soliman

et al., 2021). Learning these techniques has been shown to decrease depression and stress levels with students (Reicher et al., 2017; Soliman et al., 2021). Students across various grades and ages were able to access what they had learned about coping through SEL programs and were able to incorporate positive coping into their life. According to Gibbons (2010), creative arts is a crucial tool in developing positive coping skills, because creativity empowers individuals to develop autonomy and control over their actions and reactions. Creativity and artmaking stimulates new modes of thinking allowing individuals opportunities to express thoughts and feelings nonverbally, bridging disparate learning styles and reducing stress and frustration (Gibbons, 2010).

Mindfulness is an important topic to consider when aiming to decrease stress and anxiety, as it has been shown to improve emotional regulation and cognitive functioning (Garner et al., 2018). Mindfulness is a practice that involves being present and fully engaged in the current moment while acknowledging and accepting one's thoughts, feelings, and sensations without judgment to better understand oneself (Browning, 2020; Garner et al., 2018). Browning (2020) and Garner et al. (2018) suggest that when mindfulness is integrated into SEl programs, both teachers and students receive positive benefits. By providing teachers with the resources to self-regulate and model awareness and non-reactivity, students are provided with a more favorable learning atmosphere. However, Duane et al. (2021) notes mindfulness practices that are not trauma-informed may unintentionally trigger traumatic memories or feelings of distress in children, potentially exacerbating their symptoms. Duane et al., (2021) suggests an understanding of mindfulness and trauma are crucial to establishing a safe and trusting environment for children (Brunzell et al., 2016).

Typical Social Emotional Development in Early Education Children

        The development of social emotional learning in children varies between individuals, so it is helpful to notate what is considered typical while acknowledging factors that may promote or inhibit this sector of childhood development. It is also crucial to identify the markers of healthy development, as it tends to be a valuable indicator of one's ability to experience growth, a sense of continuity in life, and a connected knowing of other's experience of the world (Nadel & Muir, 2007). For the purposes of this paper, the presented information will focus on the social-emotional benchmark a child should reach by school age. Squires et al. (2012) reflects that by the time a child reaches toddlerhood, they should be able to express a range of emotions, start to show empathy for others, regulate attention and socio-emotional responses, and cooperate with daily routines and requests. By the age of 5, the typical age most children enter into the school system, parents may notice their children can now play pretend, comfort others when they are sad, and adapt their behavior based upon their environment (CDC, 2022). These developmental milestone competencies affect children's behavior in relation to self and in relationship with others (Malik & Marwaha, 2018) and consistently build into more integrated and complex socio-emotional skills.

        It is important to keep in mind that children are also concurrently responding to and interacting with their environment and physiology highlights who and what affects socio-emotional development. Other research demonstrates that a core component directly connected to socio-emotional development is the attachment bond a child forms with their caregivers(Malik & Marwaha, 2018). Before we have the capacity to use language, we communicate through our primary emotions and some may argue that an infant forming a sense of trust in their caretaker's ability to tend to their needs imbibes one's first sense of control in

their new world. A child's attachment to their caretaker is the foundation which interacts with a

litany of other factors which determine a child's socio-emotional learning. The variables that

affect SEL are vast and extend to include brain physiology, culture, heredity, environment, peer

relationships, early childhood intervention SEL programs, stress levels, parental attitude, and

mentalization of caregivers (Bozgun & Akın-Kösterelioğlu, 2021; Barrasso-Catanzaro &

Eslinger, 2016; Lopez, 2020; Niles et al., 2006).

   When identifying which area of the brain is most responsible for socio-emotional

processing, research shows that the prefrontal cortex plays a large role. It is the largest lobe of

the human brain structure, is in charge of executive functioning and additionally, in

consequential terms, powers our sociomoral reasoning and development (Barrasso-Catanzaro &

Eslinger, 2016). Damage to this area due to illness, injury, or other developmental disruption

could result in serious impairments in socioemotional development and other areas of life

(Eslinger et al., 2013; Maguire & Fishbein, 2016). Understanding developmental milestones and

potential impairments allows educators to tailor instruction to meet the unique needs and abilities

of their students. Moreover, an understanding of development can aid educators in recognizing

when students may be struggling with a particular social or emotional skill (Harris et al., 2022).

Impact of COVID on SEL in Early Education Children

   The COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying lockdown had a notable disruption on

the school experience of children and inevitably affected the development of children worldwide.

Defining the scope of this disruption's influence on school-aged children is still in the early

stages; however, current studies have revealed a surge in anxiety and depression in children,

higher levels of caregiver stress which increased the risk of family adversity, including domestic

violence, child abuse neglect and a rise in mental health issues (Bartlett & Stratford, 2021).

Relevant to this project, there is concern that social-emotional development could be stunted for many children, thus impacting the types of SEL interventions that would be most helpful for each age group. Additionally, SEL may be a crucial tool in efforts to repair, support and enhance social-emotional growth for those most impacted by the pandemic.

School Performance

The pandemic has amplified existing problems impacting school performance. As the lockdown continued, there were multiple concerns being raised about the potential negative consequences on student's learning and emotional well-being (Kimner et al., 2020). Measuring practices that were in place for in-person learning had to be quickly altered to accommodate the new online instruction, and there was limited research available on how this new type of learning would affect academic performance. Research suggests that students who were considered at-risk readers prior to the pandemic suffered the most significant impact (Schweiger, 2022), adding to the increasing findings of the negative impacts of the lockdown on elementary academic learning.

Impact on Teachers and Staff

Addressing the needs of teachers and staff is crucial for creating a supportive and effective SEL environment. As distance learning took shape during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers had to troubleshoot tough situations such as issues with internet access, lack of technical infrastructure, and lack of computer/tablet access (Zincirli, 2021). Kimner et al., (2022) found that the methods successful in regaining engagement during remote learning were focused on meaningful connections with students, collaborative and mutual trust. The researchers found that maintaining the norms and schedules of collaborative work was important; this included having teachers facilitate online conversations between each other and preserving the regular meeting

times of their pre COVID-19 schedules in grade-level meetings, staff meetings, and professional

learning opportunities. The teachers "openly shared concerns about students and framed

conversations around what it meant to be culturally responsive during this unprecedented time"

(Kimner et al., 2022). A sample of 151 elementary school teachers in the United States were

surveyed in summer 2020 and the majority of participants reported feeling emotionally

exhausted and high levels of task stress and job ambiguity. The findings identified a critical need

to allocate more attention and resources to support teacher psychological health by strengthening

emotional support, autonomy, and teaching efficacy (Chan et al., 2021). Davis et al. (2022) found

that COVID-19-related stressors were linked to poorer mental health and less confidence in

schools to address teacher needs. Surveyed respondents suggested that mental health support,

including hiring or improving mental health professionals such as psychologists, social workers,

and counselors, was the best way to assist students in transitioning back to school. Researchers

found that teachers desired professional development that would provide context on the

pandemic, strategies to address students' needs, and help identify trauma, recognizing that

training should cater to the needs of students living in under-resourced communities and the

populations these teachers serve (Davis et al., 2022).

Preliminary research indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the likelihood

of negative moods, anxiety, anxiety, attention difficulties, and social challenges among children.

The move to remote learning necessitated prolonged periods of time staring at computer screens,

which increased stress and attention requirements. These difficulties have been linked to current

deficits in SEL competencies within the classroom (Raffaele et al., 2021).

Implementing SEL in classrooms

For the purpose of this study, researchers aimed to understand how SEL is currently being implemented into classroom settings. Research conducted by Buchanan et al. (2009) suggests that the majority of teachers believe that social and emotional learning (SEL) is crucial for students in both their academic pursuits and future endeavors, with almost half of those in the study currently implementing an SEL program in some way. While teachers are the primary school professionals involved in implementing SEL, Buchanan et al. found that 40% of teachers reported that school counselors also engage in this activity, while school psychologists are less likely to implement such programs. Findings from Buchanan et al., (2009) are aligned with current practices observed in schools, with 58.7% of teachers implementing SEL and 37.9% believing that school counselors should be responsible for this programming.

Merrell & Gueldner (2010) highlights current approaches to logically and successfully infusing SEL techniques into a typical school day. They argue that it is necessary to offer SEL instruction across an array of situations and circumstances, also emphasizing explicit instruction. According to Merrell & Gueldner (2010), typically in SEL programming, books or other related reading material is purposely chosen to identify particular emotions and then problem-solving strategies are used to help characters make decisions. Merrell & Gueldner, (2010) state that as students grow they go through a series of social and emotional developmental stages, therefore programs must be strategically developed in order to offer developmentally appropriate information that encourages growth in future stages. Durlak et al., (2015) echoes this focus on development, arguing that transitional periods, stages in the life span in which developmental challenges and demands are increased, are an especially critical time to offer SEL programming.

Given the variety of SEL methods currently being implemented into classrooms, there are also a wide range of approaches to training school staff members. According to Merrell & Gueldner (2010), packaged SEL programs often include instructions that outline evidence supporting the efficacy of the curriculum as well as the concepts on which these techniques are formed. MindUP is a straightforward example of an SEL teacher training program described by Durlak et al., (2015). This curriculum is based in neuroscience and teaches the skills and knowledge children need in order to regulate stress and emotions and foster positive relationships, while emphasizing kindness and empathy. Durlak et al., (2015) describes the associated training for teachers as including a full-day, interactive training session in which participants gain information on theory. The training includes interactive dialogues on SEL and the developmental features of children's social and emotional competency. Teachers are offered tactics that guide the introduction of mindfulness to the classroom with specific attention given to engaging students and common challenges. Instruction is offered through lecture, video, readings, and role-playing.

Merrell & Gueldner (2010) describe how schools integrating SEL will often select a SEL program based on a needs assessment, aiming to address particular social and emotional needs of the student body. Eveleigh et al. (2022) stresses the importance of adaptive flexibility in program delivery depending on variables unique to the school's environment and population.

In order to effectively promote social and emotional learning (SEL) in the classroom, it is crucial to understand how teachers' own social-emotional wellbeing impacts their students. Schonert-Reichl (2017) emphasizes the importance of teachers' social-emotional competence and wellbeing, as classrooms with warm teacher-child relationships foster positive social and emotional development and deep learning. However, poorly managed social and emotional

demands of teaching can negatively impact both student behavior and academic achievement. Therefore, interventions to improve teachers' social-emotional competence and stress management have been developed with promising results. Additionally, how teacher beliefs about their efficacy and whether they feel they have the necessary support impact the success of SEL programs in the classroom, and suggests that more can be done in US teacher education programs to promote both teacher and student social-emotional competence (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning

Arts education typically involves structured instruction and assessment of specific artistic skills and techniques, and it often emphasizes the importance of developing competency in these areas. Developing proficiency in artistic modalities such as drawing, dancing, and playing a musical instrument, naturally promotes SEL-related growth (Farrington et al., 2019). The practice of self-expression through the use of art education originated in psychology and has been designed to promote children's personal qualities. The evolutionary focus of creative self-expression was to foster children's innate creative and expressive potential in an educational setting (Zitnmerman, 2009). Involvement with arts education in school, often relates with the ability to facilitate determined outcomes that correspond with social emotional learning in children and young adults. It is a general belief that arts education offers students a variety of opportunities to approach and advance proficiency in social emotional skills such as persistence, empathy and self-awareness, than other areas of study (Farrington et al., 2019). Farrington et al. notes that integrating arts education with SEL improves students' self-awareness, self-regulation skills, enhances social awareness, helps students develop relationship skills, and becomes responsible decision-maker.

Eddy et al., (2021) proposes that arts education can provide a uniquely powerful means for promoting social-emotional learning (SEL) in schools and communities, as it engages students' emotions and encourages self-expression and empathy. Eddy et al., reference local-level initiatives that have successfully implemented SEL through arts education, including a program that used theater to promote conflict resolution and empathy in middle school students, and a community arts project that engaged high school students in addressing social justice issues.

Integrative arts education into SEL offers compelling, enlightening, and informative opportunities for the types of comprehension. Graham (2021) suggests that an integrated approach to arts education can join intentionally with other academic areas to stimulate participation in achieving academic success. Afterall, it is widely believed that creativity, imagination, critical and divergent thinking, which are key aspects of arts education, are also essential dimensions of thinking in other subjects (Burton et al., 2000).

Creative Art and Social Emotional Learning

Creative arts activities may be less structured and concerned with the development of artistic skills, and instead focus on self-expression and exploration. The implementation of SEL and the incorporation of art or creativity to assist in the learning process has proven to enhance the students' understanding of their social and emotional learning. Students in early childhood who have the experience with positive social emotional development have been found to have a stronger sense of identity (Zakaria et al., 2021). When teachers utilize the process of making art it adds a nonverbal layer of exploration for younger children, where they have the ability to express their feelings and experiences in a way that is more accessible for their development. By utilizing drawing, preschool age children can express meaningful emotions through their art that they would not be able to articulate otherwise (Zakaria et al., 2021).

Integrating art into SEL curriculums may utilize dance and movement, writing, performing, music, and visual arts (Eddy et al., 2021). By providing students with a variety of options for creative expression through art, it encourages students to find creative outlets and coping strategies that translate classroom learning to their everyday life. The utilization of new materials also allows students to explore new situations and come up with different outcomes in a manner that is novel and safe (Casciano et al., 2019).

The use of creative art in collaboration with SEL empowers students' learning outcomes. Students learn to take on leadership roles while working in a group setting and rely less on direction from their teachers because they are able to use the relationship-building skills that they learn to accomplish goals with less instruction (Eddy et al., 2021). Research suggests that students consider working goals more seriously when there is authentic social and/or emotional context to their learning. Using art-making also connects students with personally-oriented, global and local social and community issues (Eddy et al., 2021). The utilization of art and creative expression with SEL has been beneficial to students and teachers as they gain understanding of their experiences. However, utilizing art therapy practices in the classroom could further enhance the beneficial impact of social and emotional learning for the student, providing support for student emotional development.

Art Therapy and SEL in the Classroom

Much of the literature has researched and measured the creative therapies as a whole. This includes drama, movement, music, etc. For the sake of this research paper, the interest lies in exploring specifically visual art and its impact on SEL in the classroom. Additionally, the articles use various terms, such as art enrichment, art interventions, creative arts therapies to refer to the art therapy.

In comparing both clinical art therapy programs with general art education curriculum, both have the potential to address SEL in the classroom. Hannigan (2019) suggests that art therapists and art educators can work collaboratively on an "art-therapy informed arts education" that puts an emphasis on the therapeutic practices of art in schools. In a study on preschoolers, art therapy was utilized to "allow for children's individualized creativity" while attaining the basic skills necessary to transition into kindergarten, such as cleaning up, sitting in a chair, and keeping their hands to themselves (Klorer, 2012). Harvey (1989) proposed that using creative arts therapies "can result in metaphor-making and problem solving of social/emotional conflicts" In another art therapy study that emphasized providing psychoeducation, children were able to identify feelings connected to their behaviors during early stages of art therapy (Mcdonald, 2019). The art can be utilized in numerous ways, through both an art therapy and art education lens, to support SEL in the classroom.

Though Harvey's (1986) research showed that encouragement of creativity with young children in the classroom is associated with positive social and emotional outcomes, he states that little research has supported the "general anecdotal claims" about the arts supporting SEL in the classroom. More research is needed to compare the nuances of art therapy approaches to general art education approaches when addressing SEL in the classroom. Harvey (1986) suggests for future research to explore how creative arts therapies can be integrated into the general classroom discipline. Hannigan (2019) recommends that art therapists work with art teachers to support a model of art education/art therapy immersion to address art education, mental health, and inclusivity. An immersion program, she suggests, would encourage inclusivity in supporting the mental health of children, who may not have the means to access therapy.

Research Approach

This research project will follow a qualitative case study design which is intended to thoroughly and descriptively explore how art therapy can inform and support educators in their efforts to create socially and emotionally competent classrooms, as it's understood by both participants and researchers. Researchers chose an exploratory qualitative design for several reasons including wishing to develop a deeper understanding of how social and emotional learning is currently being implemented in classrooms and to identify the current needs of teachers and students. Additionally, researchers would like to examine how creative art therapies could potentially be integrated into the general classroom discipline to encourage inclusivity of mental health services for children. In order to gather this information, the research will include a qualitative interview conducted via Qualtrics survey, including Likert scale and open-ended questions. Following this, information will be inductively generated from these findings in order to apply to broader themes (Creswell, 2014).

As in this research, case studies can acquire a sociological component, where an in-depth examination of socially interactive systems occurs (Betts & Deaver, 2019). Creating a lens from which to view these aspects leads to the further expansion of assertions in art therapy literature as it pertains to social and emotional learning in early education classrooms.

Methods

Definition of Terms

The following section will define the key terms used in the literature review and qualitative case

study. The defined terms are central to the greater understanding of the research purpose,

clarifying definitions particular to the study, and eliminating ambiguity. Sources for the

key term definitions include the Mirriam-Webster Dictionary, reviewed literature, and

accepted definitions from other researchers in the field.

Art Therapy

The American Art Therapy Association (2017) defines Art Therapy as, "an integrative mental

health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and

communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory,

and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship", and continues to explain,

"Art Therapy, facilitated by a professional art therapist, effectively supports personal and

relational treatment goals as well as community concerns. Art Therapy is used to improve

cognitive and sensory-motor functions, foster self-esteem and self-awareness, cultivate

emotional resilience, promote insight, enhance social skills, reduce and resolve conflicts

and distress, and advance societal and ecological change."

Coping

Mirriam-Webster (2022) defines cope as "to deal with and attempt to overcome problems and

difficulties". To that effect, the researchers accept the definition of coping as, "dealing

with and attempting to overcome problems and difficulties".

Curriculum

The researchers have accepted the Mirriam-Webster (2022) definition of curriculum as, "a set of

courses constituting an area of specialization, offered by an educational institution".

Distance Learning

The researchers agree with Mirriam-Webster's (2022) definition of distance learning as, "a

method of study where teachers and students do not meet in a classroom but use the

Internet, email, mail, etc., to have classes".

Early Education

For the purposes of our study, the researchers use the term Early Education to refer to the period

of time between the beginning of transitional kindergarten and the end of 3rd grade.

Emotion Regulation

Psychology Today (2022) defines Emotion Regulation as, "the ability to exert control over one's

own emotional state. It may involve behaviors such as rethinking a challenging situation

to reduce anger or anxiety, hiding visible signs of sadness or fear, or focusing on reasons

to feel happy or calm."

Evidence Based Programs

The California Department of Education (2022) defines Evidence Based Programs as programs,

"that have evidence to show that they are effective at producing results and improving

outcomes when implemented." Under the Every Student Succeeds Act the evidence, "has

generally been produced through formal studies and research."

Mindfulness

The American Psychological Association (2022) defines mindfulness as, "the awareness of one's

internal states and surroundings", and goes on to say that through interventions,

mindfulness helps "people avoid destructive or automatic habits and responses by learning to observe their thoughts, emotions, and other present-moment experiences without judging or reacting to them".

Social Emotional Learning

Social and Emotional Learning is defined by CASEL (2022) as, "The process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."

Design of Study

The following section will give a comprehensive description of the methods we utilized in this qualitative case study. The design of this study utilizes a qualitative case study approach that will make use of teacher volunteer subjects from public elementary schools in the greater Los Angeles area. The study will target teachers from these schools teaching Transitional Kindergarten through 3rd grade, requesting their voluntary response to an online survey. The qualitative case study will explore themes through the distribution of an anonymous online survey using Qualtrics software with TK-3rd grade teachers teaching in public schools in Los Angeles county. The following subsections will define the researchers' proposed methods for determining sampling, the process of gathering data, and the process for analyzing data.

Sampling

Subjects will be selected based on their profession as an early elementary educator teaching in classrooms TK-3rd grade. The selected school district's minority enrollment is 100% of the student body (majority Latinx), which is more than the California public school average of

78% (majority Latinx). Students also come from families that are primarily from a lower SES. All subjects will be consenting adults over the age of 18. Approximately 60 individuals will be asked to participate in the initial survey. Researchers will initially contact schools in the Los Angeles area based on prior professional relationships. In the initial email correspondence, principals will be asked to disseminate a voluntary online survey to teachers teaching TK-3rd grades. Subjects will be informed about the purpose of the study and invited to complete the voluntary online survey with the purpose to explore how SEL is being implemented in their classrooms and how subjects feel art therapy could enhance or support their efforts.

Gathering of Data

Researchers will contact the principals of the Los Angeles based schools and request that information about the study and voluntary online survey be sent via email to current TK-3rd grade teachers. The researchers also will utilize the snowball sampling method in which identified research participants are asked to provide other individuals who meet the research criteria with an invitation to participate in the research study as well. In the email correspondence, subjects will be provided with a consent form, and Human Bill of Rights and invited to complete an anonymous voluntary online survey that seeks information about if and how SEL is implemented in their classrooms.

Analysis of Data

Researchers will analyze qualitative data derived from an anonymous online Qualtrics survey, which includes Likert scale questions and open-ended questions. The survey data will be systematically assessed and reviewed by researchers and then explored for emerging themes. This will include coding the data in order to uncover trends that have emerged within data. These themes will then be examined in relation to our research questions. The results will be

presented as recommendations for how art therapy approaches can support teachers in their

effort to implement SEL.

Presentation of Data

The purpose of this research is to help increase children's access to mental health resources by answering the following research question – how can theories in art therapy support teachers in their efforts to create socially and emotionally competent early education classrooms? This research will expressly aim to explore themes related to current implementation of SEL by teachers, how teachers understand SEL at present, and how visual art and theories in art therapy might address SEL objectives. The data sets presented below consist of online survey responses from current kindergarten through third grade teachers and are organized in the order of the survey questions. Using the online software Qualtrics, the survey was distributed via email using a snowball method to Los Angeles area teachers. The survey consisted of 20 questions. Of the 20 questions, 13 were closed and 7 were open ended. There were 51 responses submitted and of these, 30 teacher responses were complete and viable. The data was synthesized by researchers via use of a graph and/or a short descriptive paragraph. Goals of this research study had previously included engaging teachers in a focus group that would have provided an additional example of how art therapy theories could be applied to the teaching of SEL in classrooms. However, the focus group was not included in the process due to a lack of participation. This presentation of data will begin with presenting basic demographic information about participants' experience and where teacher education was received. The following presentation will focus more on the participants' understandings of SEL, current facilitation, impact and responses, and thoughts related to arts integrated SEL strategies. To illustrate themes in responses, researchers present a word cloud in addition to the text descriptions.

Question 1: Early education grades you are currently or have taught (select all that apply):

Figure 2a

Grades Taught
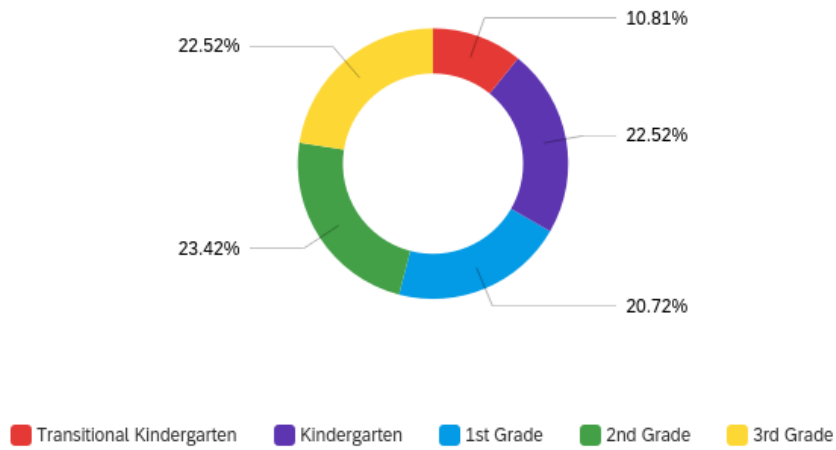
Note. Figure 2a indicates that the least taught grade level of our study participants is Transitional

Kindergarten, with only 10.81% of participants teaching or having taught that grade.

Question 2: Number of years you have been teaching

Figure 3a

Years Teaching
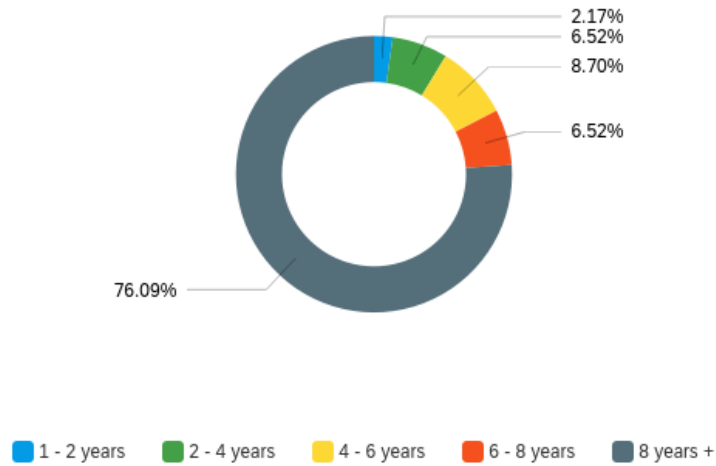
Note. As seen in Figure 3a, about 78% of study participants have been teaching for eight or more

years. There were no study participants who have been teaching for less than one year.

Question 3: Where did you receive your teacher education?

Figure 4a

Location of Education
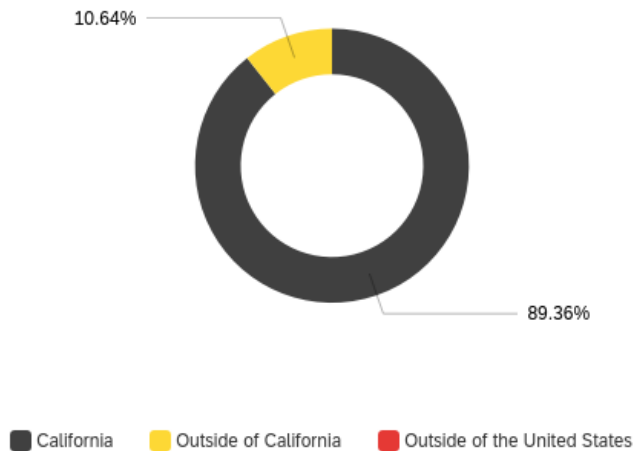
Note. Figure 4a represents the final demographic information question and shows that of the

participants who took our survey, 89.36% of participants received their teaching education in

California. The other 10.54% received their education outside of California. None of our study

participants received their education outside of the US.

Question 4: Please describe your teaching philosophy in a few words.

Figure 5a

Teaching Philosophy

Note. This word map was created by Qualtrics and shows participants most used words in response to teaching philosophy.

Participants were also asked to describe their teaching philosophy (Figure 5a). In response, some participants highlighted having students develop a "lifelong relationship with learning". For example, some participants stated that they aspire to "teach students to be citizens of the world" and "to create lifelong learners." Others focused on building a strong relationship with students. For example, one participant stated, "Build relationships first...everything else comes after." Another participant stated, "good teaching is all about the personal relationship with the students." Others focused on inclusivity. For example, participants stated, "every student deserves to succeed" and "I believe all students can learn no matter what their abilities are," and "every child has the right to a safe positive environment for learning." Other participants focused on the importance of cultivating an environment conducive to learning. One participant stated it is necessary "to provide an engaging, stimulating and challenging environment that is welcoming

to all students and families, and another stated, " as a teacher I hope to create a positive

environment where students learn and also ask questions when they need help." Lastly, one

participant felt that there should be a separation between traditional curriculum and SEL, stating,

"teachers should teach the basics of reading, writing, math, social studies and science. SEL

should be taught at home and left out of the classroom."

Question #5: Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is defined by CASEL (2022) as, "The process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions." Using your own words, please describe how you understand Social Emotional Learning.

Figure 6a

Teacher Understanding of Social-Emotional Learning

Note. This word map was created by Qualtrics and shows participants most used words about their understanding of SEL.

Participants were asked to describe their understanding of social emotional learning (Figure 6a). In response, some participants spoke about SEL in the context of age. For instance, one participant talked about "learning how to interact in a socially, age- appropriate, acceptable manner." Another talked about SEL as being important "in the early years of education." In addition to age, others spoke about the characteristics of SEL, including "developing self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills for school, work and life," and "helping students understand empathy, compassion, ownership, their own feelings, and communication."

Others spoke about how SEL develops emotion regulation. For example, one response said SEL

helps students, "understand their emotions and give them tools to handle situations

appropriately," and another said SEL gives students, "support for identifying and managing

emotions."

Question 6: Do you currently implement SEL in your classroom?

Figure 7a

Current Implementation of SEL in Classroom
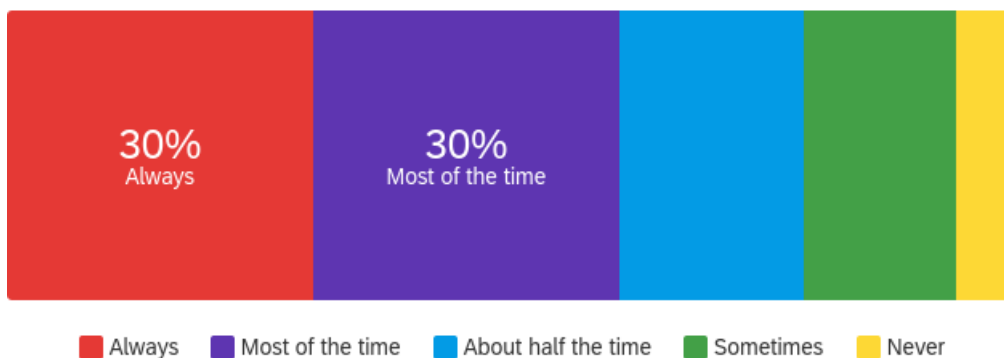
Note. In Figure 7a it is shown that 30% of participants in our study always use SEL in their

classroom while another 30% uses SEL most of the time. The rest of participants fell into the

remaining three categories of half the time, sometimes, and never with percentages at 18%, 15%,

and 6%, respectively.

Question 7: If you do currently implement SEL in your classroom, please describe how in a few words.

Figure 8a

How SEL is Implemented in Classroom

Note. This word map was created by Qualtrics and shows participants most used words in response to SEL implementation in their classroom.

Participants who implemented SEL were asked to describe how they utilized SEL concepts in their classrooms (Figure 8a). The most frequently used program referenced was *Second Step*, which one teacher reported was, "a district-adopted curriculum." One teacher mentioned buying their own curriculum with, "short scenarios about different situations that students face." Two participants received training either through the school or by other means. School counselors provided SEL activities for some teachers, but one participant noted that these lessons often seemed to be "one size fits all." Another participant utilized a restorative justice model for SEL, "where students bring topics of concern up to the group, and we problem solve solutions together." Five participants indicated implementing unique lessons, including the "seven habits or growth mindset." Specific activities such as "contingency maps, zones of regulation," "talking circles," and "Read Aloud" were mentioned, with three participants directly

referencing art as part of how they implement SEL. Videos were are also reported as used by multiple participants to teach or reinforce SEL concepts, with one teacher specifically using "relaxation videos." Two additional teachers mentioned using mindfulness and breathing exercises. Many of the participants indicated that their main method of implementing SEL is using "check-ins" to see how their students were feeling. One teacher wrote, "I check in daily with my students to see how they are feeling. We discuss our feelings and ways to control those feelings." Several teachers stated that they meet SEL needs as they arise. One participant noted, "I go by what emotions and behaviors my students exhibit in the classroom."

Question 8: How effective do you find SEL to be in your classroom?

Figure 9a

Effectiveness of SEL in Classroom
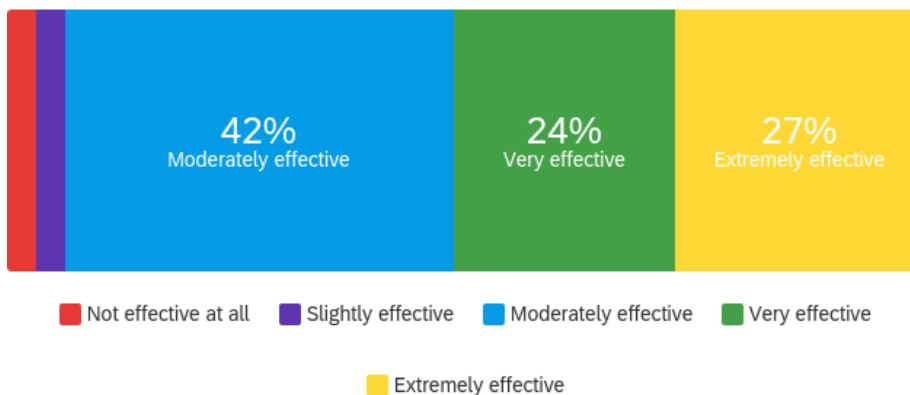
Note. Figure 9a illustrates how effective participants of the study feel SEL is in their classroom. Moderately effective was the most selected answer, with 42% of participants selecting that answer. Not effective and slightly effective were the lowest selected answers, both being at 3%.

Question 9: How are you measuring effectiveness? Check all that apply.

Figure 10a

How Effectiveness of SEL is Measured
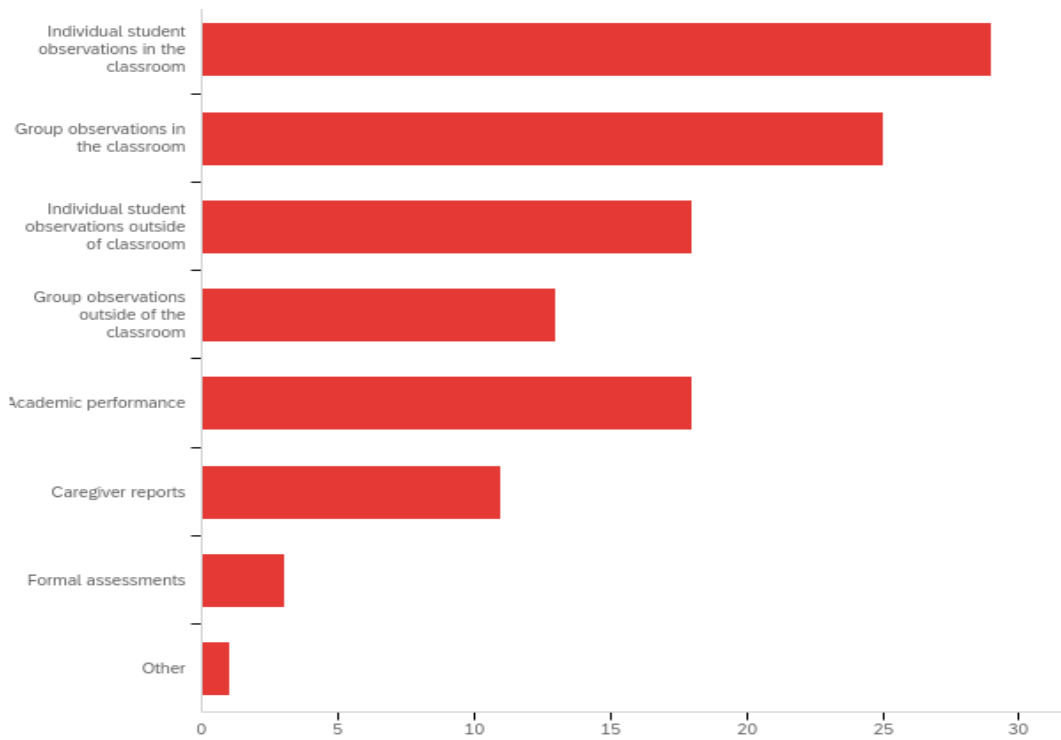
Note. Figure 10a represents the most commonly used methods of measuring SEL effectiveness in the classroom, as reported by study participants.

Question 10: Please use a few words to describe student responses to SEL implementation in the classroom.

Figure 11a

Student Responses to SEL Implementation in Classroom

Note. This word map was created by Qualtrics and shows participants most used words for student responses to SEL implementation in the classroom.

When asked about how their students respond to SEL implementation, most teachers reported that students were "engaged," "appreciative," and "open-minded." Although one participant noted that students may, "not always be willing to talk." Two teachers had differing views about SEL in the classroom; one teacher stated that "parents should be teaching these topics to their children," rather than teachers. Another teacher indicated that some students felt that SEL was "unnecessary". Another teacher found that "informal" implementation was typically more effective in their classroom. Nonetheless, participants generally found that SEL was "well-received." Several participants endorsed skill-based lessons, especially conflict resolution, which students utilized frequently throughout the day. One participant explained, "students use the conflict resolution model constantly throughout the day. Whenever conflict happens, they request for each other to check in. They also often come to meetings wanting to talk about a conflict, such as, '"I think we should make a rule about…'..."' Another agreed,

"Students feel more relaxed … problem solving our way through interpersonal conflicts that mostly arise out on the playground." Several participants observed behavioral improvements with fewer disruptions because, as one teacher noted, students "have tools to communicate and process." Similarly, several teachers noted that SEL activities helped students stay calm and focused in the classroom. One teacher confirmed, "Students are able to calm down and complete work." Another reflected that, "Students appreciate the time to get in the right headspace for learning." Finally, several teachers reported that SEL was particularly helpful in managing emotion. One participant reflected that their students mentioned that they even "practice breathing at home when they get anxious or feel like they can't relax."

Question 11: Please describe any barriers to implementing SEL in your classroom (check all

that apply)

Figure 12a

Barriers to SEL Implementation in Classroom
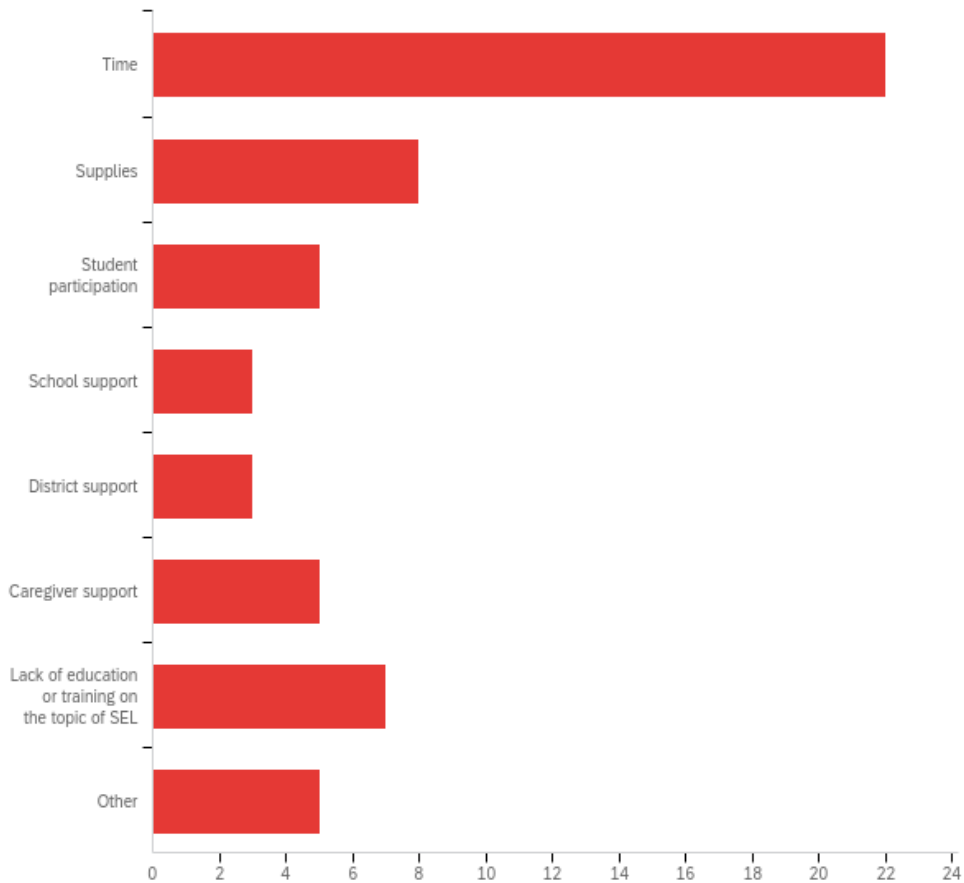
Note. Figure 12a illustrates the different barriers study participants face when

incorporating SEL into their classroom. Time appears to be the biggest barrier, with 22

survey responses.

Question 12: Does your school require you to include SEL in the classroom?

Figure 13a

Requirement of SEL in Classroom
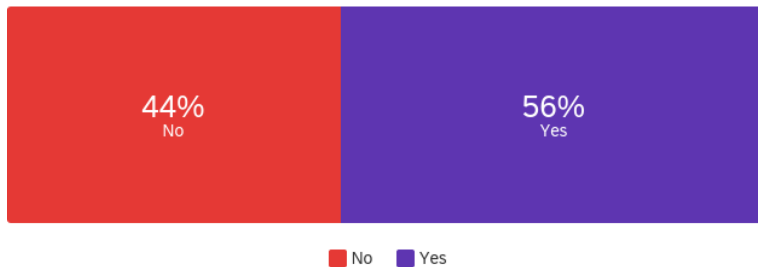
Note. Figure 13a illustrates that of the study participants, 56% are required to include SEL in their classroom. The rest of the participants marked that they are not required by their school to include SEL in their classroom.

Question 13: Does your school have a SEL curriculum/program that is required or frequently used?

Figure 14a

School SEL Requirements
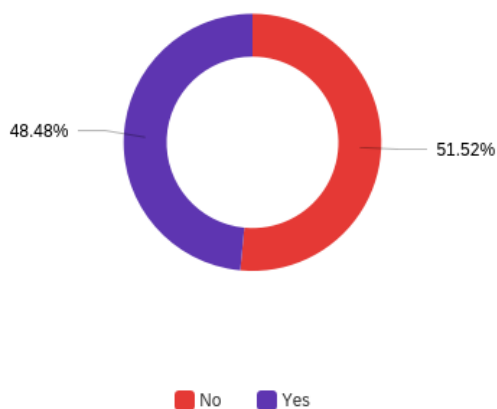
Note. Figure 14a shows that 46.88% of study participants are required or frequently use a SEL curriculum or program when teaching SEL. The rest of the participants noted that there is no curriculum or program that is required or frequently used.

Question 14: Do you or have you ever used visual art (either viewing or creating) in your

implementation of SEL in the classroom?

Figure 15a

Visual Art in SEL Implementation
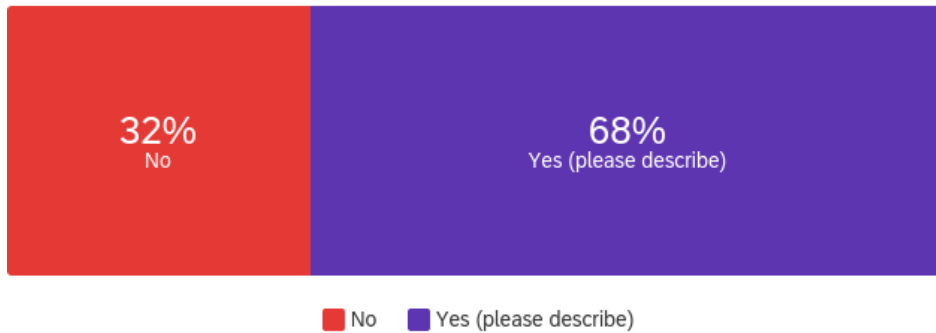
Note. Figure 15a illustrates the answers of study participants on whether or not they use visual

art with their implementation of SEL, with 68% of participants checking that they do use visual

art.

Question 15: How effective do you find visual art to be in your implementation of SEL in your

classroom?

Figure 16a

Effectiveness of Visual Art Implementation
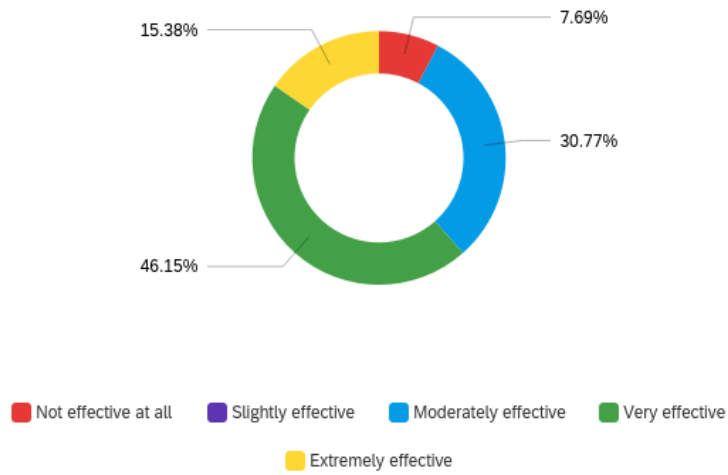
Note: Figure 16a shows how effective study participants feel visual art implemented with SEL is

in the classroom. The most selected answers were moderately effective and very effective.

Question 16: How are you measuring the effectiveness of visual art in your implementation of

SEL? Check all that apply.

Figure 17a

How Effectiveness of Visual Art is Measured
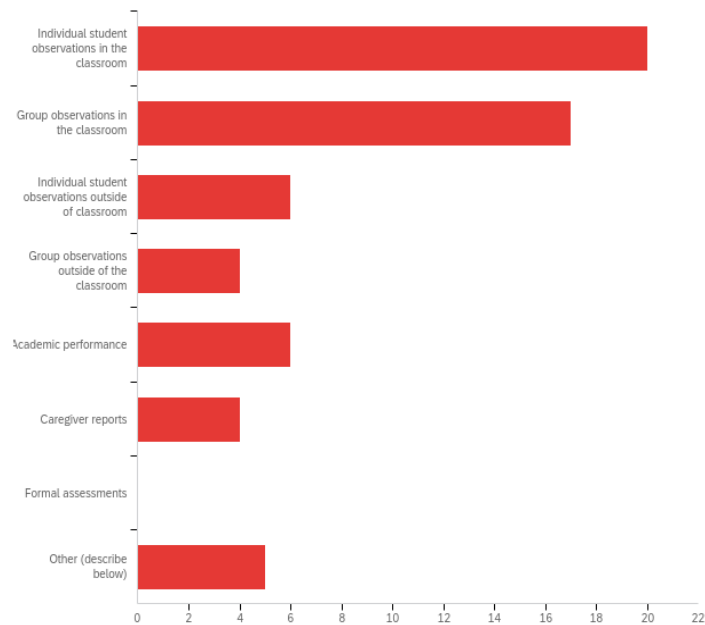
Note. When it comes to measuring the effectiveness of visual art with SEL, Figure 17a shows

that the most used ways of measuring are individual student observations in the classroom and

group observations in the classroom.

Question 17: Please review the definition of Art Therapy taken from the Art Therapy Credentials Board (www.atcb.org): Art therapy uses art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork as a therapeutic and healing process. Clients – young, old, and in-between – are able to explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavior, develop social skills, improve reality orientation, reduce anxiety and increase self-esteem. After reviewing this definition, are there ways that you think Art Therapy might support your implementation of SEL in the classroom? Please describe in a few words.

Figure 18a

How Art Therapy can support Implementation of SEL

Note. This word map was created by Qualtrics and shows participants most used words in response to art therapy support for SEL.

Participants were asked to describe in a few words ways in which they think art therapy might support the implementation of SEL in the classroom. In response, the majority of participants spoke about the intersection of Art Therapy and SEL in positive terms. For instance, one participant mentioned that, "this would give students another way to explore their feelings." Similarly, another participant expressed that, "art therapy helps students come to a more relaxed state of mind." A theme that appeared in the answers to this question was an understanding that

art therapy provides an option to help students communicate in ways that were non-stressful and appropriate. On the other hand, there were some responses from the participants that indicated that art therapy being implemented by teachers might not be helpful. For example, one participant stated that "the best implementation would be having a trained art therapist coming into the classroom to do lessons. Most teachers would not feel equipped to do this on their own."

Question 18: Please use a few words to describe student responses to implementation of SEL using visual art.

Figure 19a

Student Responses to SEL and Visual Art in Classroom

Note. This word map was created by Qualtrics and shows participants most used words for student responses to SEL and visual art in the classroom.

Participants were asked to use a few words to describe student responses to the implementation of SEL using visual art. The responses to this question were varied. Some participants expressed that they felt that the implementation of SEL using visual art was a positive experience where one participant stated, "some of the students have shared that they can better express themselves using art." Similarly, another participant stated, that "While doing art, students have conversations with peers in a fun and relaxed way." Other responses about the

implementation of SEL using visual art included more focus on the art making than on the SEL.

One participant stated that, "Students enjoy using different art media in their journals. They like

learning how to draw when I model." Similarly, another participant stated that "Students love the

art lessons." Moreover, other responses indicated general statements of approval. For example,

one participant answered "all positive" and another participant answered "fine." Only one

participant stated that they had a mixed experience, which was that "Most are positive but I have

some negative."

The data presented above reviews the 30 responses received from kindergarten through

third grade teachers. The data is derived from surveys distributed via email using a snowball

method. The questions presented within the survey are meant to explore our research question –

how can theories in art therapy support teachers in their efforts to create socially and emotionally

competent early education classrooms? The following section will include a thematic analysis as

it relates to our research question.

Data Analysis

The larger purpose of this research project aims to provide teachers with resources and strategies that can increase children's access to early mental health resources within a school setting. The main question for research is as follows; how can theories in art therapy support teachers in their efforts to create socially and emotionally competent early education classrooms? To answer this question researchers collected data using an anonymous online survey that included Likert scale, open-ended and closed-ended questions that collected information about the teacher's teaching experience including teaching SEL, their understanding of what SEL is and how students responded to their current strategies. The results from this survey included responses to 20 questions relating to SEL in the classroom from 30 Los Angeles based TK-3rd grade teachers. The survey also aimed to collect qualitative information about how visual art techniques were employed in SEL implementation and lastly, given a basic definition of what art therapy is, how teachers felt this approach might be used to enhance their efforts with SEL in their classrooms.

The analysis began with a systematic review of all data sets from Qualtrics, survey software. This included organizing and reviewing both open and closed responses to the survey questions. The responses to the open-ended questions were coded for further cross-referencing in order to develop preliminary themes. Next researchers refined themes by reviewing data once again in order to ensure that themes were accurate and valid. Throughout this process we used both inductive and deductive approaches to help structure the thematic analysis, assessing themes and patterns as they relate to the research questions. The analysis section will introduce the significance of SEL and address how teachers understand art therapy. It will describe the tools teachers are currently using to implement SEL and how students respond to its implementation. The potential of art as a tool to teach SEL will additionally be outlined.

Importance of SEL

When asked to describe their understanding of SEL, many participants emphasized the importance of SEL and its long-term impact on students. First, one teacher shared that SEL is an "intentional instructional /support plan that everyone needs to develop and learn." Another teacher added that SEL is "just as important, if not more so, as the academics in the early years of education." A few teachers stressed that "we need to work on meeting [student] needs better" using SEL and that "without considering social emotional learning, you cannot connect with students at a deeper, longer lasting level." As another teacher suggests, SEL meets "the needs of the whole-child." Another teacher shared that the impact of SEL will "help them in their adult life." This suggests that participants feel SEL offers opportunities for children to grow and learn in ways that are different from academics, and that SEL is crucial for student success.

Emotional

Approximately 64% of participants noted the importance of the emotional component of SEL. One teacher stated that "the emotional state dictates all," which points to the impact of a child's emotional state on the rest of their student experience. Another teacher shared that SEL offers students the chance to "recognize and manage their emotions," and "give[s] them tools to handle situations appropriately." Similarly, one teacher highlighted that "being mentally and physically aware of how [they] are feeling" gives them the ability to "respond appropriately to any given situation." Finally, another teacher claimed that SEL helps students develop "self awareness [and] self control," while also "helping students feel loved, valued and accepted [by] tapping into their feelings." All things considered, the data suggests that participants believe SEL supports teaching children to manage their emotions in order to navigate through their personal and social experiences.

Social

Approximately 23% of the participating teachers specified that the social aspect of SEL was of particular value. These teachers offered the following viewpoints on the effect SEL has on social awareness, "Teaching the students about their emotions as well as how to manage their emotions [helps them] achieve their goals as well as be successful in society," and "[SEL] is students developing an understanding of who they are, who others are, and how they want to be in community with others," as well as, "In the educational environment, guiding children to understand their emotions and how it affects their learning and social relationships." One teacher also went on to share, "[SEL is] being mentally and physically aware of how you are feeling to be able to respond appropriately to any given situation." These data suggests that in addition to the emotional facet, participants think the social characteristic of SEL help children learn to more comfortably negotiate through the variety of social settings they may find themselves in.

Academic

The data showed 63% of participants used academic improvement as a metric for measuring SEL's success. One teacher shared, "[SEL] is developing self awareness, self control, and interpersonal skills for school." Additionally, teachers further reported that, "By understanding and acknowledging their emotions, we can facilitate learning" and, "A healthy emotional environment is key to learning." Another teacher expanded on this point by saying, "Social emotional learning is how I help my students to succeed in school by supporting them in every way possible." Some participants shared that "by understanding and acknowledging their emotions, we can facilitate learning", and another participant shared that SEL gives students an opportunity to "process their emotions and face them so that they can work through them in a healthy way and ultimately move forward with the learning." The learnings gleaned from these

participants suggests that there may be additional educational gains made, beyond traditional academic lesson planning, through the implementation of SEL in the classroom.

Teacher's Understanding of Art Therapy

The way that teachers understood art therapy and its effectiveness was mixed. The teachers were given the following definition for art therapy: "Art therapy uses art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork as a therapeutic and healing process. Clients – young, old, and in-between – are able to explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavior, develop social skills, improve reality orientation, reduce anxiety and increase self-esteem."

Uncertainty About What Art Therapy Is

After reading this definition, teachers were asked to discuss their feelings on how art therapy might support their implementation of SEL in the classroom. While 68% of teachers did say they use visual arts as part of their SEL practice, it seemed like teachers generally felt less confident about the concept of art therapy. Some teachers agreed it would be very beneficial, but did not specify how. Uncertainty seemed to be a theme amongst many teachers, as some said that they felt they were not equipped to provide art therapy services and would need more training, and some responded that they were not sure it would be effective at all.

Art Therapy as a Potential Resource

Alternatively, many teachers explained that art therapy could be a resource for students to express themselves and their emotions. It appears as though the survey participants believe that art therapy supplies a way for people to connect and communicate by sharing similar feelings and challenges in life. One participant expressed that art therapy techniques could be of benefit to students who possess limited writing skills. It could be assumed that this teacher believes that

art therapy techniques could help facilitate both verbal and non-verbal communication. One

teacher understood art therapy as a tool to not only share ideas, but as a way to solve problems,

although the type of problems were not specified. An additional teacher expressed that art

therapy could be a tool for grounding when there are unexpected upsetting events.

Tools teachers utilize to teach SEL

There are a variety of techniques participants reported using to implement SEL. Some

teachers reported utilizing mindfulness and breathing techniques (Many utilized educational

videos). The most frequently used SEL program was *Second Step*, which is described by

SecondStep.org as a classroom based social skills program designed to increase children's social

competence and other protective factors, and reduce impulsive, high-risk, and aggressive

behaviors with several participants noting that this curriculum was adopted by their district. One

participant used a restorative justice model for SEL, a large portion of participants considered

"check-ins" to be a primary tool for implementing SEL. Other common techniques included (1)

restorative justice practices, (2) problem-solving and conflict resolution techniques, (3)

reflective, creative and social activities. With facilitating more effective communication being a

main priority of teaching SEL, it can also be noted that teachers reported using social stories,

which are "concise narratives about a situation, concept, behavior, or social skill that is written

and implemented according to specific guidelines" (Ozdemir, 2010) and can frequently include

visual cues. These visual cues could be interpreted as a visually-interactive form of storytelling

which inherently lies within the scope of the arts. Across these distinct practices, teachers

alternated between planned and spontaneous implementation. The below table illustrates SEL

tools implemented by teachers and their frequency of use, along with their effectiveness and

student responses.

Table 1

The Frequency and Effectiveness of SEL Tools in the Classroom

Frequency of use	SEL TOOL	Effectiveness	Student Responses
30%	Unstructured lessons & activities	Very effective	Improved focus on schoolwork
27%	Preset Curriculum	Moderately to very effective	Increased engagement
17%	Check-ins to assess social emotional health	Moderately effective	Improved communication
13%	Spontaneously addressing SEL topics	Moderately effective	Fostered discussion
10%	Mindfulness, relaxation, breathing techniques	Very effective	Increased skills and awareness
10%	Videos	Moderately to very effective	Greater comprehension of subject
10%	Art	Very effective	Increased self expression and verbalization
7%	Conflict resolution activities	Very effective	Improved interpersonal relationships and involvement

Note. This table presents data on SEL tools implemented by teachers, frequency of use,

effectiveness and student responses.

Implementation

30% of teachers surveyed "always" implement SEL in the classroom, while 30%

reported "sometimes" implementing SEL. Some described specifics of SEL lesson planning in

the classroom to involve "lessons that teach students to recognize and manage their emotions

productively, particularly in terms of social relationships at school with peers and adults" and

"teach scenarios students will encounter daily and hope they have/are taught the skills to cope

with the situations or act upon them in a kind way." Some teachers described motivations for

SEL implementation. One participant described SEL as a problem solving tool to work "through

interpersonal conflict that mostly arise out on the playground" and another reported "breathing

exercises also allowed students to recognize that they felt better and could return to class."

Evaluation

Teachers continually reported positive feelings about SEL. Unstructured lessons &

activities and preset curriculum had the highest frequency of use (30%, 27% respectively) of all

the SEL tools used in the classroom (Table 1). In contrast, when asked about tools for

implementation art, at 10%, is one of the least frequently mentioned tools. When using *Second*

Step, most commented on the positive response, descriptions included, "It is at their level so they

are able to relate to the scenarios," and "students feel more relaxed during and following SEL

lesson." In regard to student engagement with SEL, teachers reported that students responded

positively to the conflict resolution model. One participant noted that "Students use the conflict

resolution model constantly throughout the day. Whenever conflict happens, they request each

other to check in..." Another teacher reported that their students "use the breathing techniques

frequently" and "practice breathing at home when they get anxious or feel like they can't relax".

Another teacher stated, "students appreciate the time to get in the right headspace for learning.

Students express the value of feeling safe in class." Even though the responses were

overwhelmingly positive, it was not unanimous. One teacher did not implement SEL and felt that

SEL should not be implemented in schools. This teacher stated, "Teachers should teach the

basics of reading, writing, math, social studies and science. SEL should be taught at home and

left out of the classroom."

Art as a Tool to Teach SEL

For the purposes of this research project, researchers were specifically interested in how art making might be used as a tool for SEL implementation. In the course of the study, participants were asked about the tools they employed for SEL implementation, and only 10% of them mentioned using art or art-related activities. However, when specifically asked about art as a tool for SEL, 93% of participants believed that it was effective, with 62% stating that it was highly effective. One participant noted that, "some of the students have shared that they can better express themselves using art," while another participant who teaches third grade, explained that "using art for those students who are non-verbal," helps them "open up and speak." Despite the overwhelmingly positive response to the idea of using art for SEL implementation, only 33% of participants reported actually having used art-making in their SEL teaching.

Barriers to using SEL and Art Therapy

Study participants were asked about barriers when incorporating SEL into their classrooms to which 38.33 % of teachers listed time as the most significant barrier. Other barriers include supplies, student participation, school support, district support, caregiver support, and lack of education or training on SEL. For example, one participant described that "as a special education teacher, I am not given the time to create all the things I need to create to support my students…the state, feds & county only seem to care that paperwork is done correctly and on time- it is very disheartening."

An additional barrier that might prevent the implementation of SEL and art therapy according to the data, is that SEL is not required statewide. Only 56% of participants are required

to use SEL in the classroom, with 44% not having any requirements. Education about

incorporation and integration is another barrier to implementing SEL and art therapy. When

participants were asked if there are ways that art therapy might support the implementation of

SEL in the classroom, some of the responses indicated this need for more information. For

instance, one participant stated that there needs to be "more training in therapy - art is easy, but

what to do with feelings and support appropriately is a bit uneasy and uncertain." Moreover,

there appears to be a need for continuity or consensus in knowing what art therapy is. For

instance, one participant stated, "I think it would allow students to communicate feelings without

having to speak about it." Another response included, "Our students come from many

dysfunctional families; this therapy will assist them to express themselves in a safe

environment." Another participant stated, "Yes, it would be good for students to show each other

they are different but share similar feelings and challenges in life." While all of these responses

point to a general understanding of art therapy, it is still being determined if there is a shared

common understanding of its basic principles and uses in the classroom.

There is also no consensus among participants on the definition of SEL and there is a lack

of information on how art can enhance SEL. For instance, in describing SEL in their own words,

participants expressed a broad spectrum of understanding. For example, one participant

represented SEL as "how students deal with things other than academics. We need to work on

meeting these needs better." Another participant responded, "Social Emotional Learning is

students developing an understanding of who they are, who others are, and how they want to be

in community with others." Another participant responded that "The emotional state dictates all.

A healthy emotional environment is key to learning." While all of these responses are relevant

and related to SEL, it also needs to be clarified if there is a consensus on what SEL is and how it

can be used in the classroom.

Findings

This research project was a qualitative case study with TK-3rd grade teachers teaching in public schools in Los Angeles County and aimed to answer the following question; how can theories in art therapy support teachers in their efforts to create socially and emotionally competent early education classrooms? Researchers collected data by distributing an anonymous online survey to teacher participants. Results were analyzed using a thematic analysis using the research question as a way to code and identify emergent themes. Findings reference the literature and will be presented in this section as recommendations for how teachers, art therapists, and mental health practitioners can best work together to implement SEL in the classroom. Our findings indicate that there are three main areas that can be addressed regarding SEL and art therapy practices: understanding, access, and training.

Understanding SEL and Art Therapy

Building Consistency in Defining SEL

One of our recommendations to help teachers, art therapists, and mental health practitioners implement SEL in the classroom is to build consistency in defining SEL. While exploring the literature, we have found that the definitions and frameworks of SEL can vary. For example, while some organizations refer to SEL more generally as a strengths-based social and emotional education (Frydenberg, 2021), others are more expanded in their understanding of SEL. It appears that many organizations tend to follow the CASEL definition of SEL, which is the definition we used in our research. That definition states that SEL is "the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and

show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (CASEL, 2022).

We have found that within the literature, definitions of SEL cover various topics and can focus on one aspect of the full definition, including specific parts derived from the CASEL definition. Examples of this include developing self-awareness, self-control, growing interpersonal skills, developing emotional competency, developing self-regulation, problem-solving, building empathy, and an ability to cooperate and work within a team (Durlak et al., 2015).

In connecting this literature to the data, over half of teachers reported positively about SEL, sharing that it offers opportunities for children to grow and learn in ways that academics do not, and that SEL is crucial for student success. Many teachers commented on the emotional aspect of SEL, and a portion shared the social aspect of how SEL aids student growth. Additionally, some teachers mentioned the benefit of SEL on academics. Because most teachers are highlighting only a portion of SEL, this may suggest that teachers understand SEL differently, which is likely due to the variety of approaches teachers use to implement SEL.

Increasing Understanding About the Practice of Art Therapy

Within the data, we found that teachers were not familiar with how to incorporate art therapy with SEL. Presenting teachers with resources such as videos modeling a typical art therapy-informed class session could help increase understanding around what art therapy is and how it is utilized. This could also serve as an educational resource that highlights the key differences between the scope of practice of an art therapist and a teacher when it comes to art directives. Additionally, it may be helpful for teachers to obtain a resource pamphlet with various worksheets and prompts that support practicing SEL in an art therapy-informed manner. The

potential for art therapy as a tool for improving SEL teaching and learning in classrooms is

expansive and yet perhaps, in this study, not yet fully actualized.

We believe if teachers get proper explanation of art therapy and what it looks like in

practice, it may give teachers a better understanding of how to incorporate it with SEL. To build

better understanding about SEL and art therapy, it is imperative to give teachers better access to

teaching resources.

Access to SEL Resources

Giving Teachers Equal Access to SEL Materials

Within the data, we found that some teachers shared their experiences using CASEL,

which views SEL through a restorative justice lens. Other teachers mentioned *Second Step*,

which offers classroom kits that include tools like videos, cards, streaming lessons, music, and

take-home material to implement SEL. A multitude of teachers shared that they receive weekly

SEL material from their school counselor to use in the classroom, while others stated that they

organize their classroom's SEL themselves through morning meetings, check ins, mindfulness

activities, and interactive activities. This suggests that teachers' access to structured SEL tools

largely informs how they understand SEL, as teachers that are being given structured SEL

resources at school are likely to have a broader understanding and implementation of SEL.

Given the wide range of topics and focuses addressed in definitions of SEL within the

literature and data, we believe that building consistency in the definition might be helpful in the

collaboration of art therapists, educators, and mental health practitioners. The inconsistency in

the definition of SEL within the literature and data suggest that in order for teachers, art

therapists, and mental health practitioners to build consistency in defining SEL, it is imperative

for them to have the same access to structured SEL programs and materials. Giving teachers this

access will give them the opportunity to learn about SEL fully and allow them to be better

trained in implementing SEL and art therapy approaches.

Training in SEL and Art Therapy-Informed Practices

Proper Training with SEL

In the data we found that 56% of teachers were required to use SEL as part of their

classroom instruction. However, of this group only 30% were using SEL consistently. This

suggests that teachers may not have the training to incorporate SEL within various manners

throughout their curriculum. For example, they may be infusing SEL into their classroom

through weekly check-ins or meditations, but they may be missing out on countless opportunities

to weave in social emotional components into other parts of instruction. Additionally, even fewer

teachers incorporate art into their SEL instruction. Providing proper training for teachers to

implement SEL and art therapy-informed exercises might help build consistency in the use of

SEL and art practices.

In addition to the data, the literature also supports further investigation into training

teachers properly in the SEL based art therapy to elevate their concerns and offering them the

opportunity to bring in art therapists to assist with art activities. The literature agrees with our

findings and one report strongly states that "their theory emphasizes that the artistic and

social-emotional aspects are always happening simultaneously" (Farrington et al, 2019) This

further backs the need for studies into combining art therapy with SEL so that it may aid in

meeting SEL requirements in addition to the noted benefits of SEL that our participants

proclaimed in the data. As stated in the literature, SEL has gradually grown to be more broadly

well received and utilized since its inception. Buchanan et al. (2009) found this notion to be true,

going on to state that as SEL became more widely accepted in schools, it has become vital to

contemplate the user assessment of the curriculum in the areas of use, implementation, and outcomes. We researchers suggest that the same must be true about the use of art therapy in conjunction with SEL. Through further studies, we believe that barriers involved in implementing art therapy-based SEL practices will fall away.

Learning How to Utilize Art and SEL in Classrooms

Overall, teachers did not feel equipped to facilitate art therapy-informed practices. Providing examples about how to implement it without the clinical training that art therapists receive could be useful, as well as information about how to receive training or work alongside an art therapist in the classroom to facilitate together. We believe that it is understood by both the teachers and us researchers that there is a difference between a teacher leading an art activity and an art therapist facilitating a group art directive, but further research could address this difference and how to bridge that gap.

The data specifically found that even though there was a lack of cohesion in the overall understanding of art therapy, the survey participants generally agreed that art therapy has the potential to coincide with the implementation of SEL. In fact, the majority of teachers surveyed stated that visual art implemented with SEL was moderately effective to very effective when utilized in the classroom. The teachers had varied opinions as to whether teachers alone, with their limitations of time, diverse ideas of SEL, and finite knowledge of art therapy, could manage the addition of art therapy to their SEL curriculum. With proper training, these challenges might be met, though a few participants suggested that it might be more prudent to have an art therapist facilitate these lessons for their students.

Confidence Utilizing SEL and Art Therapy Approaches

      The literature also presents challenging ideas about the educator's own self concepts about their effectiveness with SEL, which may in part, depend on the amount and quality of their support. Such thinking may influence their ability to implement an effective SEL curriculum for their students. When teachers feel less effective, they are less successful in implementation (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). This line of thinking goes to show the need for further research into how to best bridge the aforementioned gap for the teachers in school settings with well contextualized SEL tools such as art therapy and the addition of art therapists in the classroom to facilitate the most rewarding and lasting SEL experience for students.

Conclusion

This study intended to contribute to both the fields of art therapy and early education by examining how theories in art therapy could support teachers in their efforts to create socially and emotionally competent early education classrooms. The study was directed by the following research questions: (1) How is social and emotional learning (SEL) currently being implemented in classrooms", (2) What are the current SEL needs of teachers and students? and (3) How might creative art therapies be integrated into general classroom programming to build mental health inclusivity? Throughout the process of collecting data through a survey that received rich qualitative data, the research team made discoveries and gained a deeper understanding of how teachers currently understand SEL and art therapy and how they are implementing tools to meet the social and emotional needs of young children in school settings.

Although the researchers were not able to conduct their previously planned focus group, they were able to gleam understanding from emergent themes located within the survey responses. Within the responses, it was understood that teachers had differing definitions about what SEL was and reported using a variation of strategies and resources in order to teach SEL in their classrooms. While most teachers agreed that it was an essential element of children's development, the researchers deduced that teachers could benefit from having a more consistent understanding of SEL, both in its definition and application. Additionally, teachers reported not being familiar with how to use art therapy theories to inform their SEL practice. While researchers set out to examine how art and creative therapies could be potentially integrated into the general classroom discipline to encourage mental health inclusivity, and believe this to be possible, we also realized it is paramount to acknowledge the scope of practice for teachers and art therapists.

We believe that teachers can use certain aspects of art therapy practices to promote social and emotional learning (SEL) in the classroom. For instance, teachers can incorporate art directives that focus on mindfulness and stress reduction, rather than on addressing other mental health issues. Using art to support general SEL activities and lessons could also be an appropriate way for teachers to utilize art therapy theories in early education classrooms. To navigate this effectively, one must have a clear understanding of boundaries in processing student artwork and be able to identify concerning student behaviors that may require an extra level of care. It is encouraged that teachers have an open line of communication or access to an art therapist preferably and/or a mental health professional to address additional student mental health concerns. If teachers are interested in incorporating art therapy theories into their lesson planning, communicating with art therapists could provide them with guidance and prompts that align with their scope of practice. As for future research, we acknowledge that expanding the understanding of both social-emotional learning and the practice of art therapy, and exploring how these two areas can be integrated into real-life applications, could be beneficial for teachers, their students, art therapists, and mental health practitioners alike.

Appendix A

Teacher Survey Questions

Q1 Thank you so much from the Loyola Marymount University Marital and Family Therapy/ Art Therapy Department for taking the time to participate in this brief anonymous survey that aims to understand:

Teachers' perspectives on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in their classrooms
How visual art and theories in art therapy might positively support SEL implementation.
 Results of this study will be analyzed for emerging themes and used to develop SEL strategies and curriculum that is informed by teachers' experiences.

Q2 Early education grades you are currently or have taught (select all that apply):

1.   Transitional Kindergarten
2.   Kindergarten
3. 1st Grade
4.   2nd Grade
5.   3rd Grade

Q3 Number of years you have been teaching:

1. Less than 1 year
2. 1 - 2 years
3. 2 - 4 years
4. 4 - 6 years
5. 6 - 8 years
6. 8 years +

Q4 Where did you receive your teacher education?

1. California
2. Outside of California
3. Outside of the United States

Q5 Please describe your teaching philosophy in a few words.

_____

Q6 Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is defined by CASEL (2022) as, "The process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."

Using your own words, please describe how you understand Social Emotional Learning.

_____

Q7 Do you currently implement SEL in your classroom?

1. Always
2. Most of the time
3. About half the time
4. Sometimes
5. Never

Q8 If you do currently implement SEL in your classroom, please describe how in a few words.

_____

Q13 Does your school require you to include SEL in the classroom?

1. No
2. Yes. Please describe requirements below.

_____

Q14 Does your school have a SEL curriculum/program that is required or frequently used?

1. No
2. Yes. Please include name/title of the curriculum/program.

_____

Q9 How effective do you find SEL to be in your classroom?

1. Not effective at all
2. Slightly effective

3. Moderately effective
4. Very effective
5. Extremely effective

Q10 How are you measuring effectiveness? Check all that apply.

1. Individual student observations in the classroom
2. Group observations in the classroom
3. Individual student observations outside of classroom
4. Group observations outside of the classroom
5. Academic performance
6. Caregiver reports
7. Formal assessments (please name below)

   _____

8. Other (please describe below)

   _____

Q11 Please use a few words to describe student responses to SEL implementation in the classroom.

   _____

Q12 Please describe any barriers to implementing SEL in your classroom (check all that apply):

1. Time
2. Supplies
3. Student participation
4. School support
5. District support
6. Caregiver support
7. Lack of education or training on the topic of SEL
8. Other (please describe below)

   _____

Q16 Do you or have you ever used visual art (either viewing or creating) in your implementation of SEL in the classroom?

1. No

2. Yes (please describe below)

_____

Q17 How effective do you find visual art to be in your implementation of SEL in your classroom?

1. Not effective at all
2. Slightly effective
3. Moderately effective
4. Very effective
5. Extremely effective

Q18 How are you measuring the effectiveness of visual art in your implementation of SEL? Check all that apply.

1.   Individual student observations in the classroom
2.   Group observations in the classroom
3.   Individual student observations outside of classroom
4.   Group observations outside of the classroom
5.   Academic performance
6.   Caregiver reports
7.   Formal assessments (please name below)

_____

8.   Other (please describe below)

_____

Q21 Please use a few words to describe student responses to implementation of SEL using visual art.

_____

Q19 Please review the definition of Art Therapy taken from the Art Therapy Credentials Board (www.atcb.org):

Art therapy uses art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork as a therapeutic and healing process. Clients – young, old, and in-between – are able to explore their feelings,

reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavior, develop social skills, improve reality orientation, reduce anxiety and increase self-esteem.

After reviewing this definition, are there ways that you think Art Therapy might support your implementation of SEL in the classroom? Please describe in a few words.

_____

Q20 Would you be interested in participating in a focus group with other teaching professionals to further discuss current SEL practices in the classroom and how art and art therapy might support your work? Please provide your name, email address, preferred format and availability below:

1. Name: _____
2. Email Address: _____
3. Phone Number: _____
4. Preferred Format (Zoom or In-person)?

    _____

Appendix B

Letter of Permission

MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
3320 Gilman Road, El Monte, California 91732-3201 • (626) 652-4000 • www.mtviewschools.com
"Inspiring Each Student to Succeed Every Day"
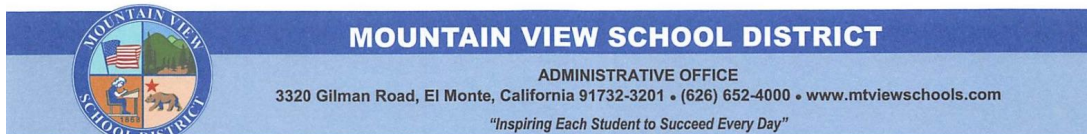
BOARD OF EDUCATION
Adam C. Carranza
Christian Diaz
Jacqueline Saldaña
Veronica Sifuentes
Cindy Wu

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION
Raymond Andry, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Darin De Knikker
Assosciate Superintendent
Business Services
John Lovato, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Personnel Services
Jefferey Lagozzino, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Educational Services

Baker School
12043 Exline St.
El Monte, CA 91732
(626) 652-4700

La Primaria School
4220 Gilman Rd.
El Monte, CA 91732
(626) 652-4150

Maxson School
12380 Felipe St.
El Monte, CA 91732
(626) 652-4500

Miramonte School
10620 Schmidt Rd.
So. El Monte, CA 91733
(626) 652-4600

Monte Vista School
11111 Thienes Ave.
So. El Monte CA, 91733
(626) 652-4650

Parkview School
12044 Elliott St.
El Monte, CA 91732
(626) 652-4800

Payne School
2850 N. Mt. View Rd.
El Monte, CA 91732
(626) 652-4900

Twin Lakes School
3900 Gilman Rd.
El Monte, CA 91732
(626) 652-4400

Children's Center
2109 Burkett Rd.
El Monte, CA 91732
(626) 652-4250

Voorhis Learning Center
3501 Durfee Ave.
El Monte, CA 91732

Cogswell Admin. Center
11050 Fineview St.
So. El Monte, CA 91733

Kranz Property
12460 Fineview St.
El Monte, CA 91732

Madrid Property
3300 Gilman Rd.
El Monte, CA 91732

November 30, 2022

Dear LMU Institutional Review Committee,

I, Jefferey S. Lagozino, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent of the Mountain View School District, give Dr. Jessica Bianchi LMFT, ATR-BC and the researchers under her mentorship, permission to conduct research with TK - 3rd grade classroom teachers within the Mountain View School District. I understand that the purpose of this research project is to explore how early education teachers currently understand social emotional learning (SEL), how they are implementing SEL in their classrooms, and teacher's perspectives on how theories in art therapy might enhance or support their efforts providing SEL which can provide children with early access to needed mental health support. I understand that participation in this research project is voluntary. I understand that names and identifying information will be anonymous and confidential. I understand that the research project will include the following:

- TK-3rd grade teachers will be asked to complete a voluntary online questionnaire. The questionnaire will include prompts that aim to understand how teachers define and implement effective SEL in the classroom. Prompts will include:
  • How do you define Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)?
  • What types of activities, strategies, curriculums do you implement in the the classroom to address SEL?
  • What types of activities, strategies, curriculums do you find effective in addressing SEL in the classroom? How are you measuring effectiveness?
  • Do you incorporate visual art in your SEL implementation strategies? Do you find visual art to be effective in addressing SEL in the classroom?

- Voluntary participation in a semi-structured focus group with other TK - 3rd grade teachers.

Please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns.

Jefferey S. Lagozino
Jefferey S. Lagozzino, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services

References

Allbright, T., & Hough, H. (2020). Measures of SEL and school climate in California. *State Education Standard, 20*(2), 28–32.

Aspen Institute. (2019). *From a nation at risk to a nation at hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development.* Aspen Institute, National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development (NCSEAD).

Barrasso-Catanzaro, C., & Eslinger, P. J. (2016). Neurobiological bases of executive function and social-emotional development: Typical and atypical brain changes. *Family Relations*, *65*(1), 108–119. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12175

Bartlett, J. D. & Stratford, B. (2021). *A national agenda for children's mental health.* Child Trends.

https://www.childtrends.org/publications/a-national-agenda-for-childrens-mental-health.

Belfield, C., Bowden, A. B., Klapp, A., Levin, H., Shand, R., & Zander, S. (2015). The economic value of social and emotional learning. *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis*, *6*(3), 508–544. https://doi.org/10.1017/bca.2015.55

Blad, E. (2021, February 3). *Social-emotional learning: States collaborate to craft standards, policies*. Education Week. Retrieved October 25, 2022, from https://www.edweek.org/leadership/social-emotional-learning-states-collaborate-to-craft-standards-policies/2016/08

Bouffard, S., Parkinson, J., Jacob, R., & Jones, S.M. (2009). Designing SECURe: A summary of literature and SEL programs reviewed in preparation for the development of SECURe. Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, Cambridge MA.

Bozgün, K., & Akın-Kösterelioğlu, M. (2021). The roles of social-emotional development,

    academic grit and subjective well-being in primary school students' reading-writing

    motivation. *Reading Psychology*, *42*(8), 836–857.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2021.1955782

Brackett, M., Bailey, C., Hoffmann, J. & Simmons, D. (2019). RULER: A Theory-Driven,

    Systemic Approach to Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning, *Educational*

    Psychologist, 54:3, 144-161, DOI: 10.1080/00461520.2019.1614447

Browning, A. (2020). Mindfulness in Education: An approach to Cultivating self-awareness that

    can bolster kids' learning. WestEd.

    https://www.wested.org/resources/sel-mindfulness-in-education/

Brunzell, T., Stokes, H., & Waters, L. (2016). Trauma-informed positive education: Using

    positive psychology to strengthen vulnerable students. *Contemporary School Psychology,*

    20(1), 63–83. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-015-0070-x

Buchanan, R., Gueldner, B., Tran, K. O. & Merrell, K. (2009). Social and emotional learning in

    classrooms: A survey of teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and practices. *Journal of*

    Applied School Psychology, 25:2, 187-203, DOI: 10.1080/15377900802487078

Burton, J. M., Horowitz, R., & Abeles, H. (2000). Learning in and through the arts: The question

    of transfer. *Studies in Art Education*, *41*(3), 228–257. https://doi.org/10.2307/1320379

California Department of Education (CDE). (2021, September 23) *Social and emotional*

    learning: Guidance and resources for supporting social and emotional learning. CDE.

    https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/se/

Casciano, R., Cherfas, L., & Jobson-Ahmed, L. (2019). Connecting arts integration to

    social-emotional learning among special education students. *Journal for Learning*

    through the Arts, *15*(1).

CASEL. (2022). *SEL policy at the state level: A systemic approach can align state policies,*

    resources, and actions to support SEL. CASEL.

    https://casel.org/systemic-implementation/sel-policy-at-the-state-level/#CA

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, December 29). *CDC's Developmental*

    Milestones. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from

    https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html

Chan, M., Sharkey, J. D., Lawrie, S. I., Arch, D. A. N., & Nylund-Gibson, K. (2021). Elementary

    school teacher well-being and supportive measures amid COVID-19: An exploratory

    study. *School Psychology*, 36(6), 533–545.

    https://doi-org.electra.lmu.edu/10.1037/spq0000441

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (2013). *Effective social*

    and emotional learning programs – Preschool and elementary school edition.

    https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED581699.pdf

Compass, B. E. (2009). Coping, regulation, and development during childhood and adolescence.

    New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, *124*, 87–99.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods

    Approaches (4th ed.). *Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.*

Davis, C. R., Baker, C. N., Osborn, J., & Overstreet, S. (2022). Understanding teacher

    self-efficacy to address students' social-emotional needs in the COVID-19 pandemic.

    Urban Education, https://doi.org/10.1177/00420859221099834

Djambazova-Popordanoska, S. (2016). Implications of emotion regulation on young children's

emotional wellbeing and educational achievement. *Educational Review*, *68*(4), 497–515.

https://doi-org.electra.lmu.edu/10.1080/00131911.2016.114455

Domitrovich, C. E., Cortes, R. C., & Greenberg, M. T. (2007). Improving young children's social

and emotional competence: A randomized trial of the preschool "PATHS" curriculum.

The Journal of Primary Prevention, 28(2), 67–91.

Duane, A., Casimir, A. E., Mims, L. C., Kaler-Jones, C., & Simmons, D. (2021). Beyond deep

breathing: A new vision for equitable, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed

mindfulness practice. *Middle School Journal,* 52(3), 4–14.

Durlak, J., Domitrovich, C.,Weissberg, R., & Gullotta, T., (2015) *Handbook of social and

emotional learning: Research and practice.* Guilford Publications.

Eddy, M., Blatt-Gross, C., Edgar, S. N., Gohr, A., Halverson, E., Humphreys, K., & Smolin, L.

(2021). Local-level implementation of social emotional learning in arts education:

Moving the heart through the arts. *Arts Education Policy Review*, *122*(3), 193–204.

Edgar, S. N., & Morrison, B. (2020). A vision for social emotional learning and arts education

policy. *Arts Education Policy Review,* 122(3), 145–150.

https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2020.1774830

Elias, M. J., & Moceri, D. C. (2012). Developing social and emotional aspects of learning: The

American experience. *Research Papers in Education*, *27*(4), 423–434.

https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2012.690243

Elias, M. J., Parker, S. J., Kash, V. M., & Dunkeblau, E. (2007). Social-emotional learning and

character and moral education in children: Synergy or fundamental divergence in our

schools? *Journal of Research in Character Education, 5*(2), 167–181.

Eslinger, P. J., Flaherty-Craig, C. V., & Chakara, F. M. (2013). Rehabilitation and management of Executive Function Disorders. *Neurological Rehabilitation*, 365–376. https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-444-52901-5.00031-9

Eveleigh, A., Cook, A., Naples, L. H., & Cipriano, C. (2022). How did educators of students with learning differences use social–emotional learning to support their students and themselves early in the COVID-19 pandemic? *Children & Schools*, *44*(1), 27–38. https://doi-org.electra.lmu.edu/10.1093/cs/cdab030

Farrington, C. A., Wright, L., Weiss, E. M., Shewfelt, S., Puller, J. S., Nagaoka, J., McBride, M. R., & Maurer, J. (2019). (rep.). *Arts Education and Social-Emotional Learning Outcomes among K-12 Students: Developing a Theory of Action* (pp. 1–48). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Consortium on School Research.

Femi Vance, & Rebecca Goldberg. (2020). Creating a rising tide: Improving social and emotional learning across California. *Journal of Youth Development*, *15*(1), 165–179. https://doi-org.electra.lmu.edu/10.5195/jyd.2020.819

Frydenberg, E. (2021). Social Emotional Learning in the early years: Innovation and applications. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*, 31(2), 184–194. https://doi.org/10.1017/jgc.2021.18

Fundamentals of SEL. CASEL. (2022). CASEL. https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/

Garner, P. W., Bender, S. L., & Fedor, M. (2018). Mindfulness-Based SEL Programming to Increase Preservice Teachers' Mindfulness and Emotional Competence. *Psychology in the Schools*, *55*(4), 377–390.

George Lucas Educational Foundation. (2011, October 7). *Social and emotional learning: A short history*. Edutopia. https://www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning-history

Gibbons, K. (2010). Circle justice: A creative arts approach to conflict resolution in the

    classroom. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*. 27.

    10.1080/07421656.2010.10129716.

GovTrack.us. (2022). H.R. 2437 — *112th Congress: Academic,social, and emotional learning*

    act of 2011. govtrack. https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/112/hr2437

Graham, M. A. (2021). The disciplinary borderlands of education: Art and STEAM education.

    Ournal for the Study of Education and Development, *44*(4), 769–800.

    https://doi.org/https://search-ebscohost-com.electra.lmu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=

    psyh&AN=2021-94071-002&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Greenberg, M. T., Weissberg, R. P., O'Brien, M. U., Zins, J. E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H., &

    Elias, M. J. (2003). Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through

    coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning. *The American Psychologist*,

    58(6–7).

Gruber, H., & Oepen, R. (2018). Emotion regulation strategies and effects in art-making: A

    narrative synthesis. *The Arts in Psychotherapy, 59,* 65–74.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2017.12.006

Guide, C. A. S. E. L. (2013). Effective social and emotional learning programs. Preschool and

    Elementary School, 9.

Harvey, S. (1989). Creative arts therapies in the classroom: A study of cognitive, emotional, and

    motivational changes. *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, *11*(2), 85–100.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00843773

Hannigan, S., Grima-Farrell, C. & Wardman, N. (2019). Drawing on creative arts therapy

    approaches to enhance inclusive school cultures and student wellbeing. Issues in

    Educational Research, 29(3), 756-773. http://www.iier.org.au/iier29/hannigan.pdf

Harris, V.W., Anderson, J. & Visconti, B. (2022). Social emotional ability development (SEAD):

    An integrated model of practical emotion-based competencies. *Motivation and Emotion*,

    46, 226–253. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-021-09922-1

Hoffman, M. L. (1982). Affect and moral development. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent*

    Development, *1982*(16), 83–103. https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.23219821605

Hunter, L. J., DiPerna, J. C., Hart, S. C., Neugebauer, S., & Lei, P. (2022). Examining teacher

    approaches to implementation of a classwide SEL program. *School Psychology, 37*(4),

    285–297. https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000502

Jones, S., Brush, K., Bailey, R., Brion-Meisels, G., McIntyre, J., Kahn, J., Nelson, B., & Stickle,

    L. (2021). *Navigating SEL from the inside out: Looking inside & across 25 leading SEL*

    programs–a practical resource for schools and OST providers. Cambridge: Harvard

    Graduate School of Education.

Jones, S. M., & Bouffard, S. M. (2012). Social and emotional learning in schools: From

    programs to strategies. *Society for Research in Child Development Social Policy*

    Report. 26(4), 1-33. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED540203.pdf

Jones, S. M., Brown, J. L., & Aber, J. (2011). Two year impacts of a universal school based

    social emotional and literacy intervention: An experiment in translational developmental

    research. *Child Development*, *82*(2), 533-554.

Kamei, A., & Harriott, W. (2021). Social emotional learning in virtual settings: Intervention

    strategies. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, *13*(3), 365–371.

Kapitan, L. (2018). Introduction to art therapy research. Routledge.

Kimner, H., Gopal, M., & Rocha-Salazar, L. (2020). *Ayer elementary school's resilient*

conditions for improvement: Pivoting amid COVID-19. Policy Analysis for California

Education. Retrieved October 31, 2022, from

https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/ayer-elementary-schools-resilient-conditions-improvement

Klorer, P. G., & Robb, M. (2012). Art enrichment: Evaluating a collaboration between head start

and a graduate art therapy program. *Art Therapy*, *29*(4), 180–187.

https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2012.730920

Lawson G.M., McKenzie M.E., Becker K.D., Selby L, Hoover SA. (2019). The core components

of evidence-based social emotional learning programs. *Prevention Science*,

20(4):457-467. doi: 10.1007/s11121-018-0953-y. PMID: 30443846; PMCID:

PMC6544145.

López, C.M., Álvarez, M. & Gómez, A. (2022) Do educators matter? Associations between

caregivers' mentalization and preschoolers' attachment, social emotional development

and theory of mind, Early Child Development and Care, 192:2, 233-247, DOI:

10.1080/03004430.2020.175566426

Maguire, E. R., & Fishbein, D. H. (2016). The influence of family characteristics on problem

behaviors in a sample of high-risk Caribbean adolescents. *Family Relations*, *65*(1),

120–133. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12179

Malik, F., & Marwaha, R. (2018). Developmental stages of social emotional development in

    children. National library of medicine: National center for biotechnology information.

    https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK534819/

Maloney, J.E., Lawlor, M.S., Schonert-Reichl, K.A., Whitehead, J. (2016), *Handbook of*

    mindfulness in education: Mindfulness in behavioral health (pp. 313–334). Springer.

    10.1007/978-1-4939-3506-2

McDonald, A., Holttum, S., & Drey, N. S. (2019). Primary-school-based art therapy: Exploratory

    study of changes in children's social, emotional and mental health. *International Journal*

    of Art Therapy, *24*(3), 125–138. https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2019.1634115

McElrath, K. (2021). *Nearly 93% of households with school-age children report some form of*

    distance learning during COVID-19. Census.gov. Retrieved October 24, 2022, from

    https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/08/schooling-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.

    html

McKown, C., Gumbiner, L. M., Russo, N. M., & Lipton, M. (2009). Social-emotional learning

    skill, self-regulation, and social competence in typically developing and clinic-referred

    children. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, *38*(6), 858–871.

Merrell, K. W., & Gueldner, B. A., (2010) *Social and emotional learning in the classroom*

    promoting mental health and academic success (pp.48-66). Guilford Publications.

Nadel, J. (2007). *Emotional development: Recent research advances*. Oxford Univ. Press.

Niles, M. D., Reynolds, A. J., & Nagasawa, M. (2006). Does early childhood intervention affect

    the social and emotional development of participants? *Early Childhood Research &*

    Practice, *8*(1).

O'Neal, C. R., Boyars, M. Y., & Riley, L. W. (2019). Dual language learners' grit, engagement, and literacy achievement in elementary school. *School Psychology International*, *40*(6), 598–623. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034319875176

Ozdemir, Selda. (2010). Social stories: an intervention technique for children with Autism. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 5. 1827-1830. 10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.07.372.

Raffaele, C., Khosravi, P., Parker, A., Godovich, S., Rich, B., & Adleman, N. (2021). Social-emotional attention in school-age children: A call for school-based intervention during COVID-19 and distance learning. *Children & Schools*. 25;43(2):107-117. doi: 10.1093/cs/cdab010.

Reicher, H., & Matischek-Jauk, M. (2017). Preventing depression in adolescence through social and emotional learning. *International Journal of Emotional Education*, *9*(2), 110–115.

Reyes, C., Brackett, M. Rivers, S., Elbertson, N. & Salovey, P. (2012). The interaction effects of program training, dosage, and implementation quality on targeted student outcomes for the RULER Approach to social and emotional learning. *School Psychology Review*. 41. 82-99. 10.1080/02796015.2012.12087377.

Richerme, L.K. (2021) Every student succeeds act and social emotional learning: opportunities and considerations for P-12 arts educators*, Arts Education Policy Review*, 122:3, 151-157, DOI: 10.1080/10632913.2020.1787284

Schlund, J. (2021, July 22). *In school systems around the world, there's growing appreciation of the importance of social and emotional learning.* https://medium.com/social-emotional-learning/in-school-systems-around-the-world-theres-growing-appreciation-of-the-importance-of-social-and-fc797d8aa84

Schonert-Reichl, K. (2017). Social and Emotional Learning and Teachers. *The Future of Children, 27, 137-155*. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44219025

Schore, A. N. (2002). Dysregulation of the right brain: a fundamental mechanism of traumatic attachment and the psychopathogenesis of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 36*(1), 9–30. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1440-1614.2002.00996.x

Schweiger, E. M. (2022). Literacy and COVID-19: Elementary students' reading performance through a global pandemic [ProQuest Information & Learning]. In Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences *83*(11–A).

Skar, G. B. U., Graham, S. & Huebner, A. (2021). Learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of emergency remote instruction on first grade students' writing: A natural experiment. *Journal of Educational Psychology. 114*(7), 1553–1566. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000701

Soliman, D., Frydenberg, E., Liang, R., & Deans, J. (2021). Enhancing empathy in preschoolers: A comparison of social and emotional learning approaches. Educational and Developmental Psychologist, *38*(1), 64–76.

Squires, J. K., Waddell, M. L., Clifford, J. R., Funk, K., Hoselton, R. M., & Chen, C.-I. (2012). A psychometric study of the infant and toddler intervals of the social emotional assessment measure. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, *33*(2), 78–90. https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121412463445

Steed, E. A., Shapland, D., & Leech, N. (2021). Early childhood teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of their elementary school's approach to Social Emotional Learning: A

mixed methods study. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *50*(7), 1121–1132.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01248-4

Tharaldsen, K. B. (2019). Winding down the stressed out: Social and emotional learning as a

stress coping strategy with Norwegian upper secondary students. *International Journal of*

Emotional Education, *11*(2), 91–105.

Upshur, C., Wenz-Gross, M., Rhoads, C., Heyman, M., Yoo, Y. & Sawosik, G. (2019). A

randomized efficacy trial of the second step early learning (SSEL) curriculum. *Journal of*

Applied Developmental Psychology. 62. 145-159. 10.1016/j.appdev.2019.02.008.

Webb, T. L., Miles, E., & Sheeran, P. (2012). Dealing with feeling: A meta-analysis of the

effectiveness of strategies derived from the process model of emotion regulation.

Psychological Bulletin, 138, 775–808.

Zakaria, M. Z., Yunus, F., & Mohamed, S. (2021). Drawing activities enhance preschoolers socio

emotional development. *Southeast Asia Early Childhood*, *10*(1), 18–27.

Zimmerman, E. (2009). Reconceptualizing the role of creativity in art education theory and

practice. *Studies in Art Education*, *50*(4), 382–399.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2009.11518783

Zincirli, M. (2021). School administrators' views on distance education during the COVID-19

pandemic process. *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 9(2), 52–66.

http://dx.doi.org/10.52380/mojet.2021.9.2.202

Zins, J. E., Bloodworth, M. R., Weissberg, R. P., & Walberg, H. J. (2007). The scientific base

linking social and emotional learning to school success. *Journal of Educational and*

Psychological Consultation, *17*(2-3), 191–210.

https://doi.org/10.1080/10744410701413145

Zins, J. E., Payton, J. W., Weissberg, R. P., & O'Brien, M. U. (2008). Social and emotional learning for successful school performance. *The Science of Emotional Intelligence Knowns and Unknowns*, 376–395. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195181890.003.0015

Zins, J. E., Weissberg, R. P., Wang, M. C., & Walberg, H. J. (Eds.). (2004). *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* Teachers College Press.