



**Teacher Perceptions of the Empowered Program's Effect on Students' Internal
Locus of Control, Social-Emotional Learning, and Goal Setting**

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Abstract

While reading, writing and arithmetic are common to the western educational system, the United States has seen an increase in the number of programs and curricula that address soft skills related to student achievement. Nevertheless, the evaluation of the effectiveness of these programs does not consistently acknowledge the teachers' perceptions during evaluation. The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the extent teachers perceive the Empowered program has a positive effect on their students' internal locus of control (LOC), social-emotional learning (SEL), and goal setting. The second purpose of this study was to determine to what extent a difference exists in Empowered teachers' perceptions of the effect of the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting between teachers in traditional compared to non-traditional classroom settings. This survey was inspired by the theory of change adopted by Empowered. The theory of change emphasized that LOC, emotional intelligence, and goal orientation encourage a transformational mindset (Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, 2020). Teachers who teach the Empowered program were invited to participate in the 11-statement survey. Quantitative data analysis was used to determine the results of the 57 respondents. The results of the hypothesis testing indicated that teachers perceived the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. The second purpose could not be addressed due to an insufficient sample size for teachers from non-traditional settings. Further research is recommended to survey teachers utilizing the Empowered program in non-traditional settings. Additionally, evaluating the program to determine its effects on student achievement is also suggested for further research.

Dedication

I will first give all honor and praise to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for without his grace and mercy, the trials of life would have eaten me alive. To my family and village, the support and love over this nine-year journey were tremendous. From being paid in pizza to babysit to being a shoulder to cry on and sending prayers on my behalf, I thank you all.

To Savannah, Sierra, Josiah, and Jeremiah, thank you for always cheering me on, making me laugh when I wanted to cry, and being patient for the times I was locked in my office and could not spend time with you. I dedicate all that I am to you.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The aims of education have been and will continue to warrant debates as society evolves. While the purpose of education in its many forms may never truly be defined, the need for an accepted interpretation is not debatable. One definition of education, according to *Oxford Languages*, is “the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university” (“Education,” 2021, para. 1). Education is also defined as “an enlightening experience” (“Education,” 2021, para. 2). A person may argue that gaining general knowledge or the practice of education in traditional U.S. schools follows the first definition. However, those looking for a deeper purpose for education may lean more toward the “enlightening experience” definition. The ancient philosopher Plato believed the role of education, to teach character and moral judgment, was essential to a human’s development. In *The Plato’s the Republic*, Plato (ca. 370 B.C.E./1943) discussed the concepts of just and unjust in a dialogue among colleagues. He pointed out that holistic education is necessary to produce an ethical society.

Regardless of the current state of the education system and its effectiveness or ineffectiveness to prepare students for an ethical society, both caused by and unaddressed by the education system, there is no argument that achievement gaps illuminate student preparedness. Lynch (2017) contended that the achievement gap continues to be a formidable opponent. This report specifically provided evidence that racial and socioeconomic demographics are why schools are failing. According to Ratliff et al. (2016) “Researchers have found that family income was highly correlated to differences in children’s development” (p. 100). Additional findings from Ratcliff et al. (2016)

provided evidence attributing differences in achievement to factors such as wealthier families spending up to seven times more on developing their children than families in the low socio-economic status range.

Reading, writing, and arithmetic continue to be the foundation of education, as national standardized tests such as the ACT and SAT primarily assess reading, math, and science. The education students receive today, in some ways, still resembles the design of education of what it was nearly 200 years ago when Horace Mann advocated for core subjects in the “common school” (Kober, 2020, p. 2). The common schools lack of focus on enlightenment allowed leaders to creatively destroy the more traditional education model to incorporate enlightenment by addressing non-core subjects or soft skill development. Examples of non-core content related to soft skill development involve programs engaged in “promotion of social competence, bullying prevention, drug use and abuse prevention, civic and character education, awareness and training on emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, social skills training, and 21st-century skills education” (Osher et al., 2016, p. 644). More specifically, focus was on LOC, SEL, and goal setting as subjects included in soft skill development. The National Conference of State Legislators (2021) reported ten bills passed in the legislature for the 2019-2020 year that supported SEL programs and oversaw programs in states across the country. These decisions in Congress continue to illuminate what has been absent from education.

Empowered, formerly known as Youth Entrepreneurs (YE), is a non-profit organization committed to impacting education (YE, 2019a). YE proposed a theory of change to address the development of enlightenment in the educational system:

"providing knowledge, understanding, or insight" ("Enlightening," n.d.), including insight

into a person's capabilities (Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, 2020). The theory is an intersection between students' internal LOC, emotional intelligence, and goal orientation. The Empowered theory of change suggests an intersection of three components working together to affect a transformational mindset, thereby impacting self-actualization. LOC and its effect on education described by Rotter (1966) and soft skills that support the interpersonal development of students amplified by Freund (2019) describe the first two. The third component is goal setting to increase motivation and self-efficacy suggested by Sides and Cuevas (2020). Empowered (2019b) detailed their definition of the three components as “(a) LOC, connect attribution of success or failure, initiative, and grit, (b) soft skills, networking and collaboration and emotional intelligence, and (c) entrepreneurial mindset, comfort with risk, opportunity recognition, and future orientation” (p. 4). All of the activities within Empowered promote (a) action, the opportunity for students to act, innovate, and make change; (b) purpose, the opportunity to grow their value outside of grades and tests; (c) agency, the opportunity to make their own decisions; (d) principles, a lens through which to decide their behaviors; and (e) incentives, an opportunity to receive rewards (Empowered, 2021a).

While psychology predominately utilizes LOC, it is a factor that educators increasingly believe affects how students learn and their barriers to learning. Those with an internal LOC see obstacles as opportunities as they credit their effort to overcome them. People with an external LOC expect these things to happen because of forces out of their control, including luck or fate (Lopez-Garrido, 2020). Students with an internal LOC are more likely to welcome new and more challenging content in the educational

setting. In contrast, the students with an external LOC may be hesitant to try new things because they are not knowledgeable in that area.

As stated in the Empowered theory of change and as defined by *Oxford Languages*, interpersonal development as relating to relationships or communication between people is commonly interpreted as the ability to work with others (“Interpersonal,” n.d.). Empowered supports the belief that social-emotional components, including self-awareness, social-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, support students' interpersonal development (Empowered, 2021a). Students with high social-emotional intelligence also exhibit higher-level decision-making skills, which correlate to better critical thinking and excellent analytical and interpretive skills (Insight Assessment, 2020). Bradbury and Greaves (2009) explained emotional intelligence as “effective communication between the rational and emotional centers of the brain” (p. 7).

Kumm and Maggin (2021) stated, “goal setting is a research-informed intervention that has improved behavioral outcomes for students with emotional and behavioral disorders” (para 1). Locke and Latham (2002), with over 35 years of research in goal setting, indicated four mechanisms affect performance: (a) focusing on goal-relevant activities, (b) ensuring an energizing element, (c) ensuring persistence, (d) and identifying knowledge and strategies related to tasks. Goal setting for this study is quantified by (a) the ability to understand the completion of tasks is linked to goals, (b) the ability to understand frequent self-assessment is related to progress, (c) willingness to pursue goals that are high risk, (d) and the ability to think beyond the immediate situation and plan for the future. These components are derived from the work of Haynie and

Shepherd (2009) and Davis, Hall, and Mayer (2015), having studied and created resources to determine entrepreneurial aptitudes and desirable skills referenced in the theory of change study commissioned by YE to distinguish goal orientation.

There was no formal evaluation to determine the validity of Empowered's theory of change completed by expert organizations such as the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). A leading expert in SEL in education, CASEL (2021) conducts evaluations of programs across the country, designating them as SElect, Promising, or SEL-Supportive. Additionally, other organizations with expertise in LOC or goal setting in the educational field have not completed research on Empowered's theory of change. Empowered has commissioned several studies and white papers to evaluate the validity of its program. However, as of 2022, no researcher had evaluated Empowered teachers' perceptions of the program's effect on students' internal LOC, SEL, or goal setting.

The results from the 2020 white paper commissioned by Empowered established the program's effectiveness based on alumni feedback regarding their perceptions of their behavior compared to non-alumni after being a part of the Empowered program. Upon selection of the alumni, the researchers ensured non-alumni were demographically matched to obtain the best data considering culture and social norms (Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, 2020). The Detroit's Youth Development Resource Center (YDRC) further validated the Empowered program, meeting the essential aspects and suggested indicators through YDRC program evaluation. YDRC, recognized by CASEL as an authority in program design, proposed a blueprint for

effective programming, emphasizing programming for summer school and after-school programs (YDRC, n.d.).

The gap in evaluating the Empowered program consists of the lack of data from the practicing teachers' perspective of the program's effect on student behavior regarding internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. These components of the Empowered program and formulated through the theory of change, were not included in the previous analysis. A study of teachers' perceptions of the effect of the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting is advised to understand best practices of implementation. Equally important, the previous study did not address how the environment of traditional school settings and non-traditional settings may have affected the students' experience. Therefore, research to gauge teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the Empowered program in traditional and non-traditional settings is recommended.

Background

Empowered, cited here as Youth Entrepreneurs (YE), was created in 1991 in Wichita, Kansas, as an after-school program (YE, 2019a). The founders of YE, Charles and Liz Koch, recognized the achievement gap caused by economic circumstances. The Kochs sought to create a program that would help students identify the barriers to their goals, see an opportunity for a better future, and utilize their skills, abilities, and passion for achieving a better future rather than allowing their situation or environment to control them (YE, 2019b). Empowered is marketed not just as activities for entrepreneurship classes but as a holistic program focusing on self-actualization and self-discovery, which continues to embody the theory of change (Empowered, 2021b).

Empowered commissioned an external study in January 2019, *Evaluating the Theory of Change for Youth Entrepreneurs*.

This study supports the claim Youth Entrepreneurs is having an effect on those who come into contact with the program, and that the growth appears to be consistent with the proposed theory of change domains on which the curriculum focuses: locus of control, emotional intelligence, and goal orientation. (Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, 2020, p. 13)

Ultimately, Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute (2020); “Scores indicated more internal locus of control, greater emotional intelligence, and more entrepreneurial goal orientation than non-participants” (p. 3).

The Empowered program has grown to serve students in over 41 states, offering classes during school, after school, and in the summer, with nearly 700 teachers utilizing the Empowered program (YE, 2019a). Empowered developed a program focused on experiential and collaborative activities where students worked together while engaging in real-world pursuits. Ultimately, Empowered proclaimed that it moves students from a deficit mindset to a contribution mindset, motivating them to realize their unique and innate talents and abilities and seek opportunities to impact their environment and circumstances positively.

Statement of the Problem

Welch (1969) stated that the purpose of an evaluation is to gather information to make a decision. As cited in Abramson (1966), Cronbach recommended using evaluations to improve courses while still being implemented rather than waiting until the

completion of said course. Specifically, he advised "systematic observation by teachers" (Abramson, 1966, p. 392).

Although program evaluations are essential, finding reports of teacher evaluations on curriculum or programs' effectiveness has proven difficult. Teacher perceptions of the lack of training to adequately implement a program have been studied; for example, Carter (2021) and Pierre (2021) found integration difficult without proper support. Teacher perceptions of their understanding of content impacting student achievement have been researched, as studied by Anderson (2021). In those cases, the program's teacher perceptions alone were not studied. Schremer (1991) made the case to consider teacher concerns when making decisions regarding curriculum. More recently, Van de Oudeweetering and Voogt (2018) contended that systemic integration in national curricula has been complex due to the absence of educators in curriculum development. It was not known to what extent teachers delivering the program perceived the effectiveness of the Empowered program for developing students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting at the time of this study. Additionally, it was unknown to what extent a difference existed in Empowered teachers' perceptions of the effect on the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose of the study was to determine the extent Empowered teachers perceive the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' (a) internal LOC; (b) SEL comprised of the components self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making; and (c) goal setting. The second

purpose of this study was to determine the extent a difference exists in Empowered teachers' perceptions of the use of Empowered program related to students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting between teachers in traditional compared to non-traditional classroom settings. Overall, the enhancement of the Empowered program and other soft skill programs is the definitive goal.

Significance of the Study

Empowered has not conducted studies of teachers' perceptions of the program. Additionally, Empowered has not conducted an evaluation to determine differences in teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the program with students taught in a traditional classroom compared to a non-traditional classroom.

As a result, suggestions for using the results of this study include:

- bringing more clarity to the existing body of knowledge for the continued growth and improvement of Empowered while guiding other programs as a framework to better serve all children,
- contributing to the body of research addressing teachers' perceptions of the program and its effect on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting,
- contributing to the body of research addressing the effectiveness of curricula and programs implemented in different teaching environments,
- assisting leaders in educational settings to determine more effective ways to implement programs for better outcomes and methods to improve curricula and program development,
- assisting leaders in educational settings to utilize a teacher feedback tool to improve the delivery and effectiveness of the program,

- encouraging leaders in educational settings to consider researching a program or curriculum in multiple settings, as different environments may yield different results, thereby informing an organization how to tailor their support of the program most effectively.

Delimitations

“Delimitations are self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 134). The delimitations for this study are as follows:

1. The study was limited to those Empowered teachers on the Empowered email list as of May 14, 2021.
2. Teachers’ answers to an electronic survey about their perceptions were the only measurement utilized.

Assumptions

“Assumptions are postulates, premises, and propositions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research. Assumptions include the nature, analysis, and interpretation of the data” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 135). Therefore, assumptions for this study include:

1. Only teachers who utilize the Empowered program completed the survey.
2. Surveyed teachers were familiar with and had good knowledge and understanding of the Empowered program.
3. Surveyed teachers understood the questions posed in the survey.
4. Surveyed teachers answered the questions without prejudice or bias.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study of teachers' perceptions regarding the Empowered program.

RQ1. To what extent do Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal locus of control?

RQ2. To what extent do Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' social-emotional learning?

RQ3. To what extent do Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' goal setting?

RQ4. To what extent are Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal locus of control different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings?

RQ5. To what extent are Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' social-emotional learning different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings?

RQ6. To what extent are Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' goal setting different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings?

Definition of Terms

For this study, the following definitions give context for further understanding. According to Lunenburg and Irby, "all key terms central to your study and used throughout" (2008, p.118), should be defined.

Contribution mindset. Ben Zander, the author of *The Art of Possibility*, implied one should focus on what one can contribute rather than how one will perform and obtain

perfection (as cited in Zander & Zander, 2002). In a blog post, Give and Take defined contribution mindset as “focusing on rewarding contributions rather than encouraging competition, greed, comparative grading curves, and avoiding mistakes” (Baker, 2018 para. 2).

Deficit mindset. Being both limiting to student outcomes and an equity issue, a deficit mindset is when teachers or school leaders focus on problems rather than potential (ANet, 2020). In a deficit mindset, an individual sees only negative elements and misses the opportunities. A deficit mindset can skew how one thinks of people and shape how one views situations (Spencer, 2016).

Fixed mindset. People with fixed mindsets believe they are either good at something or not good at something. The overall research suggests that it is possible for some individuals to have a fixed mindset in certain situations. However, a fixed mindset discourages skill development and growth (Dweck (2015).

Foundational principles. Empowered utilizes eight principles as the foundation of its program:

Responsibility: Take responsibility for your own life. No one will ever be as concerned about your success as you.

Integrity: Always act with courage, respect, and toleration.

Knowledge: Seek and use the best knowledge, drive change that benefits others, and exemplify humility and intellectual honesty.

Freedom: Respect the rights of others and study the links between freedom, entrepreneurship, and societal well-being.

Passion: Find fulfillment in your life by improving the lives of others.

Opportunity: Approach everything in life as a reason to improve; recognize and seize what life has to offer.

Sound Judgment: Use economic thinking to create the greatest benefit while using the least resources.

Win-Win Focus: Cooperation creates real value in society—for yourself and others. (YE, 2019b, para. 1)

Empowered has incorporated these foundational principles throughout the program (YE, 2019b).

Goal setting. YE (2019d) conveyed that goal setting involves using three components: comfort with risk, opportunity recognition, and future orientation.

Growth mindset. Those with growth mindsets may recognize a barrier as an opportunity for growth rather than not developing their skills. According to Dweck (2015),

We found that students’ mindsets—how they perceive their abilities—played a crucial role in their motivation and achievement, and we found that if we changed students’ mindsets, we could boost their achievement. More precisely, students who believed they could develop their intelligence (a growth mindset) outperformed those who believed their intelligence was fixed (a fixed mindset). (para. 3)

Locus of control. The *Glossary of Education Reform* reported, “Locus of control is a psychological concept that refers to how strongly people believe they have control over their situations and experiences that affect their lives” (“Locus of Control,” 2013, para. 1). Individuals can possess either an internal or external LOC. In essence,

individuals with an external LOC believe they have no control over what happens to them; external factors determine the outcomes. On the other hand, those with an internal LOC believe they can affect the results of a situation, and external factors do not play a role in the outcomes (“Locus of Control,” 2013).

Non-traditional classroom. The non-traditional classroom moves away from one or all of these norms of the traditional classroom (Cooper, 2017). For this study, a non-traditional classroom signifies any setting a teacher gives instruction outside of an accredited course in a school classroom during regular school hours. Examples of non-traditional classrooms may include an after-school program, a summer program, or an adult learning program in a facility.

Self-actualization. Maslow (1943) defined self-actualization as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming. McLeod (2020) explained that in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, one could only achieve self-actualization after one has fulfilled (a) physiological: air, food, water, shelter, sleep, clothing and reproduction, and (b) safety needs: personal security, employment, resources, health and property.

Social-emotional learning. SEL incorporates five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. According to CASEL (2021a), SEL is

an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop (a) healthy identities, (b) manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, (c) feel and show empathy for others, (d) establish

and maintain supportive relationships, and (e) make responsible and caring decisions. (para. 1)

Traditional classroom. A traditional classroom involves a standard curriculum delivered by a teacher in person. In this model, students' time, place, and pace of learning remain constant during regular school hours. The teacher is the primary resource in this model, teaching face-to-face ("Traditional classroom," n.d.).

Transformational mindset. The standard definition of transformation, according to Merriam-Webster, is a thorough or dramatic change in the form or appearance ("Transformation," n.d.). Further, as stated in *Evaluating the Theory of Change for Youth Entrepreneurs*, "transformational mindset seeks to encourage growth mindset" (Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, 2020, p.5).

Organization of the Study

This study contains five chapters. In Chapter 1, the background of the study is introduced, the problem and purpose statement are stated, the significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, and the definition of the terms are described. Chapter 2 contains an in-depth literature review, including LOC, SEL, goal setting related to growth and fixed mindset, transformation, self-actualization, and teacher beliefs and motivation. Lastly, the history and evolution of Empowered is studied. Included in Chapter 3 is the methodology used in the study: the research design, population and sample, sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, hypothesis testing, and limitations. The study's findings, including descriptive statistics and the results of the hypothesis testing for the six

research questions, are found in Chapter 4. Lastly, Chapter 5 includes a study summary, findings related to the literature, and conclusions.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Chapter 2 provides a review of literature related to an overview of Youth Entrepreneurs and the organization's philosophy. An overview of general soft skill education theories incorporated into the classroom follows. The soft skill programs emphasized are Maslow's hierarchy of needs and its influence on education. The educational models: whole child, LOC, SEL, and goal setting are reviewed. The chapter concludes with an overview of the impact of environments in which students learn.

Soft skill programs and curricula have been introduced in schools to address growth in areas that are not measurable through classroom grades or statewide tests. The education system has implemented programs allowing students to intentionally interact with strategies, terms, and concepts that impact self-actualization, whole-child education, LOC, SEL, and goal setting. Two such examples of soft skill programs are Botvin LifeSkills and Mindful Schools. Botvin LifeSkills is designed to decrease drug, alcohol, and tobacco usage, as well as violence (Botvin LifeSkills Program, 2021). Mindful Schools impacts self-awareness, resilience, and compassion (Mindful Schools, 2021). Both have mixed results related to the degree they affect the child. These examples illuminate the challenges when determining soft skill programs' effectiveness. Such variables as demographics or implementation styles can affect outcomes. One solution to evaluating the effectiveness of a program could be identifying the teachers' perceptions of the program's effectiveness as the implementer of the program and primary observer of outcomes. Currently, there are data from research addressing teacher perceptions of program implementation based on their training or development and the impact on the

implementation of a program related to student achievement (Clayton, 2021; McChargue, 2021; Saini, 2021). However, as the Empowered program focuses on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting, there is a gap in data evaluating the teachers' perspectives sans formal training. Additionally, there is a lack of research comparing the effectiveness of a program's effect on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting in different teaching environments.

Programs addressing soft skills have increased to help bridge the achievement gap. Michael Castle, Chair of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth, and Families Committee on Education and Workforce (*Examining the 21st Century*, 2000), made a statement on after-school programs and their effectiveness in rural and inner-city schools. He reported that since 1995 the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), a program reconfiguring public schools' spaces for after-school programs, funding had grown from \$750,000 to \$453 million with a proposed growth to \$1 billion for 2001. The study concluded that after-school programs affect the achievement gap and positively reduce crime as crime increases 300% on weekdays between 3:00 pm and 6:00 pm (*Examining the 21st Century*, 2000). These after-school programs also addressed soft skill content to focus on issues ranging from (a) substance use prevention, (b) prosocial behavior to at-risk youth facing poverty, family dysfunction, violence, trauma, and other pitfalls, (c) involvement in prevention and intervention programs instead of punitive measures. The House subcommittee proposed a bill providing \$253.8 billion in overall funding for the fiscal year 2022 for 21st CCLC (Afterschool Alliance, 2021b). Agaskar, Albert, and Garcia (2020) reported that feedback from the youth provided evidence that after-school programs were beneficial in four major categories: “educational and career

services, behavioral health and social services, safety and violence interventions, and sports and recreational activities.” (para. 1)

Programs such as Botvin LifeSkills, Mindful Schools, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and others that address student emotional development report growth in a positive direction when implemented. Further evaluation may allow these programs to experience a greater impact on youth. Collins (2001) discussed the fallacy of settling on good results, therefore overlooking great results. Soft skill programs are vital to address the barriers and gaps in the educational system, and educational leaders must be intentional about evaluating a programs’ effectiveness with proven tools, including teachers’ voices.

Youth Entrepreneurs

“Youth Entrepreneurs exists to instill Principled Entrepreneurship™ in young people through experiential learning and confidence-building” (YE, 2019b, para. 1). Empowered, formerly known as Youth Entrepreneurs, offers a myriad of resources for teachers to access at no cost from their online platform, www.teachempowered.org. Empowered offers over 100 lessons that address such subject matter as foundational principles, entrepreneurial mindset, economics, marketing, and business finance, with additional studies covering other core content such as English, science, and math focusing on 9-12 grade levels (Empowered, 2021). Delivery of Empowered curricula varies, with some lessons delivered in a traditional school setting and some in non-traditional school settings such as after-school programs.

The Youth Development Resource Center (YDRC) attributes various components to the successful programs the Empowered program entails. Youth who participate in the

Empowered curricula experience “measurable growth in learning and skill development” (YDRC, n.d.). As observed through the Empowered platform released in 2021, Empowered suggests their program offers a “hands-on, student-centered method that transforms any classroom, in any subject or grade-level, into a real-world experience” (Empowered, 2021c, para.2). Youth are encouraged to take chances and learn from mistakes while having opportunities to demonstrate their learning. Student peers and adults interact, brainstorm, and share during the project or activity. In a strategy to allow open-ended questions to encourage self-reflection, teachers create a space for debriefing on program activities and learning. Empowered also allows youth to remain actively engaged by returning to the program after completing the course to mentor, lead, or coach other youth, which are all indicators of a quality youth program (YDRC, n.d.).

Research supports the method of delivery of teaching the content impacts learning. According to Hromek and Roffey (2009), when youth can experience success in a collaborative setting with peers, their sense of social competence and readiness to learn can increase. Watz (2011) referenced Mann, advocate for the common school, proclaiming “that teachers needed to model desired traits and actions for their students to see and experience the development of character” (p. 43). In addition to modeling, Watz (2011) also stated, delivery of instruction had to be developed in a way that was cognitively appropriate and systematic so that students would not be overwhelmed, as well as tangible so that students would make connections to materials and events that they saw in their everyday lives. (p. 43)

If the content and delivery were successful, students would learn, and society would benefit.

Empowered recognizes real-world learning and hands-on activities to promote student progress. It focuses on igniting passion, opening doors, and transforming mindsets (YE, 2019a). In addition, the program also promotes the eight foundational principles (see p. 12 for the listing of the principles) to equip young people with the values and vision to pursue their dreams (Youth Entrepreneurs Academy for Educators, 2021).

Abraham Maslow and Self-Actualization

As behavior-science expert Duckworth (2020) asserted, "Schools play an essential role in helping young people develop socially, emotionally, physically, and academically" (para. 11). Complementary or supportive programs have been encouraged and adopted in public schools to promote and enhance the education of the whole child. Dr. Martin Luther King (1974) declared, "We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education" (para. 6). Maslow's hierarchy of needs postulates what humans need to become self-actualized; the United States education system adopted this theory to address soft skills to offer additional student support. Maslow was "inspired in the 1960s by Aldous Huxley's notions that major changes in education were vital for the attainment of eupsychia (his paradigm for the best possible human society)" (Hoffman & Tass, 2021, p. 1). There is little doubt that Maslow had a profound impact on educational learning theories, being one of the most cited authors in an analysis of education research from 1968 to 1977 (Pearson & Podeschi, 1997).

Maslow initially introduced his theory in 1943, identifying the basic needs of food, water, warmth, rest, security, and safety is necessary for learning to occur. After meeting those needs, students can start forming relationships and feeling prestige and accomplishment (McLeod, 2020). Maslow's theory suggests that meeting basic needs is essential before fulfilling self-actualization and potential. Several definitions of self-actualization exist. The Oxford Dictionary (n.d.) defined self-actualization as "the realization or fulfillment of one's talents and potentialities, especially considered as a drive or a need, present in everyone" (para. 1). Another definition from the website GoodTherapy stated: "The term is used colloquially to refer to an enlightened maturity characterized by the achievement of goals, acceptance of oneself, and an ability to self-assess realistically and positively" ("Self-Actualization," 2007, para. 2). Egel, a San Diego therapist, explained self-actualization as "becoming everything you are capable of becoming" (as cited in Raypoole, 2020, para. 2). King (1974) and others suggested that learning to be all that one can be encompasses more than receiving core content instruction. Maslow's theory continues to influence how to effectively develop students and move them to their most significant potential.

However, some have postulated Maslow's theory to embody misconceptions and limitations. One potential limitation is Maslow's suggestion that individuals must first have their basic needs met before continuing to self-actualization. Rao (2017) found that Maslow's theory was heavily based on Western culture and did not consider a worldview. Dawson (1961) described the culture of the West by noting the separation of religion and education in Western cultures as opposed to the rest of the world, where education and religion are connected. Religion urges adherents to think first of others, which might

cause them to deny their own basic needs as they serve a higher power, and they might yet achieve self-actualization through that service. Rao (2017) also criticized Maslow for overlooking students lacking basic needs but still attaining academic success and self-actualization.

If graduating from college was used as the metric of success, the dismal graduation rates from students representing lower socioeconomic status could support the belief that they did not have their physiological and safety needs met. With college graduation rates of 21% for students from low-income areas compared to 51% from high-income homes, the data substantiate the claim that lack of basic needs met played a role in lower graduation rates (National Clearinghouse Research Center, 2019). However, an investigation of college experiences of low socioeconomic status (SES) students revealed they worked long hours to make more money, which led to less studying, creating lower GPAs. This phenomenon most likely accounts for the lower graduation rates among students from high minority and low-income environments (Walpole, 2003).

Additionally, an explanation for low graduation rates is the lack of financial aid accessed by low SES students. Titus (2006) stated, "Low SES students are disproportionately enrolled in institutions with lower levels of financial resources and higher dependence on tuition as a source of total revenue" (p. 47). Although many factors are associated with college graduation success or failure of low SES students, it is reasonable to assume that basic needs or physiological needs, as Maslow would suggest, have not always been present in the lives of some successful students. Ultimately, rather than assuming that all failures among these students were due to unmet basic needs, there

is good reason to recognize and research the low SES population who did achieve success.

One factor that allows a student to self-actualize is implementing "deep learning" (Saban, Kocbeker-eid, & Saban, 2016). Students associate their ideal learning with experiences that create opportunities for "deep learning" or learning that has meaning-making, which Saban et al. (2016) summarized as self-actualization (p. 1023). Saban et al. (2016) used the term "Deep Learning" to describe students' ability to learn information, synthesize that information, and make personal connections to that learned material. Rodrigues and Deuskar (2018) summarized self-actualization as the highest level of personal development. Therefore, a reasonable conclusion would suggest that students who could learn deeply would experience significant achievement and realize their potential or become fully self-actualized. The idea of deep learning bypasses the hierarchy of components needed for Maslow's approach to self-actualization. Deep learning focuses on the holistic nature of a student's learning and how it affects their future.

Fisher and Crawford (2020) studied Fairway Elementary. This rural school went from low performing to distinguished between 2008 and 2016, utilizing Maslow's hierarchy of needs as an overall approach to school culture. The school experienced change overall; however, general growth was more significant than individual growth. While conducting the study, the researchers concluded that meeting the children's basic needs did not impact positive achievement outcomes.

While many research studies exist that outline individual strategies for improving school success, larger and more encompassing models for school change do not

provide research to support the use of Maslow's hierarchy. This research is unique in that Maslow's hierarchy is not being used to support a single group of individuals; instead, it is used as a lens to support the success of an entire school of children, parents, faculty, staff, and the community. (p. 11)

Fisher and Crawford (2020) confirmed positive outcomes of academic achievement on the whole-school level while utilizing Maslow's theory. However, there was no conclusive evidence supporting the theory that affected academic achievement when determining each student's outcome or a small group of students' results.

An opportunity to research different methods to achieve self-actualization is warranted. Additionally, Whaba and Bridwell (1987) deduced in their 1976 literature review that "Maslow's need hierarchy theory has received little clear or consistent support from the available research findings. Some of Maslow's propositions are rejected" (p. 212). Whaba and Bridwell's (1987) findings identified gaps in Maslow's theory, signifying the need to develop other models or pathways leading to self-actualization.

A tenet of modern western society is that individuals consciously seek a state of betterment and understanding of their life journey. Researchers continue to evaluate the application of programs impacting students' awareness and understanding and whether or not those programs achieved outcomes. Maslow provides guidelines to identify the steps to reach satisfaction where passion and performance synchronize. Ultimately, self-actualization is a continuous journey throughout life. The purpose of programs that help students achieve self-actualization must be incorporated to help students understand the journey to their best selves.

Administrators must not overlook the teacher's voice in program and student success (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012; Poulou, Bassett, & Denham, 2018; Reimer, 2011). Overall outcomes may suggest progress; however, the evaluations by teachers may offer insights into significant improvements in programs to maximize achievement (Tsolou & Margaritis, 2013; Zinsser, Shewark, Denham, & Curby, 2014). The first account feedback of teachers' perceptions may ultimately ensure the best program is being effectively implemented, in a timely manner, to the appropriate students to obtain the highest level of student achievement.

Whole Child and Character Education

The American educational system has experienced its share of introductions to a vast array of theories, instructional strategies, and other educational supports. The idea of whole child education or simply uniformity in implementing soft skill programs in and out of schools has proven to be diverse in implementation. Programs such as Botvin LifeSkills, Mindful Schools, or 21st Century Learning Centers across the nation address whole child education in many different ways and focus on different grade levels. The Whole Child Approach was defined by Whole Child (2015), as "Each child, in each school, in each of our communities deserves to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. That's what a whole-child approach to learning, teaching, and community engagement really is" (para. 1). Whole Child (2015) recommended that instruction have set objectives and opportunities for feedback and allow students to thrive wholly. This model would increase engagement and motivation while supporting higher-order and critical thinking skills. This statement could support the critiques of Maslow's theory,

suggesting the instruction and components in the classroom affect self-actualization rather than what the hierarchy of needs presents as being necessary for learning to occur.

Whole-child education has several definitions. According to YDRC (n.d.), there are four essential aspects to quality whole-child youth development programming: (a) positive relationships, (b) safe and supportive climate, (c) active, engaged learning and skill-building, and (d) voice, choice, and leadership. Further explorations into whole-child education have led to character education. Historically, teaching character was the role of the church; however, during the Period of Enlightenment (commonly agreed as the beginning of the 18th century) in France, “character education took on the form of a stand-alone subject in school” (Watz, 2011, p. 36). Not having been a strong student or a proponent of the traditional school setting, Horace Mann (1796-1859), an early supporter of character education, identified the significance of character education as “moral guidance that would allow students to move outside of their narrow viewpoints to factor in universal notions of good and evil in order to make decisions that were positive for all members of society” (as cited in Watz, 2011, p. 40).

Education with an emphasis on character and morals, in addition to academics, is not seen favorably by all. One critical review of character education suggested multiple gaps regarding the introduction of character education into the schools. Leung and Shek illuminated several concerns: “lack of theory and research-based policy, lack of validated and standard curriculum materials, problems in implementation strategies and tactics, and unsystematic evaluation” (Leung & Shek, 2021, p. 1). Additionally, the opposition, expressed by Soder, Goodland and McMannon (2002), equates morals to religion; however, schools cannot lawfully engage with religion. The inclusion of character

education in public schools became a flashpoint as the result of some believing that moral and character education should be taught in the church, not the school. Further opposition suggested that character education is “dangerously anti-democratic in its relative neglect of the development of reasoning and critical independence in students, and that it employs an unduly authoritarian and paternalistic stance in pedagogy” (Kristjansson, 2016, p. 31). Critically analyzing any approach to educating a society allows leaders to ensure all facets are considered and included in selecting and implementing curricula, programs, and pedagogy to best serve all children.

The Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and Boy Scouts of America (BSA) provided an option to address character education for children. The YMCA, established in the 19th century, was at the forefront of establishing a universal moral code; however, it was mostly for middle-class white males who could afford to be a part of the program (YMCA, 2022). The YMCA self-identifies as one of the preeminent organizations to develop character in the United States (YMCA, 2022). Their 2022 mission statement is, "To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all" (YMCA, 2022, para. 1). The YMCA launched the Citizenship Education Movement of 1924, which attempted to stress that a good citizen was a world citizen. The YMCA also helped to break down racial barriers. The YMCA program in Black Mountain, North Carolina, had a successful breakthrough in race relations as George Washington Carver was invited, in 1923, to speak to an all-white audience (Canady, 2009). The invitation was pivotal to race relations as the Jim Crow laws were present in the South between 1890 and 1920, and the racial climate due to segregation was bleak in 1923.

The BSA was developed early in the 20th century, although only for middle-class white males, at least in its early development. The BSA (2021) advocated the 12 Scout laws; the Scout promised to be “trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent,” and vowed to “do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout law,” “to help other people at all times,” and “to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight” (para. 6). However, the BSA, strongly comparable to the underlying attempt to increase character-building seen in the YMCA, was reported to "sustain the fantasy of a powerful yet innocent America" by forming scout troops on US military bases in Japan, Germany, and South Korea (Schulz, 2019, para. 1). Recent studies have analyzed the BSA program participation as pivotal to creating positive character development. Wang et al. (2017) concluded a positive correlation but admittedly indicated limitations linked to a lack of data supporting emotional engagement and its link to positive character development.

One of the first attempts to incorporate a non-academic program into the schools was noted in 1937 when the state of New York sought to incorporate moral education under the social studies curriculum. Wilson (1938) summarized this structure that was going to be the vehicle for character building:

Social studies derive their central importance in the school program because of their connection, real or assumed, with the elements of social competence in a democratic society. However, it is to be recognized that these subjects alone cannot produce that elusive quality called ‘good citizenship.’ In its broad sense, social efficiency is a product of forces reaching far beyond subject areas and beyond school walls. (pp. 6-7)

Wilson intended to illuminate the civic duty of social studies to incorporate character development into a school district by emphasizing the significant role it played in the social aspects of the countries' citizens.

A lack of research exists in 2022 to determine a direct correlation between student achievement and utilizing a district-wide program of social studies classes as a vehicle for character building and influencing students to be good citizens. Crocco and Thornton's (2002) findings identified factors that compromised the success of the social studies program; with the authors noting, "the curriculum reform as practiced in many NYC restructured schools may shortchange the teaching of social studies" (p. 207). New York City Department of Education does not currently utilize a character education program in the social studies class in order to obtain recent data concerning implementation and outcomes. However, Wellness Wednesday NYC was created in 2020 to focus on students' and families' physical, mental, and emotional well-being during summer break (NYC Department of Education, 2022). Current research gives insight into underlying conditions to be addressed when implementing programs impacting students' behavioral issues, such as teacher training, professional development, and lack of explicit teaching regimens (Aparo, 2021; Byrd, 2021; Scrifes, 2021).

Another early attempt to move from traditional education to one that incorporated elements of character development was the pilgrimage to Christian schools. Due to the media's coverage of violence and shootings in schools, a dramatic increase in the number of Christian schools occurred from the 1960s to the 1980s, resulting in enrollment growth to a million students (Watz, 2011). Wilhelm and Firmin (2008) defined character education as "practicing an apt behavior and teaching right from wrong" (para. 1).

Wilhelm and Firmin (2008) surmised that removing God from the school inevitably removed character education from the public schools. As Wilhelm and Firmin (2009) suggested:

The absence of such a central belief as a divine law makes the attempt of moral development and character education a sublime objective for those who reject the Biblical standard for ethics. If Christianity is not the approach from which character and honest living are based, what is the standard? (p. 188)

Lewis (1947) researched many ancient cultures to compose common values for secular purposes. In *The Abolition of Man* (1947), he discussed the universality of traditional values of loyalty and justice. Lewis surmised that when a child learns the right sentiments or emotions conforming to reason, the child will have the ability to separate from animals. He continued that the failure to nurture the right beliefs ultimately could result in the abolition of man, and right sentiments are lacking in modern education. These characteristics of right beliefs found in different cultures suggest a shared understanding of a desirable human. A debate on the methods to develop character may continue. Implementation of character development may occur via child-rearing, academics, religion, or other methods and mediums. However, there is agreement on the importance of whole-child education. The varying implementation methods may provide different outcomes, suggesting further review as no universal approach or evaluation tool exists.

Locus of Control

In 1954, Rotter proposed a theory “focused on the role of people’s expectations or their subjective estimates of how likely it is that a given behavior will lead to a desired

outcome” (Brinthaupt, 2019, para.1). Rotter (1966), attributed with discovering locus of control (LOC), explained how personal characteristics interact with the environment to predict behavior. The articles suggests that, “LOC refers to the perceived location of reinforcement sources for a person; who is responsible for what happens to a person. It is similar to other control-related constructs, such as attributions, learned helplessness, and self-efficacy” (Brinthaupt, 2019, para. 3).

No one source or academic institution oversees programs addressing LOC, as it is more commonly found in the psychological profession. However, the education system uses the data from research and the scale created by Rotter in 1966 to analyze student success. Carpenter's (2011) findings showed that internal LOC was statistically significant in predicting success on a registered nurse exam. According to Carpenter, “Internal LOC indicates one’s ability to see obstacles as opportunities to learn rather than barriers to learning” (“Locus of Control,” 2013, para. 1b). Additionally, Bahçekapılı and Karaman’s (2020) findings indicated that external academic LOC negatively affected academic achievement. Bahcekapili and Karaman (2020) continued, “when individuals’ external academic LOC increases, the individual passes the responsibility on to other factors” (p. 201). Individuals with an external LOC suggest that they cannot acquire that skill if they are not capable of something.

Tamta and Rao (2017) postulated that college students grapple with self-esteem issues. They concluded, "individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to attribute their success to internal causes, whereas people with low self-esteem generally attribute positive outcomes to external causes" (Tamta & Rao, 2017, p. 157). Attributing success to internal or external forces is the basis of LOC; it is essential to identify LOC to

determine methods to overcome barriers. Using Rotter's scale gives teachers a tool to understand a cause for lack of student achievement. LOC could impact student success and their ability to continue to meet goals in the face of adversity. Empowered suggests its content, delivery style, and debriefing methods give students agency, allowing them to realize the value they create and their impact on their outcomes (Empowered, 2021).

Wang and Anderson (1994) explored how the level of excuse-making and blaming differs for a college student with an internal LOC compared to a college student with an external LOC. Wang and Anderson concluded that externals are more prone to endorse excuses made by others, "which suggest they are more prone to perceive others' behavior as also controlled by outside factors" (p. 298). Identifying internal or external LOC is a powerful tool to allow students to understand that their LOC may change their outlook on future opportunities. The experiential approach of Empowered and the opportunity for students to learn through failure allows students to practice finding their strengths. Again, this strength finding could enable students to understand the value they create, which impacts the growth of their internal LOC (Empowered, 2021).

Social-Emotional Learning

James Comer opened the door to the concept of social-emotional learning (SEL) in the 1960s. He created the School of Child Development in 1968, where he emphasized the development of children outside of academics (Greenberg, 2014). He examined the experiences at home compared to school and the effects on the child's psychological development (Edutopia, 2011). SEL addresses how children can effectively navigate the world around them and make sound decisions. The journey to

self-actualization, Maslow's highest level of learning achievement, should also allow the child to positively impact the world.

According to Edutopia (2011), a leading voice in K-12 education, "SEL educators and researchers believe that by integrating SEL in schools, we can teach students critical life skills that will help their personal development and their academic performance as well" (para. 4a). In 1994, scientists created a think tank to study the process through which people learn to "recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships and avoid negative behaviors"; this learning was labeled social-emotional learning (Edutopia, 2011, para. 3). Comer published information that prompted teachers, parents, mental health professionals, and administrators to adjust academic and social programs decisions. One significant change included reevaluating school procedures, which led to social development programs that "ushered in a school-wide approach to impacting student emotional intelligence" (Edutopia, 2011, para. 8).

Multiple studies evaluating the efficacy of educational programs, especially those addressing SEL, have been conducted. Researchers such as Muchowski (2021) studied a middle school in northern California. Her findings suggested that teachers positively affect student behavior and academic achievement in eighth-grade students with learning disabilities. The SEL program was implemented for 20 minutes each day during the advisory period. Herbert (2021) stated, "The social-emotional learning curriculum which was implemented due to this action research project was able to impact the lives of not only students but also the overall school community with its findings" (p. 21). This qualitative study was conducted with a sixth-grade cohort in Brooklyn, New York. The

results provided evidence of SEL's positive impact on academic and behavioral performance.

CASEL (2022), providing guidance on implementation, evaluation of current programs, and continuous professional development, has been a leader in the SEL field since 2011, directly partnering with 20 large, complex school districts serving 1.7 million students. In 2015, CASEL conducted a rigorous study of 213 SEL programs, including programs in traditional K-12 school settings and non-traditional school settings (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2021). The programs studied have varied from those that addressed knowledge of the five competency clusters of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making to those focused on positive learning environments and improving student attitudes. CASEL categorized the programs into multiple levels based on their effectiveness, ranging from SElect, Promising, and SEL-supportive categories. The CASEL program guide explained each designation.

The SElect designation indicates a program promotes students' social and emotional competence, provides practice opportunities, offers multi-year programming, and delivers high-quality training and other implementation support. The Promising status program promotes students' or teachers' social and emotional competence in a Promising category and provides comprehensive SEL programming. Lastly, SEL-Supportive, indicates that a program meets the SElect or Promising evidence criteria for promoting student or teacher outcomes but does not fully meet all necessary program design criteria. (CASEL, 2021, para. 3)

CASEL (2022a) designated 27 of the 213 evaluated programs as SElect, the most distinguished category in 2017. CASEL (2015) assessed outcomes that included (a) improved academic performance, (b) reduced emotional stress, (c) improved identity development and agency, (d) reduced problem behaviors, (e) improved school climate, (f) improved school connectedness, (g) improved social behaviors, (h) improved teaching practices, and (i) enhanced other SEL skills and attitudes, student characteristics, and school characteristics. CASEL's (2022) evaluations did not include programs utilizing the teachers' perceptions to determine effectiveness of any of the programs.

Effectiveness was based on pre- and post-experiments comparing groups who participated in the program with groups who did not. To assess the effects at a universal level, spanning from preschool through 12th grade, the program must report a statistically significant effect between alumni and non-alumni and "prove positive effects on (1) improved positive social behavior, (2) reduced problem behavior, (3) reduced emotional distress, (4) improved student-reported identity and agency, (5) improved school connectedness, and (6) improved school climate" (CASEL, 2022, para.4).

With the increasing responsibility of schools to address interpersonal skills, SEL, and whole-child education, school districts found themselves searching for curricula and programs to address the SEL of every child. Blum and Libby (2004) stated that many students lacked social-emotional competencies, leading to unengaged students, negatively affecting their academic performance and behavior. Sklad, Diekstra, Ritter, Ben, and Gravestain (2012) recognized that SEL programs and other supporting tools have helped develop a population that can contribute mentally and physically to a progressive society. Sklad et al.'s (2012) meta-analysis review of 75 programs indicated the effects of

programs impacting social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes. Sklad et al. (2012) concluded that school-based SEL programs increased social skills and decreased antisocial behavior. The findings provided evidence of an improvement in social skills, self-image, academic achievement, mental health, and extroverted behavior, as well as a reduction in antisocial behavior and substance abuse as a result of the SEL program (Sklad et al., 2012).

Programs and curricula such as character education programs, mentoring programs, and prevention programs have been tested, utilized, revamped, renamed, and redeployed to adapt and better serve students. However, testing, analysis, and research have produced mixed results regarding the efficacy of these programs (CASEL, 2015). CASEL's (2015) evaluation indicated that over 100 of the 213 programs evaluated lacked effective teaching practices, academic curriculum, and the availability of free-standing SEL lessons. There is no widely accepted implementation methodology. However, most efforts have resulted in positive outcomes. Researchers from The Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) determined, "Research indicates that high-quality, evidence-based programs and policies that promote these skills among students can improve physical and mental well-being, academic outcomes, and college and career readiness and success" (EASEL Lab, 2021, p. 1).

An attribute of SEL is a positive impact on student engagement and development. While SEL is not new to education, understanding oneself gives students greater control, and thereby they are more likely to make better choices. A study compiling SEL implementation practices obtained from teachers, principals, and other supporting school staff provided a framework for incorporating SEL in the classroom. The case study

(Transforming Education, 2020) utilized 11 cases to demonstrate SEL in the classroom. Teachers incorporated SEL into their lessons to encourage and enhance multiple components, including: (a) goal setting, (b) building relationship skills, (c) fostering positive group work, (d) having agency to give feedback or students owning their responsibility to provide feedback, (e) teaching equality and equity, (f) strengthening mindsets, (g) encouraging self-advocacy, (h) cultivating community, (i) engaging in critical reflections, (j) practicing social awareness, and even (k) promoting SEL in adult meetings (Transforming Education, 2020). While not meant to be a one-size-fits-all approach to incorporating SEL into a school, the composers of the results from the 11 cases provided examples but did not provide a method to obtain data based on the implementation. Although this case study compilation did not provide outcomes, the teacher's voice or opinion was dominant in describing the many techniques to incorporate SEL into the classroom or school. The teacher's voice provided best practices and recommendations to continue to improve implementation in the school.

Klint, Claro, Loeb, West, and Fricke (2020) found a positive relationship between student SEL and academic measures, even considering variables such as socioeconomic status, race, and language status. Klint et al. utilized the largest yearly measurement through eight California public school districts known as The CORE districts to determine SEL's effect on student growth. Klint et al. (2020) concluded,

Though SEL growth varies widely within schools and classrooms, recent research provides initial evidence that teachers and schools may contribute to students' growth in SEL measures over time, as student SEL growth varies systematically across schools and classrooms within schools. (para. 2d)

Klint et al. indicated that due to the lack of data relying heavily on student reporting, other means of measuring effectiveness consist of evaluating different measuring tools, including achievement and attendance data and benchmarks for programs as specified within CASEL. As previously suggested, the case for teacher input could provide further insight into program effectiveness as researching such a large data set did not yield definitive results. However, in 2022, there was no tool to support teachers in measuring the effectiveness of SEL implementation.

CASEL also evaluated Project-Based Learning (PBL) by Buck Institute for Education, which focuses on helping teachers make learning engaging and appropriate (Buck Institute for Education, n.d.). Evidence from the report led to the conclusion that the program was sufficient in teaching practices; however, it lacked an academic curriculum with free-standing SEL lessons. Although the Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline program (University of Houston, n.d.) and PBL (Buck Institute for Education, n.d.) claimed to be a SEL program, neither program created lessons teachers could use to apply the five SEL components directly in the classroom. In addition, evidence of the effectiveness of these programs did not address evaluating the same program in different settings. While SEL implementation shows positive results in student achievement, there are many programs from which to choose; however, there is a lack of effective evaluation measures for all programs nationally. The goal is not to prescribe a one-size-fits-all but to address the lack of a teacher's voice and the potential gaps in the program that could stunt the potential to experience significant growth in student achievement.

Goal setting

Goal setting has increasingly become a framework in the classroom to support improved academic results, reinforcing actions and timelines resulting in measurable outcomes, such as actions and timelines for achievement (Sides & Cuevas, 2020).

Traditionally, school districts have achievement goals ranging from student behavior to graduation and college readiness rates. The state of Texas, like others, communicated its graduation and academic achievement goals. More than 93.9% of ninth-grade students were predicted to graduate in five years compared to the 2020 five-year graduation rate of 90.3% (Texas Education Agency, 2021, pp. xi-xiii). Success or failure in the grading system determines promotion in the traditional grading model. Madden (1997) compared 126 teacher perceptions of student success in a goal-setting-oriented class compared to a class style that emphasized academic expectations. The teachers reported that setting goals allowed students to own their path to achievement; they could evaluate their goals and adjust their actions to meet those goals. In contrast to whole classroom expectations, students were more driven by individual goals and reported feeling less competition. Those teachers utilizing academic expectations found that students who could not meet the expectations reported that they developed feelings of inadequacy, which decreased motivation. Not meeting academic expectations left the students with few options to adjust their learning.

An outcome of goal setting may be increased self-efficacy. Locke and Latham (2002) and Smithson (2012) agreed that setting and measuring goals may increase self-confidence. Students experiencing success may continue to seek opportunities to achieve, which may have a long-term impact on self-efficacy. Fast et al. (2010) stated,

“one quality of self-regulation is self-efficacy. Those with a higher level of self-regulation will frequently feel enabled. Additionally, they tend to have greater aspirations, commit more to goals and have better resilience from setbacks” (p. 3). Struggling students may experience success when exposed to self-efficacy-building strategies and the ability to set goals and evaluate themselves (Burns, Marin, & Collie, 2018).

Goal setting has been shown to foster motivation (Diseth & Kobbeltvedt, 2010; Peterson et al., 2011; Pintrich, 2000). Smithson (2012) sought to determine if goal setting could foster motivation. Not only did setting goals increase or maintain student performance on all assessments in reading, math, and language arts, but there was an increase in student-to-student encouragement. The overall findings of Smithson’s 2012 research revealed that goal setting is a “strong motivator for students in increasing their performance and self-efficacy” (Smithson, 2012, para.1).

Effect of the Teaching Environment

Earthman (1998) reported that students with better school building conditions outperformed students in substandard buildings by 5 to 17 percentile points on a national test. In a similar study, Bullock (2007) investigated the relationship between the condition of the school building and student achievement in the Commonwealth of Virginia, comparing Standards of Learning (SOL). Scores in traditional buildings were compared to those in substandard facilities. Bullock (2007) concluded that students from conventional buildings performed better on tests. There is, however, a lack of data to determine if traditional and non-traditional classroom settings affect students' internal LOC, SEL, or goal setting differently.

The environment in which a child learns, performs an integral role in the child's ability to learn (Earthman, 2002; Young et al., 2003). The traditional and non-traditional teaching settings have advantages and disadvantages apparent when determining the success of a program (Hill & Epps, 2010). In the traditional classroom, the teacher is employed by the school district and presents subject matter approved by the school district during the regular school day. Conversely, the non-traditional environment is any setting outside of the traditional classroom. Although not encompassing all non-traditional environments, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs, established by Congress, awards grants to rural and inner-city public schools to develop after-school programs. The Afterschool Alliance (2021a) indicated that the grant commissioned over 10,000 school-based and community centers. The growth in these non-traditional programs has suggested the need for learning opportunities outside of the traditional teaching setting. Knobbe (2021) suggested there was no significant difference in the students' knowledge of SEL in a suburban elementary school compared to students' knowledge of SEL in different settings. The study compared students receiving weekly lessons and optional in-home links with students who received daily lessons and mandatory home links. The findings revealed the absence of a significant difference in the students' knowledge of the five SEL components based on the location of their instruction. While Knobbe (2021) did consider different modes of teaching, teachers did not have the option to offer their opinions on possible causes leading to insignificant differences.

According to a systematic review, 10 related studies identified student, family, and school as the most important factors affecting student achievement (TM Information

Systems, 2008; “Smaller Urban High Schools,” 2010;). Student factors affecting achievement were the child’s character attributes—intelligence, motivation, and attitudes. The school factors included teacher experience, attitudes, and teaching methods in the classroom as the most important aspects to determine student achievement (Gregory, Cornell, & Fan, 2011; Harith, Ahmad, & Suhaini, 2020). Further examining the teacher’s role in the classroom, the average teacher in a traditional classroom has at least a bachelor's degree. The data to determine non-traditional experience is not available; however, certified teachers from the school housing the after-school programs generally lead after-school programs. Currently there is no nationwide standard requiring certification for teachers in non-traditional settings such as after-school or summer programs outside of the school.

The Afterschool Alliance (2021a) reported regular attendance and programs shaped by local needs as two key factors impacting student achievement. Chung (2000) went into more detail to describe “clear and manageable goals, quality of after-school staff, strong involvement of families, and enriching learning opportunities are most desirable for an effective program” (p. 9). The teacher experience has not been determined to be a factor in student achievement in non-traditional environments.

A myriad of factors should be considered when determining the effectiveness of a program, including teacher involvement, parent involvement, and student commitment. Acknowledgment of key factors allows individuals to apply best practices based on the environment. Programs such as whole child, SEL, LOC, and goal setting have the propensity to allow one to learn about self (Calkins, 2021; Hathaway, 2016). A gap in research regarding these programs is the lack of systemic implementation research

completed on a similar program implemented in different learning environments. Research suggests teachers' impact was predicated on their understanding of the program or curriculum. Zhang, Lai, Pang, Yi, and Rozelle (2013) indicated that teacher training was ineffective in improving student performance. However, many others, such as Forrester (2020) and Yusnita et al. (2020), affirmed that as teachers' knowledge increases, students' performance in that area increases. Including teacher perceptions may provide valuable insights into the program's effectiveness.

Teacher perceptions of programs to utilize, program effectiveness, and other policy input, add additional perspective on what works and needs modifications (Rachel, 2021; Sventoraitis, 2018). The teacher may implement a customized program leading to increased success. The teacher being a part of the research process may offer a level of accountability by requiring the teacher to show evidence that correlates back to the objectives or purpose of the program. The teachers reporting and showing proof of outcomes also allow them to reflect on their implementation methods (Azariah, 2021; Givens, 2018; Instructional Design, n.d.).

Summary

In conclusion, how to best educate a child is a wide-ranging topic with many approaches. Maslow proposed a hierarchy; other programs and curricula speak to the method of instruction, the environment of teaching, the child's motivation, and self-awareness to answer the question of what is most impactful for student development and achievement. The uniqueness of individuals requires a vast array of methods to increase a child's achievement in school. However, the evaluation of each program is not standardized. Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been woven throughout the education

system to address student achievement. One fallacy in his theory is that some believe it considered only the western worlds' views of needs. Additionally, statewide implementation of a character-building curriculum has proven difficult to sustain and obtain the data indicating effectiveness.

While programs such as YDRC or content experts such as CASEL give guidelines and templates for programs affecting behavioral outcomes, there is no national guidance, evaluation method, or tool to determine program effectiveness. Variables as broad as demographics and implementation modes influence results and effectiveness. Therefore, the teacher, instructor, or facilitator is the constant in all programs. The voice of those implementing the programs and curricula could be a valuable resource in moving outcomes from good to great. Just as important is the instructional setting to understand how one program may or may not be effective in different teaching environments. Equipped with data highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the same program gives educational leaders guidance on how to improve a particular program given different constraints. Chapter 3 is a detailed description of the methods used to conduct the study.

Chapter 3

Methods

In the present study, surveyed teachers currently using the Empowered program across the United States were surveyed to gauge their perceptions of the effectiveness of the program on their students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the extent teachers' perceive the Empowered program has a positive effect on their students' internal LOC, social-emotional learning, and goal setting. The second purpose of this study was to determine the extent a difference exists in Empowered teachers' perceptions of the use of Empowered related to students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting between teachers in traditional compared to non-traditional classroom settings. This chapter includes a description of the research design, selection of participants, the measurement, data collection procedures, data analysis and hypothesis testing, and the limitations.

Research Design

A quantitative descriptive research design was chosen for the current research study. Quantitative design requires the researcher to make an observation about something unknown, hypothesize an explanation for the observation, predict outcomes based on the hypotheses, and formulate a plan to test the prediction (Winston-Salem State University, n.d.). The researcher then collects and processes the data and verifies if the hypotheses are supported or not supported. The dependent variables included in this study were the teachers' perceptions of the extent to which the Empowered program has a positive effect on each of the following: students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting.

The independent variable in the research was the teaching environment setting of a traditional or non-traditional classroom.

Selection of Participants

The population for this research study was composed of approximately 700 teachers from traditional and non-traditional settings and all grade levels from 41 states using the Empowered program in traditional and non-traditional classrooms in the 2020-2021 school year. The criterion to participate in the survey was being a teacher in the Empowered database designated as a current program teacher. The researcher utilized the Empowered database of teachers identified as using the Empowered program. The sample was comprised of 57 teachers who voluntarily completed the survey.

Measurement

The researcher developed the survey instrument used in this current study. This researcher utilized the Youth Entrepreneurs theory and the Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute study as the basis of this research. The survey items were determined by addressing the outcomes presented in “Evaluating the Theory of Change for Youth Entrepreneurs” (Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, 2020). The study, completed by Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, surveyed students who participated in the Youth Entrepreneurs program and students who did not participate to determine if there was a difference in internal LOC, social-emotional intelligence, and entrepreneurial goal setting. The Empowered senior manager of Impact Measurement and Communication Research validated the survey items. Teachers were asked to rate their level of agreement that the use of the Empowered program had a positive effect on students’ internal LOC, SEL, and

goal setting, utilizing a Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Agree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*). The Teacher Perception of YE/Empowered Program survey (see Appendix A) is composed of items instructing teachers to rate their agreement with the statements that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. The alignment of the specified survey items with the research questions and hypotheses is found in Table 1. For example, Item 1 in the teacher survey addresses variables specified in the hypotheses that were tested to address RQ1 and RQ4.

Table 1

Alignment of the Survey Items with the Specified Research Questions and Hypotheses

Item	Item	RQ	H
1	Exposure to the Empowered program has a positive effect on my student's perception of their control over the outcome of events in their lives.	1 & 4	1, 11
2	Exposure to the Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' self-awareness (the ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their behavior).	2 & 5	2-6, 12-16
3	Exposure to the Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' self-management (the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures).	2 & 5	2-6, 12-16
4	Exposure to the Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' social awareness (the ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself).	2 & 5	2-6, 12-16
5	Exposure to the Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' relationship skills (the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups).	2 & 5	2-6, 12-16
6	Exposure to the Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' responsible decision-making (the ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms).	2 & 5	2-6, 12-16
7	Exposure to the Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' ability to understand that the completion of tasks is linked to goals.	3 & 6	7-10, 17-20
8	Exposure to the Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' ability to understand frequent self-assessment is related to progress.	3 & 6	7-10, 17-20
9	Exposure to the Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' willingness to pursue goals that are a high risk containing a likelihood for failure.	3 & 6	7-10, 17-20
10	Exposure to the Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' ability to think beyond the immediate situation and plan for the future.	3 & 6	7-10, 17-20
11	Please select the environment most closely related to the setting in which you have implemented the Empowered program.	4 & 6	17-20

The researcher sought input from Empowered's senior manager to ensure the validity of the survey. The senior manager offered assurance that the items were relevant to the research conducted in the study created by Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute (2020). The researcher updated the survey to include any modifications specified by the senior manager.

Reliability determines if an instrument is consistent and stable over time (Creswell, 2009). A reliability analysis was unnecessary because the researcher did not construct a scale from the survey items. The researcher used single-item measurement to ensure objectivity and increase the likelihood of meaningful data. According to Sackett and Larson (1990),

Most commonly used single-item measures can be divided into two categories: (a) those measuring self-reported facts; and (b) those measuring psychological constructs, e.g., aspects of personality; measuring the former with single items is standard practice. However, using a single-item measure for the latter is considered a "fatal error" in research. A single item may suffice if the construct being measured is sufficiently narrow or is unambiguous to the respondent. (p. 631)

The items on the survey did not measure psychological constructs, and single-item measurement was appropriate for the research.

Data Collection Procedures

Before conducting the research, the researcher requested permission from the Empowered organization on April 13, 2021 (see Appendix C). Permission to conduct research was obtained from the Empowered data team on April 13, 2021 (see Appendix

D). Upon receiving approval from Empowered, the researcher applied for approval to collect data from the Baker University Institutional Review Board (IRB) on April 15, 2021. Baker University approved the study for research on April 16, 2021 (see Appendix B). Subsequently, an electronic newsletter including the survey was sent from the Empowered communications team to 700 Empowered teachers on May 13, 2021 (see Appendix E). The newsletter included an explanation of the research study, an informed consent indicating the survey responses were anonymous and voluntary, and the 11-item survey available in Google forms. The researcher collected quantitative data through a Google Forms survey link attached to the newsletter found in Appendix E. The data collection was closed on May 24, 2021. The next release of the Empowered newsletter was not scheduled until August 2021. Therefore, no survey-completion follow-up requests were made. The completed survey data were downloaded for statistical analysis to address each research question for this study.

Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

The researcher used quantitative data to understand the research problem more in-depth. The survey data were downloaded and imported into IBM SPSS Statistics Faculty Pack Version 27. The data analysis focused on six research questions with 20 hypotheses. Each research question is listed below with the corresponding hypothesis or hypotheses. The statistical analysis method is listed after the hypothesis or hypotheses that address each RQ.

RQ1. To what extent do Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal locus of control?

H1. Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal locus of control.

A one-sample *t* test was conducted to address RQ1. The sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves comparing one group's mean with a known value. The group mean is calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size is reported.

RQ2. To what extent do Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' social-emotional learning?

H2. Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' self-awareness, a component of social-emotional learning.

H3. Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' self-management, a component of social-emotional learning.

H4. Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' social awareness, a component of social-emotional learning.

H5. Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' relationship skills, a component of social-emotional learning.

H6. Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' decision-making, a component of social-emotional learning.

Five one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ2. For each hypothesis test, the sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves comparing one group mean with a known

value, and the group mean is calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size is reported.

RQ3. To what extent do Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' goal setting?

H7. Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to understand the completion of tasks is linked to goals, a component of goal setting.

H8. Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to understand frequent self-assessment is related to progress, a component of goal setting.

H9. Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' willingness to pursue goals that are high risk, a component of goal setting.

H10. Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to think beyond the immediate situation and plan for the future, a component of goal setting.

Four one-sample *t*-tests were conducted to address RQ3. For each hypothesis test, the sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves comparing one group mean with a known value, and the group mean is calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size is reported.

RQ4. To what extent are Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal locus of control different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings?

H11. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal locus of control are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to address RQ4. The two-sample means were compared. An independent-samples *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because the hypothesis test involves examining the mean difference between two mutually exclusive independent groups. The means are calculated using data for numerical variables. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size is reported.

RQ5. To what extent are Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' social-emotional learning different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings?

H12. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' self-awareness, a component of social emotional learning, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H13. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' self-management, a component of social emotional learning, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H14. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' social awareness, a component of social-emotional learning, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H15. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' relationship skills, a component of social-emotional learning, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H16. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' responsible decision-making, a component of social-emotional learning, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

Five independent-samples *t* tests were conducted to address RQ5. The two-sample means were compared. Each independent-samples *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because the hypothesis test involves examining the mean difference between two mutually exclusive independent groups, and the means are calculated using data for numerical variables. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size is reported.

RQ6. To what extent are Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' goal setting different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings?

H17. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to understand the completion of tasks is linked to

goals, a component of goal setting, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H18. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to understand frequent self-assessment is related to progress, a component of goal setting, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H19. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' willingness to pursue goals that are high risk, a component of goal setting, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H20. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' likelihood to pursue goals even if the risk of failure is higher than they would like, a component of goal setting, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

Four independent-samples *t* tests were conducted to address RQ6. The two-sample means were compared. Each independent-samples *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because the hypothesis test involves examining the mean difference between two mutually exclusive independent groups, and the means are calculated using data for numerical variables. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size is reported.

Limitations

Limitations are defined as “those characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the interpretation of the findings from [the] research” (University of Southern California Libraries, 2020). Potential limitations for the current study are:

1. The findings of this study were potentially limited due to a lack of information regarding the number of years the teachers taught in any environment and the number of years teachers taught in the Empowered program.
2. The number of minutes per class an Empowered teacher instructed the students was unknown.
3. The number of instructional days or hours per week an Empowered teacher instructed the students was unknown.
4. The number of teachers who chose to complete the survey was not within the scope of the researcher’s responsibility.
5. The type of coursework utilized when students had been exposed to the Empowered curriculum varied.

Summary

This study was a quantitative research design using statistical analyses to analyze teachers’ perceptions of the relationship between the use of the Empowered program and students’ internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. Data were collected through a preexisting database to identify the teachers contacted to complete the survey. Data were also collected via Google Forms to analyze teachers’ perceptions of the positive effect of the Empowered program on students’ internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. The data analysis

and hypothesis testing procedures were described in the chapter. The statistical analyses and hypotheses testing results are presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Results

The first purpose of the study was to determine the extent Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' perceptions of their (a) internal LOC; (b) SEL comprised of the components self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making; and (c) goal setting. The second purpose of this study was to determine the extent a difference exists in Empowered teachers' perceptions of the Empowered program related to students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting between teachers in traditional compared to non-traditional classroom settings. Chapter 4 includes the results of the quantitative data analysis used to address the six research questions. The findings begin with an explanation of the descriptive statistics. Following the descriptive statistics, the results of the hypothesis tests are presented. The chapter ends with a summary.

Descriptive Statistics

A GoogleDoc link to the survey was shared with teachers through the Empowered organization's email list. Of the teachers invited to complete the survey, 57 teachers responded. Of the 57 teachers who completed the survey, 54 teachers taught in a traditional environment, and three teachers taught in a non-traditional environment. The return rate of the survey was 8.1% for teachers utilizing the Empowered program.

Hypothesis Testing

The results of the hypothesis testing to address the six research questions presented in this study are discussed in this section. Following each research question is the method used to test the hypotheses related to that question. Next, the corresponding

hypothesis statements are listed, along with the results of each test. The significance level of .05 was utilized for all statistical analyses.

RQ1. To what extent do Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal locus of control?

A one-sample *t* test was conducted to test H1. The sample mean for teacher perceptions of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal locus of control was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves comparing one group's mean with a known value. The group mean is calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size is reported.

H1. Empowered teachers perceive that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal locus of control.

The results of the one-sample *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(55) = 17.705$, $p = .000$, Cohen's $d = 2.366$. The sample mean ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.60$) was significantly higher than the test value (3). H1 was supported. Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal locus of control. The effect size index indicated a large effect.

RQ2. To what extent do Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' social-emotional learning?

Five one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ2. For each hypothesis test, the sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample *t* test was chosen for the hypothesis testing because it involves comparing one group mean with a known

value, and the group mean is calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size is reported.

H2. Empowered teachers perceive that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' self-awareness, a component of social-emotional learning.

The results of the one-sample t test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(55) = 11.468, p = .000$, Cohen's $d = 1.532$. The sample mean ($M = 4.16, SD = 0.76$) was significantly higher than the test value (3). H2 was supported. Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' self-awareness. The effect size indicated a large effect.

H3. Empowered teachers perceive that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' self-management, a component of social-emotional learning.

The results of the one-sample t test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(54) = 12.687, p = .000$, Cohen's $d = 1.711$. The sample mean ($M = 4.22, SD = 0.71$) was significantly higher than the test value (3). H3 was supported. Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' self-management. The effect size indicated a large effect.

H4. Empowered teachers perceive that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' social awareness, a component of social-emotional learning.

The results of the one-sample t test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(55) = 14.817, p = .000$, Cohen's $d = 1.980$. The sample mean ($M = 4.30, SD = 0.66$) was significantly higher than the test value (3).

H4 was supported. Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' social awareness. The effect size indicated a large effect.

H5. Empowered teachers perceive that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' relationship skills, a component of social-emotional learning.

The results of the one-sample t test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(55) = 15.000$, $p = .000$, Cohen's $d = 2.004$. The sample mean ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.60$) was significantly higher than the test value (3). H5 was supported. Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' relationship skills. The effect size indicated a large effect.

H6. Empowered teachers perceive that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' decision-making, a component of social-emotional learning.

The results of the one-sample t test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(55) = 18.837$, $p = .000$, Cohen's $d = 2.517$. The sample mean ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.57$) was significantly higher than the test value (3). H6 was supported. Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' decision-making. The effect size indicated a large effect.

RQ3. To what extent do Empowered teachers perceive the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' goal setting?

Four one-sample t tests were conducted to address RQ3. For each hypothesis test, the sample mean was compared to a test value of 3. The one-sample t test was chosen for

the hypothesis testing because it involves comparing one group mean with a known value, and the group mean is calculated from a numerical variable. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, the effect size is reported.

H7. Empowered teachers perceive that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to understand the completion of tasks is linked to goals, a component of goal setting.

The results of the one-sample t test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(55) = 18.200, p = .000$, Cohen's $d = 2.432$. The sample mean ($M = 4.54, SD = 0.63$) was significantly higher than the test value (3). H7 was supported. Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to understand that completion of tasks is linked to goals, a component of goal setting. The effect size indicated a large effect.

H8. Empowered teachers perceive that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to understand frequent self-assessment is related to progress, a component of goal setting.

The results of the one-sample t test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(55) = 12.48, p = .000$, Cohen's $d = 1.669$. The sample mean ($M = 4.23, SD = 0.74$) was significantly higher than the test value (3). H8 was supported. Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to understand frequent self-assessment is related to progress, a component of goal setting. The effect size indicated a large effect.

H9. Empowered teachers perceive that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' willingness to pursue goals that are high risk, a component of goal setting.

The results of the one-sample t test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(55) = 10.743$, $p = .000$, Cohen's $d = 1.436$. The sample mean ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.80$) was significantly higher than the test value (3). H9 was supported. Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' willingness to pursue goals that are high risk, a component of goal setting. The effect size indicated a large effect.

H10. Empowered teachers perceive that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to think beyond the immediate situation and plan for the future, a component of goal setting.

The results of the one-sample t test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(55) = 14.817$, $p = .000$, Cohen's $d = 1.980$. The sample mean ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.66$) was significantly higher the test value (3). H10 was supported. Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to think beyond the immediate situation and plan for the future, a component of goal setting. The effect size indicated a large effect.

The independent-samples t test that addressed RQ4-RQ6 were not conducted due to the small sample ($n = 3$) of teachers who responded who teach in non-traditional settings of the 57 total respondents. The decision was made to not attempt to resample to address RQ4-RQ6, which correlated to H11-H20, as the outcome may not have increased

participation due to the organization's more recent and limited expansion into non-traditional settings. Other contributing factors to a low response in non-traditional settings could have been that teachers did not have the option to select both environments when teaching in both settings. The survey requested participants select one or the other, leading a teacher potentially to select only the primary teaching setting.

RQ4. To what extent are Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal locus of control different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings?

H11. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal locus of control are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

RQ5. To what extent are Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' social-emotional learning different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings?

H12. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' self-awareness, a component of social-emotional learning, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H13. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' self-management, a component of social-emotional learning, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H14. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' social awareness, a component of social-emotional learning, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H15. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' relationship skills, a component of social-emotional learning, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H16. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' responsible decision-making, a component of social-emotional learning, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

RQ6. To what extent are Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' goal setting different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings?

H17. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to understand the completion of tasks is linked to goals, a component of goal setting, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H18. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to understand frequent self-assessment is related to progress, a component of goal setting, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H19. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' willingness to pursue goals that are high risk, a component of goal setting, are different between teachers in traditional and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

H20. Empowered teachers' perceptions that the use of the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' likelihood to pursue goals even if the risk of failure is higher than they would like, a component of goal setting, are different between educators in traditional classroom settings and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings.

Summary

Chapter 4 included the descriptive statistics and results of the hypothesis testing for this study. Empowered teachers in a traditional setting responded that overall, the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. A sampling of teachers working in non-traditional settings resulted in insufficient data due to the methodology of hypotheses 4-6. Chapter 5 contains a study summary, findings related to the literature and conclusions.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

The research for this study focused on teachers' perceptions of the effect of the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. The study also focused on the extent a difference exists in Empowered teachers' perceptions of the effect of the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting between teachers in traditional compared to non-traditional classroom settings. Chapter 1 of this study introduced the background, statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 provided an extensive literature review covering a brief overview of soft skill programs, the transitions and emphasis in education through Empowered, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, whole-child education, LOC, SEL, goal setting, and effects of teaching environments. The chapter also provided an outlook on education in different settings. Chapter 3 detailed the methods of this study, including the research design, participant selection, method of measurement, data collection procedures, data analysis and hypothesis testing, and the limitations. Chapter 4 detailed the findings of the study suggesting teachers perceived the Empowered program affected students' internal LOC, SEL and goal setting. Due to the small sample size, the teachers' perspective of the effect of the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, SEL and goal setting in a traditional setting compared to a non-traditional setting could not be determined. Chapter 5 includes a study summary, findings related to the literature, and conclusions.

Study Summary

In the following subsections, the researcher summarizes the current study. This section includes an overview of the problem along with a purpose statement and research questions. This section concludes with a summary of the methodology and the study's major findings.

Overview of the problem. While the importance of education has never been questioned, what should be taught has been studied, researched, and is still debated today. Empowered commissioned an earlier study to assess the effectiveness of the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, emotional intelligence, and entrepreneurial goal orientation from the students' perspective. Empowered did not survey teachers to gauge the effectiveness of the Empowered program from the teacher's point of view. This study addressed the gap in research by surveying the Empowered teachers to gauge their perceptions of the program's effect on students' internal LOC, SEL and goal setting.

Purpose statement and research questions. The primary purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of the effect of the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting while focusing on three research questions. The study's research questions were influenced by the Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute (2020), which surveyed students' perceptions of their internal LOC, emotional intelligence, and entrepreneurial goal orientation. The second purpose of this study was to compare the effectiveness of the Empowered program in a traditional and non-traditional setting based on Empowered teachers' perceptions. Six research questions were established to address the purposes of this study.

Summary of the methodology. A quantitative descriptive research design was utilized for the current research through a survey of approximately 700 Empowered teachers in May 2021. This researcher developed a survey based on a prior survey's outcomes presented in "Evaluating the Theory of Change for Youth Entrepreneurs" (Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, 2020). Empowered teachers received the survey included in a monthly newsletter sent via email from the Empowered organization on May 13, 2021. Lastly, one-sample *t* tests were used to analyze the extent teachers perceive the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. The data analysis focused on three research questions with 10 hypotheses.

Major findings. The results of the data analysis are summarized in this section addressing the research questions related to teacher perceptions of the effect of the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. The results of the data analysis revealed that:

- Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal LOC.
- Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, all of which are components of SEL.
- Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on goal setting, which entails students' ability to understand that

completing tasks is linked to goals and frequent self-assessment is related to progress.

- Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on goal setting, which involves a students' willingness to pursue high-risk goals and their ability to think beyond the immediate situation and plan for the future.

The researcher was not able to test the extent a difference exists in Empowered teachers' perceptions of the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting between teachers in traditional settings and teachers in non-traditional classroom settings due to a small sample size for the non-traditional classroom settings. The decision was made to forego resending the survey based on the timing of the next organizational email and the overall low number of non-traditional teachers in the database. The population size was approximately 700 teachers utilizing the Empowered program as identified on the Empowered mailing list. Of the 700 teachers invited to complete the survey, 57 responded, with three of the responding teachers from a non-traditional school setting.

Findings Related to the Literature

This section relates prior research on programs promoting soft skill development, including students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting to the results obtained from this study's survey. This section also considers prior research commissioned by Empowered to study the effect of the Empowered program on internal LOC, emotional intelligence, and entrepreneurial goal setting on Empowered alumni compared to non-alumni.

Overall, the results from this study will either confirm or refute what the available literature currently proposes.

Maslow's theory suggested that meeting basic needs is essential before fulfilling self-actualization and potential (Maslow, 1943). To support alternative methods of self-actualization, Empowered commissioned a study conducted by the Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute (2020). The results from the study conducted on Empowered alumni revealed that students who participated in the Empowered program scored higher in the areas of internal LOC, emotional intelligence, and goal orientation than students who did not participate in the Empowered program. Empowered believes those three domains impact a transformational mindset, thereby moving the student to self-actualization while not specifically focusing on basic needs. The results from the current study revealed that teachers agree the use of the Empowered program positively affected their students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. Though the researcher cannot directly compare both studies, the results from the current study support those teachers either agree or strongly agree there is a positive effect of the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting, thereby lending further affirmation supporting the study commissioned by Empowered.

Additionally, Rao (2017) criticized Maslow's theory that suggested only one way to self-actualization and does not consider students who lack basic needs being met, but still attain academic success and self-actualization. Moreover, Fisher and Crawford (n.d.) concluded that meeting the children's basic needs did not impact positive achievement outcomes. While this study did not explore the status of children's basic needs, the results suggest self-actualization, which encompasses an internal LOC, SEL and goal

setting, is a potential outcome for those participating in the Empowered program.

Empowered does not utilize the terms whole child or character education as descriptors of its program. However, Empowered's methodology aligns with the fundamental tenets of the whole child and character education. With clear connections to the whole child approach, Empowered activities exemplify students' ability to thrive cognitively, socially, emotionally, and civically (Empowered, 2021b). Although Kristjansson (2016) argued the whole child or character education did not belong in schools due to what he described as their close resemblance to religion, the results from this research did suggest teachers perceive the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal LOC, SEL and, goal setting through real-world Empowered activities that are not related to religion.

The results of this current study found that Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' internal LOC. In the Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute (2020) white paper commissioned by Empowered, the scale for LOC created by Rotter (1966) was utilized to survey Empowered alumni and non-alumni. The results of the study revealed that alumni tend to have more internal LOC compared to non-alumni. The results of the Empowered study provide evidence that the Empowered program appears to positively affect students' internal LOC. The results of the current study support this finding in regard to students' internal LOC. The results from this study indicated that Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The key findings from the Wichita State University Community

Engagement Institute's (2020) study suggested, "while generally reported as rare, social or school problems for participants in Youth Entrepreneurs were lower after classes compared to before classes" (p. 7). Additionally, students indicated more confidence in improving their lives compared to those students who had not participated in the Empowered program (Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, 2020). The composite scores for all theory of change domains were higher for Empowered alumni than non-alumni based on the data collected from the study commissioned by Empowered. Results of the current study provide evidence that teachers perceive the Empowered program has a positive effect on a student's SEL. The results from the current study support the outcomes of the study commissioned by Empowered.

The findings from this study indicated that Empowered teachers agree or strongly agree that the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' ability to understand that completing tasks is linked to achieving goals, understand frequent self-assessment is related to progress, think beyond the immediate situation, and plan for the future. Similarly, the study commissioned by Empowered revealed that alumni of the Empowered program were more confident in their ability to achieve career and work goals, as well as, relationship, financial and education goals. Alumni were also more confident about improving their life (Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, 2020). Likewise, Madden (1997) reported that setting goals allowed students to own their path to achievement; they could evaluate their goals and adjust their actions to meet those goals. Effective goal setting includes stating precisely what needs to be accomplished, establishing the level of difficulty, and methods to help the student reach the goal quickly. The results of the current study confirmed Empowered teachers

perceive the Empowered program has a positive effect on students' goal setting. This is evidence that the Empowered program appears to have a positive effect on students' goal setting. The results of the current study support this finding for goal setting.

Conclusions

This section details implications for action and recommendations for further research. The information is derived from this researcher's findings from the teachers' perspective of soft skill programs addressing and supporting student achievement. Concluding remarks complete this section.

Implications for action. As a result of this study, implications for action are provided for teachers and educational leaders in schools, other educational settings, and Empowered. As noted above, the results from the current study supported Wichita State's study directed to alumni regarding the program's effectiveness. The current study revealed that teachers also agree or strongly agree that the use of the Empowered's program positively affects students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. All programs should have the element of collecting both formative and summative feedback before, during, and after, in a consistent span of time, whether done weekly, monthly, or annually, depending on the length of the program. Leaders can utilize the results to monitor program success during and after implementation, allowing timely modifications and even making decisions to terminate a program. Research from the literature review revealed there is no consensus in the education field monitoring the effectiveness of LOC and goal-setting programs to provide evaluations and guidance to ensure success. Implications from this study may encourage organizations to endorse programs and curricula based on evaluation outcomes, such as those CASEL provides for SEL

programs. The evaluation from content experts, utilizing surveys or other reporting tools, may provide a database for programs allowing comparisons and documentation of best practices in order for the organization to modify programs based on comparable data. Another critical aspect to consider is for programs to partner with content creators who are experts in LOC, SEL, and goal setting to assist with program development and refinement. CASEL does not require teacher feedback as a measure in their evaluation process, but may want to consider this perspective in the future as a resource to more effectively evaluate SEL programs. There is also merit for Empowered to consider utilizing CASEL's evaluation method to gather evidence of the effect of its program on SEL, which may also increase the program's validity with school districts seeking support from Empowered. School districts across the country have partnered with CASEL to implement SEL programs and continue to partner with CASEL to evaluate their programs to ensure an increase in student achievement.

This study offers further insight into the impact of soft skill programs on students' success; however, the researcher was not able to report on teacher perceptions of the program's effect on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting in different settings. The results of that analysis could have provided insight leading to Empowered and other programs being utilized in different settings to provide customized professional development or additional support for programs. Lastly, the Empowered program does not provide or require formal training as a prerequisite to implementation, yet the program is still perceived to be effective (Teach Empowered, 2021b). These outcomes might suggest that programs can be effective without requiring formal training while offering simplified implementation strategies.

When identifying elements to support academic achievement, soft skills are increasingly considered. Interpersonal relations, belonging, and self-efficacy have been found to positively impact students' achievement (Zysberg & Schwabsky, 2020). Addressing students' self-development through soft skill development supports the movement to innovate what student learning is in the classroom. CASEL, having administered multiple studies across the country, utilizes criteria to determine the effects of an SEL program on overall student learning and development. The criteria include evaluating the implementation of SEL, whether through SEL free-standing lessons or a lesson that is part of a curriculum. CASEL also evaluates where a program is implemented, such as systemically throughout a class or school or utilized for peer mentoring. Lastly, the evaluation includes how training is offered and the method it is supported, such as through an, online resource library or technical assistance available (CASEL, 2022b). CASEL's (2015) evaluation indicated that over 100 of the 213 programs evaluated lacked effective teaching practices, academic curriculum, and the availability of free-standing SEL lessons. While many different components contribute to student achievement, the teacher's voice should be a key factor in the evaluation process. The teacher survey data from the current study and the literature review support the effectiveness of implementing soft skills programs focusing on self-development. Prioritizing teachers' perceptions of professional development for soft skill programs, teacher input on implementation and restructuring curricula and programs, and improving evaluation tools may clarify those factors contributing to growth in academic content areas such as reading and math.

Recommendations for future research. The first purpose of this research was to identify teachers' perceptions of the Empowered program's effect on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. The first recommendation for additional research is for Empowered to consider conducting a formal survey to gain access to a more significant number of teachers to determine a more accurate overview of teacher perceptions of the effect of the program based on this study. The collection of additional data could be accomplished by making a request from the Empowered president to the teachers to complete the survey this researcher created. Empowered could also commission a research group to conduct the survey. This data may allow Empowered to partner with expert organizations in the fields of LOC, SEL, and goal setting to evaluate the program and recommend modifications. This study could impact the data related to soft skill programs by first providing a framework for Empowered to conduct surveys seeking feedback systematically and continuously from teachers. Furthermore, Empowered may also research the extent a difference exists in Empowered teachers' perceptions of the Empowered program's effect on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting between teachers in traditional and those in non-traditional classroom settings as more significant numbers of teachers in non-traditional settings begin to utilize the program.

The second recommendation is to have the Impact Measurement team of Empowered identify teachers in low socio-economic schools compared to other schools to disaggregate teachers' perceptions of the effect of the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting. The outcomes of this research may suggest the need to modify the program to enhance effectiveness in low socio-economic areas, to include giving guidance on how to collect and analyze data to modify programs.

The third recommendation is to have the Impact Measurement team of Empowered conduct research reviewing student academic achievement scores. The data can inform Empowered of academic growth by comparing pre- and post-data of alumni and non-alumni. This data may confirm that the Empowered program promotes academic achievement and allow the organization to prove reliable statistical evidence to districts of the effect on student achievement. Results and trends could be considered if the survey was administered each year to determine if years utilizing the program had any implications on teacher perceptions of effectiveness.

Lastly, the Empowered program does not require any formal training for teachers to deliver the program. A theme apparent while researching teacher perceptions of programs was teacher training or lack thereof having an impact on perceived programs' effectiveness. The Empowered program promotes a model that teachers perceive as effective without program-focused training. Comparing teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of programs requiring training to implement with those not requiring training may illuminate opportunities to adjust or dismantle specific programs.

During the review of the literature, much of the research *on* teacher perceptions involved teachers who received program-focused training. This research could be extended to determine if Empowered teachers who teach different subjects offered different results *on* the effectiveness of the Empowered program. Additionally, training is not required through Empowered but offered through self-guided modules. Researching teacher perceptions disaggregated by teachers who have and have not utilized the self-guided results may inform Empowered of the strength of the training offered Zhang et al. (2013), Forrester (2020), and Yusnita et al. (2018) provide

conflicting data on the impact on outcomes based on teachers receiving training on programs.

The second purpose of this study was to gather data on teachers' perceptions of the Empowered program on students' internal LOC, SEL, and goal setting from teachers in both traditional and non-traditional settings. This study did not obtain reliable data to determine a difference. Although the data was not available, this study suggests the need for Empowered and other organizations promoting soft skill programs to continue to develop the activities and guidance to support teachers in all settings.

This researcher's literature review provided evidence that there is both a lack of teacher feedback as well as consistent evaluations completed on all programs. Evaluations measuring the success of similar soft skill curricula and programs may provide a more conclusive reflection of effectiveness. It is more challenging to gauge soft skills development than determining academic achievement; therefore, proper evaluation and techniques are critical. Consistent and effective evaluations of soft skill programs may not exist in 2022; however, recognizing the critical value of whole-person development requires action. A blueprint for developing valid, reliable, and consistent evaluations, both formative and summative, may provide more precise insight into the effectiveness of a program.

Concluding remarks. Students need academic knowledge and knowledge of self to recognize their most significant potential. Soft skill programs utilized to develop students continue to show effectiveness in student achievement and achievement outside of the classroom. Valid, reliable, and consistent program evaluations that support programs focusing on soft skills should be implemented. In addition, evaluating and

making decisions on educational programs should include the teacher's voice. According to *Voices from the Classroom 2021*, 87% of teachers agree it is essential for the next U.S. Secretary of Education to involve classroom teachers in creating and reviewing federal education policies (Educators for Excellence, 2021). Student success in the areas of academics, as well as soft skills, leads to greater academic achievement both inside and outside the classroom. Soft skill programs should support student growth and continuously provide results. Educational leaders may utilize research from prior studies and the current study to gather insight on implementation and evaluation methods to continue to improve student achievement and well-being.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Teacher Perception of YE/Empowered Program-Survey Instrument

The purpose of this quantitative study is to evaluate teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Empowered, formerly Youth Entrepreneurs, program on students' locus of control, social-emotional learning, and goal setting, based on teacher perceptions. Also, by comparing educator perceptions of Empowered effectiveness of those in a traditional setting to those of teachers in a non-traditional setting, the researcher of this study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge related to the teachers' perceptions of the Empowered program. There is no risk to participating or not participating in this survey. Participation is both voluntary and anonymous. If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact: Tiffany Jasper Jones at (913) 620-3712 or via TiffanyLJasper@stu.bakeru.edu. You may also contact the faculty member supervising this work: Dr. Denis Yoder, Professor, Baker University, (785)-766-1675, dennis.yoder@bakeru.edu. By continuing and participating in this study, you are giving your consent to have your answers analyzed for a doctoral study.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. You will determine to what degree you agree with statements. 1-5 using a Likert scale of (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly agree.

1. The Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' perceptions of their control over the outcome of events in their lives.
2. The Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' self-awareness, (the ability to accurately recognize their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their behavior).

3. The Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' self-management (the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures).
4. The Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' social awareness (the ability to successfully regulate their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating themselves).
5. The Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' relationship skills (the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups).
6. The Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' responsible decision-making (the ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms).
7. The Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' ability to understand that the completion of tasks is linked to goals.
8. The Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' ability to understand frequent self-assessment is related to progress.
9. The Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' willingness to pursue high-risk goals containing a likelihood for failure.
10. The Empowered program has a positive effect on my students' ability to think beyond the immediate situation and plan for the future.

11. Please select the environment most related to the setting in which you have implemented the Empowered program.

Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter Received From Baker University IRB Committee



Baker University Institutional Review Board

April 16th, 2021

Dear Tiffany Jasper Jones and Denis Yoder,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.
6. If this project is not completed within a year, you must renew IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,

Nathan Poell, MLS
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Sara Crump, PhD
Nick Harris, MS
Christa Manton, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD

Appendix C: Request to Conduct Research

To: Ashlyn Edmisten

Date: April 13, 2021

Sr. Mgr. Impact Measurement/Communication Research

I am requesting the use of the Youth Entrepreneurs' database of teachers to obtain contact information in order to survey YE teachers to gather data on teachers' perceptions of the YE programs's relationship to students' locus of control, social emotional intelligence, goal setting. Research method: Participants will anonymously and voluntarily complete a 11-question survey.

Purpose: This research will be used to determine if the methods proposed by the YE program is effective or suggest the YE program has gaps in their mission of effectiveness concerning students' locus of control, social emotional intelligence, and goal setting. This research will also be used to compare educator perceptions of YE effectiveness based on delivery of the program in a traditional setting compared to a non-traditional setting.

Time required: The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

Risks: No risks are anticipated. All surveys will be submitted anonymously. There is no negative impact to the YE teacher if the YE teacher does not complete the survey.

Benefits: This is an opportunity for teacher perceptions to be analyzed to gauge the effectiveness of the YE program concerning students' locus of control, social emotional intelligence, and goal setting. Teacher responses will contribute to what is understood about the YE program.

Participation and withdrawal: Teacher participation in this study is completely voluntary, and teachers may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

To Contact the Researcher: If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact: Tiffany Jasper Jones at (913) 620-3712 or via TiffanyLJasper@stu.bakeru.edu.

You may also contact the faculty member supervising this work: Dr. Denis Yoder, Professor, Baker University, (785)-766-1675, d.yoder@bakeru.edu.

Please see complete statements to participants and survey and below.

Gratefully,

Tiffany Jasper Jones

Thank you in advance for agreeing to participate in an anonymous survey to assist Tiffany Jasper Jones with research to complete a doctoral program in Educational Leadership at Baker University in Baldwin City, Kansas.

The purpose of this quantitative study is to evaluate teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Youth Entrepreneurs program on students' locus of control, social-emotional learning, and goal setting, based on teacher perceptions. Also, by comparing educator perceptions of YE effectiveness of those in a traditional setting to those of teachers in a non-traditional setting, the researcher of this study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge related to the teachers' perceptions of the YE program.

There is no risk to participating or not participating in this survey. Participation is both voluntary and anonymous. If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact: Tiffany Jasper Jones at (913) 620-3712 or via TiffanyLJasper@stu.bakeru.edu.

You may also contact the faculty member supervising this work: Dr. Denis Yoder, Professor, Baker University, (785)-766-1675, Dyoder@bakeru.edu.

By clicking the link and participating in this study, you are giving your consent to have your answers analyzed for a doctoral study. To continue to the survey, click this

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1h17Cu7FXS096pQ5d0wuh5zUI8F0RgFojVC3xiD3U3KE/edit>

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. You will determine to what degree you agree with statements 1- 10 using a Likert scale of (5) Strongly agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly disagree.

S1. The YE program has a positive effect on my students' perceptions of their control over the outcome of events in their lives.

(5) Strongly agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly disagree.

S2. The YE program has a positive effect on my students' self-awareness (the ability to accurately recognize their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence their behavior).

(5) Strongly agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly disagree.

S3. The YE program has a positive effect on my students' self-management (the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures).

(5) Strongly agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly disagree.

S4. The YE program has a positive effect on my students' social awareness (the ability to successfully regulate their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating themselves).

(5) Strongly agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly disagree.

S5. The YE program has a positive effect on my students' relationship skills (the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups).

(5) Strongly agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly disagree.

S6. The YE program has a positive effect on my students' responsible decision-making (the ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms).

(5) Strongly agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly disagree.

S7. The YE program has a positive effect on my students' ability to understand the completion of tasks is linked to goals.

(5) Strongly agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly disagree.

S8. The YE program has a positive effect on my students' ability to understand frequent self-assessment is related to progress.

(5) Strongly agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly disagree.

S9. The YE program has a positive effect on my students' willingness to pursue high-risk goals containing a likelihood for failure.

(5) Strongly agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly disagree.

S10. Exposure to the YE program has a positive effect on my students' ability to think beyond the immediate situation and plan for the future.

(5) Strongly agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly disagree.

S11. Please select the environment most related to the setting in which you have implemented YE.

X Traditional school classroom (school building during regular class time)

X Non-traditional (after school, church, club, community center, etc.)

Again, thank you for your participation in this study.

Appendix D: Empowered's Permission to Conduct Research

From: Tiffany Jasper Jones
Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2021 12:51 PM
To: Ashlyn Edmisten <ashlyn.edmisten@youthentrepreneurs.org>
Cc: Jen Watkins <jennifer@youthentrepreneurs.org>
Subject: RE: Official dissertation survey permission

Perfect. Thank you.

From: Ashlyn Edmisten <ashlyn.edmisten@youthentrepreneurs.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2021 12:51 PM
To: Tiffany Jasper Jones <tiffanyj@youthentrepreneurs.org>
Cc: Jen Watkins <jennifer@youthentrepreneurs.org>
Subject: RE: Official dissertation survey permission

Sounds good! Happy to help.

The next Hallway Chatter goes out Thursday, May 13. 😊

-ANE

From: Tiffany Jasper Jones <tiffanyj@youthentrepreneurs.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2021 12:47 PM
To: Ashlyn Edmisten <ashlyn.edmisten@youthentrepreneurs.org>
Cc: Jen Watkins <jennifer@youthentrepreneurs.org>
Subject: RE: Official dissertation survey permission

Perfect. Thank you so much. I will make those corrections. I was thinking I would have to make that change but didn't know if a disclaimer would need to be added like, Empowered, formerly YE. But I can make that change.

What date does the Hallway Chatter go out?

I am excited about moving forward and I truly appreciate all of your feedback to get me here.

Tiffany

From: Ashlyn Edmisten <ashlyn.edmisten@youthentrepreneurs.org>

Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2021 11:00 AM

To: Tiffany Jasper Jones <tiffanyj@youthentrepreneurs.org>

Cc: Jen Watkins <jennifer@youthentrepreneurs.org>

Subject: RE: Official dissertation survey permission

Hi Tiffany,

Overall I don't have edits to this, but did want to note the following:

- YE to Empowered: I would update all instances of "YE" to "Empowerd" give our new brand.
- Yellow highlighting: below I think there is a typo, so I highlighted it for you to review/confirm (think it might need to say, "...with 10 statements using..."?).
- Jen will put in a blurb about the survey in the upcoming Hallway Chatter along with the link included below!
- FYI: I submitted a test of the survey as I worked through it a few moments ago, so you will want to exclude that submission.

Jen, feel free to chime in with anything additional I may have missed.

-ANE

Appendix E: Teacher Email with Survey Link and Invitation to Participate

Some Quick Feedback

As part of our ongoing quest to continually improve, a member of our Curriculum Team has crafted a survey that is short, painless, and will provide us with important feedback and insights. We ask that you, if time allows, please fill out the following short survey.

Fill Out The Survey

Thank you in advance for agreeing to participate in an anonymous survey to assist Tiffany Jasper Jones with research to complete a doctoral program in Educational Leadership at Baker University in Baldwin City, Kansas.

The purpose of this quantitative study is to evaluate teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Youth Entrepreneurs program on students' locus of control, social-emotional learning, and goal setting, based on teacher perceptions. Also, by comparing educator perceptions of YE effectiveness of those in a traditional setting to those of teachers in a non-traditional setting, the researcher of this study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge related to the teachers' perceptions of the YE program.

There is no risk to participating or not participating in this survey. Participation is both voluntary and anonymous. If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact: Tiffany Jasper Jones at (913) 620-3712 or via TiffanyLJasper@stu.bakeru.edu.

You may also contact the faculty member supervising this work: Dr. Denis Yoder, Professor, Baker University, (785)-766-1675, Dyoder@bakeru.edu.

By clicking the link and participating in this study, you are giving your consent to have your answers analyzed for a doctoral study. To continue to the survey, click this

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1h17Cu7FXS096pQ5d0wuh5zUI8F0RgFojVC3xiD3U3>

KE/edit



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Wichita, KS 67220

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