

**Kansas Elementary Teachers' Experiences with and Perceptions of Teaching the
Content in the Kansas Social-Emotional Character Development Model Standards**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine Kansas (KS) elementary teachers' phenomenological experiences with teaching the content in the Kansas Social Emotional and Character Development Model Standards. The study is comprised of two components including the collection of observational data to examine if KS elementary teachers are teaching the content in the KS SECD Model standards and the collection of focus group data to allow KS elementary teachers to describe their phenomenological experiences with teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards.

The observational data were collected by the researcher as part of her job as an elementary school counselor to determine if and how frequently KS elementary teachers were teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards based on pre-service professional development training, and an attempt to collect locally measured data as outlined in the Kansas Can initiative. The focus group data were collected from voluntary participants that are Kansas elementary teachers. Compiled data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed by the researcher. Observational data and focus group data were intended to be tangential in nature. The researcher investigated commonalities between the focus group data and the observational data.

Results from the observational and the focus group data indicate that KS elementary teachers' phenomenological experiences with teaching the content in the KS SECD Model standards have been positive in improving their classroom environment and increasing the capacity of elementary teachers to manage their classrooms. There is also evidence reported by teachers that students value the benefit of learning the content of the SECD Model Standards. KS elementary teachers perceive that time, support from

administrators, quality professional development, and assessment measurement tools for SECD are necessary for them to adequately deliver the content contained in the KS SECD Model Standards.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project to God and family. I have found my true purpose and know that He has opened doors for me that I could have never opened on my own. My glory and praise go to Him and the many blessings He has bestowed on my life. I will be patient and wait for Him for what might be next on my career journey.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

American schools are academic institutions tasked with preparing students with a solid academic foundation to prepare them for a successful future beyond K-12 education. Traditionally, American families have been expected to teach their children moral, ethical, and character values, as well as general social skills to provide their children with the ability to work effectively in a group (Brannon, 2008). A crucial challenge for 21st-century schools involves serving a growing culturally diverse student body with a wide variety of abilities and interests for learning (Learning First Alliance, 2001). Regrettably, numerous students have lagging social-emotional skills and become increasingly less connected to school as they progress through their K-12 education, and as a result of the lack of connection, the students academic performance, behavior, and health are affected (Blum & Libbey, 2004). According to Klem and Connell (2004), as many as 40% to 60% of high school students are disengaged from their school. Students do not learn in isolation, but learn by collaboration with their peers, teachers, and other adults (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Increasingly, educators have noted that students are arriving at school with problematic behaviors that are disruptive to the learning environment (Brannon, 2008). Brannon (2008) stated that “character education has become a necessity in our schools,” (p. 62) but also pointed out that understanding roles and responsibilities of teaching character development has become increasingly unclear of the “exact role of the school and the teacher in the education of the child’s character” (p. 62). Social-Emotional Learning and Character Development (SECD) programs build students skills that prevent maladaptive behaviors

such as substance abuse, peer to peer violence, bullying, and dropping out of school (Zins & Elias, 2006). According to Bradberry and Greaves (2009), education, experience, and knowledge are not adequate predictors of future success. Individuals with the highest levels of intelligence (IQ) outperform individuals with average IQs approximately 20% of the time (Bradberry and Greaves, 2009). However, individuals with average IQs outperform those with high IQs 70% of the time (Bradberry and Greaves, 2009). The anomaly is that individuals that achieve the highest degree of success have high emotional intelligence (EQ) regardless of their IQ (Bradberry and Greaves, 2009). Schools have an essential responsibility to not only grow a child's academic skills but also their social-emotional development (Durlak et al., 2011). Because schools have a finite amount of resources and time limitations, they must prioritize and research evidenced-based resources that serve multiple purposes (Durlak et al., 2011). There is an extensive collection of developmental research that supports children's mastery of social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies to help them achieve overall greater well-being and academic success whereas failing to master SEL competencies can lead to challenges in academics and social-emotional relationships (Eisenberg, 2006; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998).

Data from the National Center for Education (2006) revealed that although behaviors such as violence and theft have decreased, disruptive behaviors such as aggression in the classroom environment have increased. In 2010, more than 767,900 serious disciplinary actions were recorded by American schools (National Center for Education and Statistics, 2010). Schools should offer a safe and supportive environment for all students. According to Bushaw and Lopez (2012), three out of four American

adults believe that bullying prevention should be part of a school's curriculum (Bushaw & Lopez, 2012). Clearly, a positive school culture and climate have a positive effect on students' academic achievement (Miffelen, 2009). Because it is often difficult to discern if a student's academic challenges and struggles lead to disruptive behavior or if disruptive behaviors lead to academic challenges, it is clear that students require support in both domains (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009). In a large meta-analysis of follow-up effects of school-based social and emotional learning interventions, researchers found that students who participated in schools with social-emotional learning instruction did better than controls in the areas of social-emotional skills, attitudes, and indicators of well-being (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). Researchers discovered that not only was instruction in social-emotional learning successful in developing the quality of their peer and adult relationships, commitment to education, and improved academic achievement, but it also decreased the tendency for substance abuse, risk taking, and maladaptive behaviors (Taylor et al., 2017). Further, the study revealed that positive outcomes remained regardless of a student's race, socioeconomic status, or school location (Taylor et al, 2017). Instruction in SEL and interventions are associated with positive developmental trajectories (Taylor et al, 2017). Additional longitudinal analyses have demonstrated links between social and emotional skills measured in childhood health, education, and well-being later in the lifespan (Hawkins, Kosterman, Catalano, Hill & Abbott, 2008; Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). Hawkins et al. (2008), stated that students that had direct instruction in SEL had significantly fewer symptoms of mental health disorders, a lower prevalence of a diagnosis of a sexually transmitted disease, and socioeconomic attainment at ages 24 and 27. As children

acquire skills through direct instruction in SEL, they move from being motivated and controlled by external factors toward being motivated by more internal factors such as a positive belief and value system, the ability to have compassion for others, making positive choices, and the ability to accept responsibility when they make a mistake (Bear & Watkins, 2006). Through an organized delivery of direct instruction in SEL with teaching, modeling, practicing, and using the skills across settings, it is hoped that student's will begin to generalize the skills across settings and situations (Ladd & Mize, 1983; Weissberg, Caplan, & Sivo, 1989). This chapter provides background information on the Kansas Social-Emotional Character Development Model Standards and the circumstances that led to the development of the standards and adoption by the Kansas State Board of Education (KS BOE).

Background

During the era of No Child Left Behind, 2001-2011, high-stakes testing was a commonly utilized practice intended to support educational reform in America (Supovitz, 2009). While the practice of administering high stakes tests appeared to create the motivation for classroom teachers and educational leaders to consider changing their instructional practices, the changes have been mostly superficial changes to instructional practice and test preparation versus resulting in solid improvements in educational reform (Supovitz, 2009). Although individual schools and school systems may benefit from the results of large scale testing, there is little benefit for individual teachers to guide future instructional practice to prepare students for success (Supovitz, 2009).

Kansas Commissioner of the Kansas Department of Education, Dr. Randy Watson, and his team conducted research to help guide their policy for the future of

Kansas education (Kansas State Department of Education, n.d.-a). When Dr. Watson and his team looked at postsecondary evidence of success for Kansas students, the team discovered that despite students in Kansas improving reading and math scores from 40% to 80% proficiency, gains in postsecondary enrollment, postsecondary retention, and postsecondary remediation remained flat (KSDE, n.d.-a). Table 1 describes the data from Kansas student's postsecondary evidence in the areas of postsecondary enrollment, postsecondary retention, and postsecondary remediation.

Table 1

Percentages of Postsecondary Evidence for Kansas Students

	Enrollment	Retention	Remediation
2007	80.6	69	29.4
2008	80.6	68	28.1
2009	80.7	67	29.1
2010	79.3	64	29.1
2011	77.2	63	28.2

Note: Adapted from *Vision Launch. Kansas Can. Kansas Leads the World in the Success of Each Student*. KSDE n.d.-a, (p. 7 & 9). Available at <http://bit.ly/2i4CSAO>.

The creation of the Kansas CAN initiative recognizes the importance of social-emotional learning in preparing students for life and was adopted as one of the five KS State Board of Education Outcomes (KSDE, n.d.-a). Understanding Kansas elementary teachers' phenomenological experiences with teaching the content in the KS Social-emotional and character development (SECD) standards is an important part of supporting the current vision for KS schools. In the 2017-2018 school year, 29,029 students were enrolled in the school district where the study was conducted (KSDE, n.d.-3). In the 2017-2018

school year, 467 students enrolled at the elementary school, Elementary School A, where both the observational data and the focus group data were collected. (KSDE, n.d.-e).

Table 2 describes the ethnic demographics for the school district and Elementary School A where the study was conducted. Table 3 describes the ethnic demographics for the district and Elementary School A where both the observational data and the focus group data were collected.

Table 2

Percentages of District and Elementary School A Race/Ethnicity Demographics

Program Year	White	African-American	Hispanic	Other
2013 District	71.3	6.9	13.4	8.4
2013 School A	80.7	3.2	5.2	10.9
2014 District	70.7	7.0	13.6	8.8
2014 School A	81.3	1.9	7.5	9.2
2015 District	69.9	6.9	14.4	8.8
2015 School A	79.6	3.0	9.5	7.9
2016 District	69.2	6.9	15.0	8.9
2016 School A	81.5	2.4	7.8	8.2
2017 District	68.0	7.2	15.6	9.2
2017 School A	82.0	2.8	5.6	9.6

Note: Adapted from *Kansas State Department of Education District Report Card*, by KSDE, n.d.-e, Available at <http://bit.ly/2BmfvfY>

Table 3 depicts the percentage of students receiving benefits of free and reduced lunch. Students receiving free and reduced lunch benefits as economically

disadvantaged (ED) versus students who do not receive free and reduced lunch benefits and are referred to non-economically disadvantaged.

Table 3

Percentages of District and Elementary School A Students Economical Status

Program Year	Economically Disadvantaged	Non-Economically Disadvantaged
2013-District	27.32	72.68
2013-School A	7.6	92.4
2014-District	24.48	72.52
2014-School A	7.9	92.1
2015-District	28.8	71.2
2015-School A	10.2	89.8
2016-District	28.36	71.64
2016-School A	9.7	90.3
2017-District	27.97	72.03
2017-School A	7.1	92.9

Note: Adapted from *Kansas State Department of Education District Report Card*, by KSDE, n.d.-e, Available at <http://bit.ly/2BmfVfY>.

Statement of the Problem

In April 2012, the KS BOE adopted the Social, Emotional, and Character Development Model Standards (SECD) (Kansas State Department of Education, n.d.-c). The purpose of the SECD Standards (KSDE, n.d.-c) is to provide schools a framework for integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) with character development so that students will learn, practice and model

essential personal life habits that contribute to academic, vocational, and personal success. It is about learning to be caring and civil, to make healthy decisions, to problem solve effectively, and to value excellence, to be respectful and responsible, to be good citizens and to be empathic and ethical individuals. (p. 3)

Research also supports schools teaching social-emotional learning (SEL), in addition to the academic curriculum (Zinsser, 2015). Although Kansas is one of only a handful of states adopting full SECD Standards, the SECD standards are merely a framework and not a requirement (Zinsser, 2015). Because the KS BOE stopped short of requiring the standards to be taught and only offered the SECD Standards as a framework, a successful implementation may not yet have occurred. According to KSDE (n.d.-a) the current vision for education in Kansas is:

Kansans are demanding higher standards in academic skills, as well as employability and citizenship skills, and the need to move away from a “one-size-fits-all” system that relies exclusively on state assessments. This new vision for education calls for a more student-focused system that provides support and resources for individual success and will require everyone to work together to make it a reality. Together, Kansans Can. (p. 1)

The KS BOE outlined five outcomes that should be measured by Kansas schools: social-emotional growth measured locally, kindergarten readiness, individual plan of study based on career interests, high school graduation, and post-secondary success (KSDE, n.d.-a). According to KSDE (n.d.-a), the KS BOE defined success of Kansas students as:

A successful Kansas high school graduate has the academic preparation, cognitive preparation, technical skills, employability skills and civic engagement to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry recognized certification or in the workforce, without the need for remediation. (p. 1)

Until it is fully understood if elementary classroom teachers are informed about the SECD standards and if they perceive the standards to be essential to the success of their students, the standards cannot be meaningfully applied and taught to Kansas students. Further, it would be helpful to understand if elementary classroom teachers perceive barriers to teaching the SECD standards and to identifying those potential barriers. Finally, determining if elementary classroom teachers take ownership of teaching the SECD Standards is important before successful implementation of the standards can be achieved.

Until elementary teachers perceptions and experiences with teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards are fully understood, successful implementation of the SECD Standards and acquisition of these important skills for Kansas students may not occur. The KS BOE, and the KSDE has committed to Kansas stakeholders that the SECD Standards are important. But, without a complete understanding of how classroom teachers perceive the SECD standards, attempts at implementation may fail.

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose of the study was to investigate the phenomenological experiences of KS elementary teachers, at one KS elementary school, teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. The second purpose of the study was to investigate KS elementary teachers' descriptions of how teaching the content in the SECD standards

has had an effect on their classroom environment. The third purpose of the study was to investigate KS elementary teachers' perceptions of how the content in the SECD standards should be delivered. The fourth purpose of the study was to investigate KS elementary teachers' description of the factors or conditions that contribute to KS elementary teachers' ability to deliver the content in the SECD standards. The fifth purpose of the study was to investigate KS elementary teachers' perceptions of what barriers prohibit them from teaching the content in the SECD standards. And, the sixth purpose of the study was to investigate KS elementary teachers' perceptions of the effects that teaching the content of the SECD standards had on the academic success of their students.

Significance of the Study

Although there is a large body of research that supports the positive effect of teaching character in schools, it is not understood what barriers exist that prevent elementary classroom teachers from teaching the SECD standards. By understanding the answers that the data reveal about the KS elementary teachers' phenomenological experiences with the SECD standards, administrators and professional school counselors can better offer professional development training to allow for successful implementation and acculturation of the SECD standards in their school community. Schools in Kansas have limited resources and funds for educating students and schools. Therefore, they "must educate the ever-changing student with fewer resources and higher stakes" (Cloud & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 125). This study allowed elementary schools in Kansas to explore the presence of a knowing-doing gap with regard to the SECD standards and begin to move toward successful implementation of the standards in Kansas elementary schools.

The study may also have additional implications for educators throughout the United States who may wish to adopt character education programming or standards from Kansas or other states by explaining Kansas elementary teachers lived experiences with the SECD standards. Additionally, there is empirical evidence that some SEL programs have demonstrated positive outcomes for ethnic minority groups and students living in poverty (Kragg, Van Breukelen, Kok, & Hosman, 2009). These findings may be used to guide future elementary school teams to implement programs supporting SECD.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were identified as part of this study. This study was limited to one elementary school in a large suburban Kansas school district, hereafter referred to Elementary School A. Therefore, the results may not generalize to other elementary schools in Kansas, or to other parts of the United States.

Assumptions

The researcher made the following assumptions about this study. The results provided by the focus group respondents were accurate and honest. Educators participating in focus groups provided truthful information and without fear of retribution from building or district leaders. The researcher acknowledges that there is likely personal and professional bias in favor of social-emotional learning and character development programs. As a researcher every attempt will be made to remain neutral when analyzing the data. As a researcher the desire is to learn from the data and the study instead of inserting my own preconceived notions or ideals into the data outcomes.

Research Questions

Based on the purpose of the study stated earlier, there are 6 research questions.

RQ 1. What are Kansas elementary teachers' phenomenological experiences with teaching the content in the Kansas Social-Emotional and Character Development Model Standards?

RQ 2. How has teaching the content of the Kansas Social-Emotional and Character Development Model Standards affected the classroom environment.

RQ 3. How should the content of the KS Social-Emotional and Character Development Model Standards be delivered in KS elementary schools?

RQ 4. What factors or conditions contribute to KS elementary teachers' delivery of the content in the KS Social-Emotional and Character Development Model Standards?

RQ 5. What barriers prohibit KS elementary teachers' from teaching the content in the KS Social-Emotional and Character Development Model Standards?

RQ 6. What effect has teaching the content in the KS Social-Emotional and Character Development Model Standards had on students' academic success?

Definition of Terms

The definition of terms is offered to the reader to make clear definitions of terms they may not be familiar. Some of the terms used in the specific context of the study may adopt a different meaning than what reader's are familiar.

Blue Zone. Kuypers (2011) stated that the blue zone is a term used to describe low states of alertness and down feelings such as when one feels sad, tired, sick, or bored.

Body in the Group. Body in the Group is a term coined by Michelle Garcia Winner's Social Thinking program. Body in the group refers to using our bodies to demonstrate our interest in being a part of the group (Winner & Crooke, 2017).

Brain Break. Brain Breaks are tools used by teachers to offer students a mental break. A brain break is designed to help students stay focused and on task. A brain break gets students moving to carry blood and oxygen to their brain. Brain breaks can energize or relax a student. (Watson Institute, 2017).

Brain in the Group. Brain in the Group is a term coined by Michelle Garcia Winner's Social Thinking program. Brain in the group teaches kids to use their brains to pay attention and stay connected through thoughts, making supportive comments, or asking questions of others (Winner & Crooke, n.d.).

Elementary Teacher. An elementary teacher in Kansas may teach students kindergarten through 6th grade. They must have completed a minimum of a bachelor's degree for a regional accredited college or university. They must have completed a state approved teacher preparation program. They must fulfill the recency requirement. The recency requirement means the teacher must have a least 8 credit hours or one year of accredited teaching experience completed within the last six years. All Kansas elementary teachers must pass a content assessment in each of the endorsement areas that they were trained to teach and wish to put on their license. All Kansas elementary teachers must pass a pedagogy assessment, Principles of Teaching and Learning, or licensure (KSDE, n.d.-e).

Emotional Dysregulation. Emotional Dysregulation is a term used in the mental health community to refer to an emotional response that is poorly modulated, and does not fall within the conventionally accepted range of emotive response (Dialectical Living, n.d.).

Emotional Regulation. Adair, Belanger, Dion, & Sabourin (1998) defined emotional regulation as the ability to respond to the ongoing demands of experience with a range of emotions in a manner that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to permit spontaneous reactions as well as the ability to delay spontaneous reactions as needed.

Expected. Expected is a term coined by Michelle Garcia Winner (n.d.-a) in her Social Thinking program. Expected behaviors are considered socially acceptable or appropriate behaviors for the given situation. Students are taught to think about and adjust their behavior to meet expectations according to the social expectations or hidden rules of the situational environment.

Get Ready, Do, Done. Get ready, do, done is a visual tool used by teachers and developed by Sarah Ward and Kristen Jacobsen's for the 360 Degree Thinking Program to support student's executive function skills or task initiation and task completion (as cited in Johnson, 2017).

Green Zone. According to Kuypers (2011), Green Zone is a term used to describe a calm state of alertness. A person may be described as happy, focused, content, or ready to learn when the Green Zone. This is the zone in which optimal learning occurs.

Kansas Social-Emotional and Character Development Model Standards.

Approved and adopted by the Kansas State Board of Education in 2012, the KS SECD Model Standards are “designed to provide schools a framework for integrating social-emotional learning with character development so that students will learn, practice, and

model essential personal life habits that contribute to academic, vocational, and personal success” (KSDE, n.d.-c, p. 4).

Red Zone. According to Kuypers (2011), Red Zone is a term used to describe extremely heightened states of alertness and intense emotions. A person may be elated or experiencing rage, anger, explosive behavior, devastation, or terror when in the red zone.

Rock Brain. Winner (2017) said that Rock Brain is a term used within the Superflex curriculum from Social Thinking. Rock Brain represents children’s behavior when they are inflexible thinkers and do not follow directions or follow the group plan.

Second Step. The Second Step organization offers a social-emotional learning (SEL) program by the same name that gives students tools to excel in and out of the classroom. This program focuses on emotion management, situational awareness, and academic achievement (Second Step, 2017).

Space Invader. According to Winner (2017), Space Invader is a term used within the Superflex curriculum from Social Thinking. Space invader represents children’s behavior when they invade or encroach on others’ personal space (Winner, 2017).

Thinking Eyes. Thinking eyes is a term coined by Michelle Garcia Winner in her Social Thinking program. Thinking eyes teaches students to bring their eyes to meet and acknowledge others in a group, then to use the eyes to track who is talking and what the group is talking about. The student is then taught to think about what they mean and what they say based upon where they are looking. Thinking eyes teaches students to read and respond to both verbal and non-verbal cues (Winner & Crooke, 2017).

Unexpected. Unexpected is a term coined by Michelle Garcia Winner in her Social Thinking program. Unexpected behaviors are considered socially unacceptable or inappropriate behaviors for the given situation. Students are taught to think about and adjust their behavior to meet the expectations according to the social expectations or hidden rules of the situational environment (Winner, 2017).

Watch Dog. Watch Dog is an acronym that stands for Dads of Great Students, a school-based, family and community engagement organization. Fathers and father-figures volunteer to serve in school. The purpose is to provide positive male role models for students, demonstrating by the presence of caring adults that education is important. To provide an extra set of eyes and ears to enhance school security and reduce bullying (Watch Dogs, 2017).

Was Funny Once. As Winner (2017) explained, Was Funny Once is a term used within the Superflex curriculum from Social Thinking. Was Funny Once represents children's behavior when they are using humor in unexpected ways or at unexpected situations.

Whole Body Listening. According to Sautter (n.d.), *Whole Body Listening* is a series of books written by Kristen Wilson and Elizabeth Sautter. *Whole Body Listening* teaches kids to listen with their ears to limit auditory distractions. In addition students learn to:

- Listen with their eyes, looking at the speaker and using the eyes to read the emotions and intentions of others.
- Listen with their mouth practicing impulse control and avoiding talking or blurting while the teacher is talking.

- Listen with their hands by using a fidget, squeezing hands together or having hands in lap or in pockets.
- Listen with their feet by using tools for sensory input or sitting in a relaxed position keeping their feet still.
- Listen with their body exploring sensory regulation strategies or seating options that allow them to attend.
- Listen with their heart. This describes the ability to show empathy and to work to take perspective of others.
- Listen with their brain. This refers to teaching kids how their brain works incorporating strategies to keep their brain engaged in listening (Sautter, n.d., p. 2).

Working Clock. Developed by Sarah Ward and Kristen Jacobson as part of their 360 degree thinking program for executive function skills, a working clock is an analog clock that serves as a tool for teachers to help students learn to plan and self-monitor time to complete tasks (Ward & Jacobsen, 2017).

Yellow Zone. According to Kuypers (2011), Yellow Zone is a term used to describe a heightened state of alertness and elevated emotions. A person may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, the wiggles, or nervousness in the Yellow Zone.

Organization of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction of the study, provides background information related to the study, presents research questions, defines terminology that may be unfamiliar to the reader, and offered an overview of the

methods used to obtain data for the study. This study provides in Chapter 1 offers the problem statement, purpose and significance of the study. Chapter 2 offers the reader background information related to the Kansas Social Emotional Character Development Model Standards and research on social-emotional learning. Chapter 2 also offers information on the Kansas State Department of Education's Kansas CAN initiative and the expectation for social-emotional learning, measured locally is an expectation for Kansas schools adopted by the Kansas State Board of Education. The chapter is divided into six subsections, each addressing parts of the KS SECD Model Standards related to the Kansas CAN initiative.

In Chapter 3, the researcher describes the study's methodology and design. Also, described sample, sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collections procedures, data analysis and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the data collection and analysis conducted in chapter three. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the study and discusses findings as they relate to the literature. The researcher offers final inferences and thoughts for the field of elementary education. Recommendations for future research are offered.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature related to social-emotional learning and character development in schools. This chapter begins with a history of the impetus for teaching SECD in the state of Kansas, the history of the creation of the KS SECD Model Standards, the benefits of teaching SECD, information on character development, personal development, social development, and college and career readiness skills as outlined in the KS SECD Model Standards. Also included is a history of how the KS SECD Model Standards were created, and finally a summary of the chapter and research related to social-emotional learning.

In 2015, Dr. Randy Watson, KSDE commissioner, and his team traveled across Kansas to conduct the largest qualitative study in the state's history to help create a new vision for Kansas schools (KSDE, n.d.-a). Watson referred to this new vision for Kansas schools as Kansans CAN (KSDE, n.d.-a). The new vision for Kansas schools was announced in October, 2015 and states that "Kansas leads the world in the success of each student. A successful Kansas high school graduate has the academic preparation, cognitive preparation, technical skills, employability skills and civic engagement to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry recognized certification or in the workforce, without the need for remediation" (KSDE, n.d.-a). KSDE (n.d.-a) has established that the 2016-2017 school year was the pilot year for the Kansans CAN initiative with the goal of achieving the components in the vision by 2026. The KSDE team traveled across Kansas to host focus groups to ask Kansas stakeholders about the skills that a successful 24-year-old Kansan need to be successful (KSDE, n.d.-

a). Stakeholders from business and industry and K-12 and higher education were invited to the focus groups. Kansas State University assisted KSDE with analyzing the data (KSDE, n.d.-a). Results from Commissioner Watson's study results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Percentage of Feedback Coded as the Skills a 24-Year-old Kansan Would Need to Master to be Successful

Skills	Stakeholders	
	Education & Administration	Business & Industry
Academics	23	16
Non-academic Skills	70	81
Physical & Mental Health	3	1
Credentials	2	1
Employed	2	1

Note. Adapted from *Vision Launch: Phase 1. Kansans CAN. Kansas Leads the World in the Success of Each Student*, by KSDE, n.d.-a.

The outcomes that KSDE and the KS Board of Education have approved include kindergarten readiness, an individual plan of study focused on a career interest, high school graduation rates, postsecondary completion attendance, and social/emotional growth that is measured locally (KSDE, n.d.-a). Early teaching and support of social-emotional learning helps young learners become classroom ready as they develop their peer-based interactive play skills (Coolahan, Fantuzzo, Mendez, & McDermott, 2000). There is growing interest and attention from policymakers and educators on how character development and social-emotional learning can be developed in children (Gutman & Schoon, 2013). Part of the challenge in deciding what or how to teach SECD

skills is that there is no single or limited set of SECD skills that predicts favorable long-term outcomes, and key SECD skills are inter-related and should be taught and developed in combination with one another (Gutman & Schoon, 2013). Cooperative play skills, as well as other non-academic skills, help children facilitate critical thinking and contribute to other aspects of academic development (Winner, n.d.-c). SECD skills also encourage children to have a positive impact on their community, and provide opportunities for students to learn and improve their conflict resolution skills and emotional regulation (Winner, n.d.-c).

According to Elias (2016), “we all know that whatever gets measured usually gets attention and focus” (p. 1). It is a common belief in education that there is currently no widespread or practical manner for all schools to measure their student’s SECD skills (Elias, 2016). Elias (2016) reminded educators that if they look at their current student report cards there is often a section for comments about student behavior, character skills, motivation, and organization or preparation. It has been an established practice for classroom teachers to provide parents with comments about SECD alongside academic grades (Elias, 2016). “In the world that our students will enter as adults, there can be no *either/or* of academic or social-emotional and character competencies. Students require *both/and*” (Elias, 2016, p. 2). Parents must receive feedback about their students that incorporate both academic and SECD, systematically and carefully (Elias, 2016).

According to Denham (2016), “In the same way that assessment is important for understanding students’ academic learning, it is also important for understanding students’ social and emotional learning” (p. 1). There are multiple tools for assessing SEL in the education setting, if schools have the desire to find a valid tool for assessing

SEL competences there are many to choose from (Denham, 2016). “Achievement tests do not adequately capture character skills such as personality traits, goals, motivations, and preferences that are valued in the labor market, in school, and in many other domains” (Kautz, Weel, Heckman, Borghans, & Diris, 2014, p. 1). Families, schools, and exposure to social interactions shape a student’s character (Kautz et al., (2014). “Character is a set of skills, not a trait. Skills can change over the life cycle” (Kautz et al., 2014, p. 1). Investment in early SECD programs improve SECD skills in a long-term way effecting later-in-life outcomes (Kautz et al., 2014).

“Every teacher needs more class time. And every year, it seems like there’s more and more content that needs to be covered and less time to teach it in, due to excessive testing and other distractions” (Watson, 2016, p. 1). Although adding more hours to the school day or decreasing the content that is delivered to our students is generally considered not optional, there are things that teachers can do to create more time to deliver academic and SECD content. Teachers must question traditional practices that may contribute to unnecessary tasks and they must evaluate their daily routines and cut out any time wasters (Watson, 2016).

For Kansas classroom teachers to be able to successfully deliver and support the content of the KS SECD Model standards, school leaders must support the factors and conditions described by respondents to support them in these endeavors. Teachers should not have to choose between teaching SECD skills or academic skills (Hansen, 2017). “By targeting elements of student emotional development that affect classroom environment, like student behavior and student-teacher interaction, SEL may actually support and promote growth from academic instruction for early childhood students”

(Hansen, 2017, p. 1). Integrating content from SECD skills and not viewing the SECD content as an add-on, but as a catalyst for academic growth, can diminish the perception that teachers have a lack of time to teach the SECD skills and move the perception as an essential component of the student's education (Hansen, 2017).

Because the KS State BOE has adopted social-emotional learning, measured locally, as one of the five outcomes for Kansas students, it is clear that the educational leaders in the state of Kansas recognize the benefit of teaching the content in the standards (KSDE, n.d.-d). According to Lynch (2016), communication of a shared mission and vision allows staff to support a common goal. Effective mission statements are clearly articulated, visible in the school environment, are familiar to all stakeholders, apply to day-to-day activities in the school, are consistently and actively reinforced and supported by all stakeholders (Lynch, 2016). In education, effective professional development affects students. Achievement and student learning improve when educators are provided the opportunity to engage in professional development that focuses on skills that educators need in order to meet students' needs (Mizell, 2010).

According to CASEL (2018), school principals believe that SEL is important, but they also have the desire for more training, support, and guidance on how to effectively deliver SEL competencies and support their students. The majority of principals surveyed report that a commitment to teaching SEL would have a positive impact on the climate of the school, improve school citizenship, assist with the formation and retention of positive peer-relationships for their students, and teachers, and decrease incidents of bullying (CASEL, 2018). Principals report that they need more effective training for

teachers and an increased availability to research-based strategies for teaching SEL to students. They also want more dedicated plan time for teachers (CASEL, 2018).

Further, a 2013 study found that 93% of teachers want more emphasis on SEL in schools. Those surveyed believe that SEL skills are essential and teachable and want their schools to make teaching SEL a priority by integrating those skills into the curriculum and school culture (Hart, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). In 2013, The Chronicle of Higher Education and American Public Media's Marketplace surveyed 704 employers to assess their value on SEL. Half of the employers surveyed reported that they have challenges filling positions with recent graduates (CASEL, 2018). Many of the employees that were hired had good technical skills, but were lacking in the areas of "communication, adaptability, decision-making, and problem-solving skills" needed to successfully do their job (CASEL, 2018, p. 2). There have been multiple school districts reporting that they have realized academic gains after implementing SEL programming in their schools. For example in the Reno, Nevada area, one school district realized a 21-point gain in math scores and a 20-point gain in English-Language Arts scores (CASEL, 2018).

Historically, schools have always been thought of as academic institutions with their main objective being to educate our children through the acquisition of academic skills (Watson, personal communication, June 3, 2016). This has been the model for delivery of education for the last 100 years (Watson, personal communication, June 3, 2016). The era of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), education entered into an era of success defined by outcomes determined by high stakes testing (Watson, personal communication, June 3, 2016). Because school's federal funding dollars were tied to

these NCLB outcomes, schools participated and narrowed their focus on academic achievement (Watson, personal communication, June 3, 2016). And, as educators complied and narrowed the focus on academic outcomes, those outcomes in reading and math improved dramatically (KSDE, n.d.-a). However, those increased academic indicators did not translate to postsecondary success and data measuring postsecondary enrollment, postsecondary retention, and postsecondary remediation remained flat (KSDE, n.d.-a). As we enter the 21st Century, school leaders and educators have begun to attempt what it means to prepare their student's for a life with their 21st century-skilled education.

Dr. Watson has referred to the idea of the No Child Left Behind Hangover, meaning that our teachers are stuck in the paradigm of high stakes testing outcomes, which prevents them from seeing the bigger picture of their student skills and outcomes to become a successful 24-year-old Kansan (personal communication, June 3, 2016). Teachers must be presented with the opportunity to be educated in the expectations outlined in the Kansas CAN initiative (KSDE, n.d.-d). This will establish a clear vision and mission for the importance of teaching SECD skills along with improving student outcomes to prepare them for life. Social-emotional learning, measured locally, is clearly stated as a KS State BOE outcome, and must be linked to local school's mission, vision, and outcomes (KSED, n.d.-d). By establishing clear expectations and tying those expectations to targeted professional development, Kansas teachers may feel there are less barriers to teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. An extensive body of rigorous research (including randomized control trials, longitudinal follow-ups, and multiple replications) demonstrates that education that promotes social and emotional

learning (SEL) gets results, and that teachers in all academic areas can effectively teach SEL. The findings come from multiple fields and sources that include student achievement, neuroscience, health, employment, psychology, classroom management, learning theory, economics, and the preventions of youth problem-behaviors. (CASEL, 2018, p. 1)

The Kansas State Department of Education recognizes that assessments can be important tools to assist stakeholders monitor and assess a student's progress. But, KSDE recognizes that assessments are only one piece of data that should be considered in a child's education (KSDE, n.d.-e). The Kansas State Board of Education's vision for Kansas students and for Kansas education is "Kansas will lead the world in the success of each student" (KSDE, n.d.-e). KSDE (n.d.-e) recognizes that education may have overemphasized the importance of state assessments and is calling Kansas schools to think about educating the whole child.

A 2015 report by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Brookings Institution stated that "SEL competencies are critically important for the long-term success of all students in today's economy" (p. 4). The report's final recommendation was to increase effective, evidence-based SEL programs as a core component in educating American's youth (AEI & Brookings Institution, 2015). Other researchers have reported statistically significant associations between SEL skills in Kindergarten students and positive outcomes for young adults in the areas of education, criminal activity, substance abuse, and mental health (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). One study concluded that students that have acquired early prosocial skills will have a reduced chance of accessing public assistance, not have any negative interactions with law

enforcement prior to adulthood, and will not spend time in prison (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015).

A study by Columbia University reported that the benefits of teaching students SEL far exceed the costs (Belfield et al. 2015). According to Belfield et al. (2015), “The aggregate result of the analysis showed an average benefit cost ratio of about 11 to 1 among six evidence-based SEL interventions studied” (p. 45). Since schools are the bedrock of healthy and vibrant communities the cost-benefit of providing Kansas youth with evidenced-based SEL programs is undeniable (Belfield et al, 2015).

According to Mitzell (2010), “the most important factor contributing to a student’s success in school is the quality of teaching. Professional development is the most effective strategy schools and school districts have to meet stakeholder expectations” (p. 1). School districts use professional development as a strategy to provide educators with the ability to improve their practice throughout their career (Mizell, 2010). Research indicates that student learning and achievement increases when educators engage in targeted and meaningful professional development (Mizell, 2010). If teachers are provided collaboration time to use the information learned in professional development, teachers can implement this new learning and rely on data to help guide them (Barber & Mourshed, 2009). The idea of increased teacher collaboration is supported by the literature regarding professional learning communities. Professional learning communities (PLC) “are an indication of a broader trend toward professional development that is increasingly collaborative, data-driven, and peer-facilitated, all with a focus on classroom practice” (Barber & Mourshed, 2009, p 30). Schools that use PLCs offer a structure to create “supportive school cultures and professional conditions

necessary for achieving significant achievement in teaching and learning targets. PLCs also allow staff to contemplate the teaching and learning process and to learn how to become more effective in their work with students” (Morrissey, 2000)

One instructional strategy that focuses on the intentional creation of time and teaching of content included in the KS SECD Model Standards benefits students are class meetings. “Family and class meetings provide the best possible circumstances for adults and students to learn cooperation, mutual respect, responsibility, and social skills” (Browning Wright, n.d., p. 1). “Class meetings should have a specific time set aside each week. The purpose of the class meetings is to develop the normative beliefs and also to address problems that students may be having” (Ophelia Project, n.d., p. 9). Another method of delivery of SECD is to provide professional to school staff that supports a building-wide common language. “When a common social skills language is developed and shared with everyone in the classroom, this is not only beneficial for use by teachers, but also by other students. When teachers spend all day redirecting students the classroom environment starts to sound like “I’m the teacher, I’m the boss, and this is my domain”” (Baker, 2009, p. 49).

The Kansans CAN vision recognizes that “student achievement does not always equate to student success” (KSDE, n.d.-b, slide 15). “Academics alone do not guarantee a student’s success. Students who lack conscientiousness, perseverance, or the ability to communicate effectively (non-academic skills), may find it more difficult to succeed in the post-secondary workforce” (KSDE, n.d.-b, slide 15). Effective leadership is essential to organization improvement (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010). Leaders must establish a shared vision and shared norms with a clear meaningful

direction (Louis, et al., 2010). The leader must do whatever it takes to support staff to meet the organization's goals (Louis, et al., 2010). Once a school-wide vision of a commitment to high standards and success for all students is established the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students is diminished and the achievement of all students increases (Wallace Foundation, n.d.).

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2018), "a key to promoting effective schoolwide SEL is ensuring that all staff members have initial and ongoing professional development and support for implementing programming" (p. 1). Additional things principals can do to support teachers delivering schoolwide SEL is communicating the message to all stakeholders that schoolwide SEL is a priority and developing and articulating a shared vision of all student's development in the areas of social, emotional, and academic development (CASEL, 2018).

The challenging thing for school leaders is that although there is a recognition that SEL skills are important, how they are measured and monitored is not clear (KSDE, n.d.-b). Both KSDE and the KS BOE want SEL and growth to be measured locally at the discretion of each individual community and school district (KSDE, n.d.-b). "Despite noncognitive skills' central roles in our education and, more broadly, our lives, education analysis and policy have tended to overlook their importance" (Garcia, 2014, p. 1). Garcia (2014) contends that SECD skills should be "an explicit pillar of education policy" (p. 1). For teachers to implement SECD into and alongside of the academic domains, they will need "new and different kinds of preparations and support" (Garcia, 2014, p. 5). Educational leaders must find ways to review policy to ensure that teachers

are trained and supported and that they receive professional development in content, delivery, and measurement of SECD skills (Garcia, 2014, p. 5). Garcia (2014) recommends that while expanding educational policy to include teaching SECD skills, teaching SECD skills provides an opportunity for collaboration between all stakeholders, including researchers, academia, industry, and policymakers, and that this collaboration is essential to meeting the vast needs of children.

A safe and supportive school climate and culture support both academic and social-emotional learning. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2014), “Our nation’s schools should be safe havens for teaching and learning, free of crime and violence. Any instance of crime or violence at school not only affects the individuals involved, but also may disrupt the educational process and affect bystanders, the school itself, and the surrounding community” (p. iii). When students display anger or aggression it can have a negative impact on all stakeholders and disrupt the learning environment (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). Helping students to learn to manage their behavior and regulate their emotions contributes to the feeling of a safe and supportive school environment (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). According to the University of Minnesota’s College of Education & Human Development blog, Improving Lives, (2016), students who are hostile-aggressive are dreaded by most teachers. These aggressive students “are capable of dominating and controlling others through intimidation and irrational, often explosive behavior” (University of Minnesota’s College of Education & Human Development, 2016, p. 1).

Important to goal-setting and goal-achievement are character virtues like perseverance or grit (Duckworth, Kirby, Tsukayama, Bernstein, and Ericsson, 2010).

Researchers have determined that deliberate practice works but is not generally perceived by students to be fun or enjoyable to students (Duckworth et al., 2010). Duckworth et al. (2010), described a character trait they call grit, related to perseverance, which is evident when students keep trying and will not give up even when a task is hard or non-preferred. “Perseverance is a skill that can be taught. Although most of us learn it through trial and error, it can and should be taught, just like any other key skill or competency” (Slade & Hoerr, 2014, p. 2). There is a growing body of evidence and research that outlines the many benefits that instruction in the content of the KS SECD Model Standards can provide, these include but are not limited to: academics, behaviors, attitudes, and skills (CASEL, 2018). SEL programs have shown an immediate improvement in student’s mental health, social skills, and academic achievement and will continue to benefit students for months or even years after initial instruction (CASEL, 2018). “Up to 18 years later, students exposed to SEL in school continue to do better than their peers on a number of indicators: positive social behaviors and attitudes, skills such as empathy and teamwork, and academics” (CASEL, 2018, p. 2). Additionally, students benefit from SECD content with fewer conduct problems, decreased emotional distress, fewer incidents of participation in drug use, and many other healthy benefits (CASEL, 2018).

Dr. Watson, commissioner of the Kansas State Department of Education, and his team turned to the people of Kansas and asked them what skills does a 24-year-old Kansans need to succeed? (KSDE, n.d.-a). Dr. Watson and his team conducted the largest qualitative study in the state’s history and determined that Kansas needed to do things differently (KSDE, n.d.-a). Stakeholders in business and industry and education concluded that the majority of skills needed for post-secondary success fall under the

category of soft skills (KSDE, n.d.-a). In what Watson and his team were calling the “Mercury Phase” or vision launch one phase of implementation of the Kansans CAN initiative, one goal of this initial phase of implementation was to identify the outcomes that will measure the success towards achieving the vision, define what “outcome” means, and identify how school districts intend to measure the outcomes (KSDE, n.d.-b).

There are five outcomes for measuring progress of the Kansans CAN initiative. These are kindergarten readiness, an individual plan of study focused on career interest, high school graduation rates, postsecondary completion attendance, and social-emotional growth that is measured locally (KSDE, n.d.-a). Social-emotional learning is identified as embedded components in several of the outcomes. For example, in the kindergarten readiness outcome it states that “early childhood experiences, birth to kindergarten, that ensure health and physical well-being and the development of cognitive, communication, and social-emotional skills necessary for school success and have a direct influence on future success” (KSDE, n.d.-b). Jones et al. (2015), stated that measuring social-emotional skills in Kindergarten may help educators assess if students are at risk of demonstrating deficits in non-cognitive skills later in the life span and allow for early intervention.

The Kansans CAN initiative states “academics are important. However, they alone don’t guarantee a student’s success after high school” (KSDE, n.d.-b, p. 10). Data from Watson’s qualitative study via the community conversations across the state of Kansas conclude that Kansans believe that schools should place more focus and attention on helping students learn and develop non-academic skills (KSDE, n.d.-b). These included but were not limited to, teamwork, perseverance, and critical thinking. Kansans

believe that these will help students be more successful in their post-secondary quest (KSDE, n.d.-b). According to KSDE (n.d.-b), students who do not receive education with nonacademic skills may find it more difficult to secure employment or be successful with their attempts at postsecondary education. The research is clear that teaching the content in the KS SECD Model standards benefits Kansas students (KSDE, n.d.-b). Research supports that teaching these skills to Kansas students is not another feel-good initiative but an essential foundation to their future success (CASEL, 2018). This is the key that will contribute to the Kansas Board of Education realizing its goal of leading the world in education (KSDE, n.d.-a).

Overview of SECD Standards

Learning standards are public declarations about what students should know and be able to do as a result of their completion of a K-12 education (Zinsser, Denham, Curby, & Chazan-Cohen et al., 2016). The comprehensive character development standards in Kansas are guided by the Kansas legislature:

Character development program means a program which is secular in nature and which stresses character qualities. Character qualities means positive character qualities which include, but are not limited to: honesty, responsibility, attentiveness, patience, kindness, respect, self-control, tolerance, cooperation, initiative, patriotism, and citizenship. (Kidd, 2011, slide 5)

Standards that are clearly written defining educational outcomes and expectations and effectively implemented create a consistency in the educational process and communicate priorities and expectations to all stakeholders (Zinsser et al., 2013). Standards that clearly articulate goals and provide developmental benchmarks and are coupled with an

evidence-based curriculum, high-quality targeted professional development for teachers, and assessments that allow teachers to monitor students' progress toward goals, provide a powerful education plan (Zinsser, Weissberg, and Dusenbury, 2013).

According to KSDE (n.d.-c):

The purpose of the Social, Emotional, and Character Development Standards is to provide schools a framework for integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) with character development, so that students will learn, practice and model essential personal life habits that contribute to academic, vocational and personal success. It is about learning to be caring and civil, to make healthy decisions, to problem solve effectively, to value excellence, to be respectful and responsible, to be good citizens and to be empathetic and ethical individuals. (p. 1)

KS SECD model standards are contained under the three areas of focus that include character development, personal development, and social development (KSDE, n.d.-c).

Character Development

According to the Josephson Institute (2014), "Historically, formal standards directing and guiding the educational mission have focused on defining grade-appropriate academic objectives" (p. 1). However, educational reformers have expanded the role of education to include: "critical and creative thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities, social and emotional life skills, ethical character traits, and practical knowledge reflecting the demands of the modern workplace" (Josephson Institute, 2014, p. 1). Character development, as defined by KSDE (n.d.-c), states, "developing skills to help students identify, define, and live in accordance with core principles that aid in effective problem solving and responsible decision making" (p. 1). The rationale for

having a character development standard is that “our schools have the job of preparing our children for American citizenship and participation in an interdependent world. Success in school and life is built upon the ability to make responsible decisions, solve problems effectively, and to identify and demonstrate core principles” (KSDE, n.d.-c, p. 1). When students can generalize a defined set of core character development principles not only while attending school in K-12 education, but also in their community, Kansas will create and achieve caring communities (KSDE, n.d.-c). The ultimate goal of character development is to have Kansas students “develop, implement, and model responsible decision making and effective problem solving” (KSDE, n.d.-c, p. 1).

According to the Josephson Institute (2014), objectives of SECD model standards should be to prepare students: “to succeed in school, including college or other post-secondary education, to succeed in the workplace, to live happy, worthy, and fulfilling personal lives and to become engaged, responsible, and productive citizens” (p. 1). Educational outcomes for all students should include: “knowledge, what students should know and understand, skills, what students should be able to do, values, what students should value and believe, and traits, what characteristics and attributes of character students should possess” (Josephson Institute, 2014, p. 1).

A school’s community commitment to character and ethics includes:

Students understanding the personal and social importance and the basic terminology and concepts of character and ethics. They strive to acquire the knowledge, adopt the values, and develop the skills, traits, and conduct patterns of a person of good character, and they seek to govern their choices and actions by universal moral and ethical principles. (Josephson Institute, 2014, p. 14)

Components of good character include positive moral values and teachers and adult role-models helping students understand that their character defines them, effects their personal reputation, and likely determines their choices and actions (Josephson Institute, 2014). Developing a good moral character influences future successes, the ability to develop positive relationships, and the ability to create and maintain self-respect (Josephson Institute, 2014). Students will learn that good moral character and ethical behavior help them establish standards of right and wrong. These standards help students define morality and values (Josephson Institute, 2014).

Personal Development

Personal development, as defined by KSDE (n.d.-c.), states, “developing skills that help students identify, understand and effectively manage their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors” (p. 2). The ability to manage emotions can either help or hinder a child’s ability to actively engage in the academic work, demonstrate commitment to their work, effort and ultimately their school success (Durlak et al., 2011). There is no documented correlation between cognitive intelligence (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EQ) (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Cognitive intelligence, one’s ability to learn, is fixed from birth and is not flexible, but emotional intelligence is a flexible skill and can be learned and improved with training and instruction (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). All humans are born with individual and unique personalities (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Personality cannot be used to predict the outcomes of emotional intelligence (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). The rationale for having a personal development standard is that “personal and academic success are built upon the ability to consider thoughts, understand feelings, and manage one’s responses. Personal thoughts and feelings impact

management of experiences and determine behavior outcomes” (KSDE, n.d.-c, p. 2).

Through personal development, Kansas citizens could create a self-awareness that allows them to express their personal thoughts and emotions in constructive ways and also identify external supports that help them to understand and analyze their thoughts and emotions (KSDE, n.d.-c). In addition, personal development allows Kansas citizens to learn to self-manage their “thoughts and behaviors, reflecting on perspectives, and setting and monitoring goals” (KSDE, n.d.-c, p. 2). Self-management allows Kansas citizens to understand and practice strategies for managing thoughts and behaviors, to reflect on perspectives and emotional responses, and to have the ability to set, monitor, adapt, and evaluate goals to be successful in K-12 education and life beyond K-12 education. (KSDE, n.d.-c).

Consideration of cognitive intelligence, emotional intelligence, and personality are the best way to understand the whole child (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). According to Bradberry and Greaves (2009), emotional intelligence has a profound effect on future success and is one way we can help our students grow for tremendous results for future success. Emotional Intelligence is the foundation for success and impacts everything a human does and says each day (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Emotional Intelligence is crucial for success and contributes to 58% of successful performance in all types of jobs (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). “It’s the single biggest predictor of performance in the workplace and the strongest driver of leadership and personal excellence” (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 21). The exciting news is that even if people have low emotional intelligence, they can be taught to improve it and can catch up to peers who have higher emotional intelligence (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009).

Personal competence is a person's ability to have self-awareness of emotions and self-management of their behavior (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Humans with high self-awareness have the ability to recognize and understand their personal strengths and weaknesses, what they are motivated by and what they enjoy, and what situations are circumstances make them upset (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Self-awareness is a foundational skill. When a person has strong self-awareness, they can more easily acquire and use the other emotional intelligence skills (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). It is a daily challenge for humans to learn to manage their emotions because our brains are genetically hard-wired to give emotions the advantage (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). As humans navigate their daily routines, they use all five senses to explore the world sending electric signals to the brain (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Input from our world enters the human brain at the base of the skull, near the spinal cord, but must travel to the frontal lobe to achieve rational thought and thinking (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). However, challenges can occur because this path goes through the brain's limbic system, the place where emotions are produced and processed, causing humans to process their experiences emotionally before they can process their experiences rationally (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). The emotional center and rational center of the human brain maintain constant communication becoming the physical source for human's emotional intelligence (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). All emotions are derived from five core feelings: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and shame (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Emotions and reactions to emotions are a complex and vary in the degrees of intensity (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). The majority of the time, the more intense a person feels the emotion, the greater the likelihood that your emotions will drive your behavior (Bradberry &

Greaves, 2009). Since human's brains are wired to feel emotions first, we must teach students that they can control their thoughts that follow the emotions, and can learn to control their reaction to the emotions (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). "Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognized and understand emotions in yourself and others, and the ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships" (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 17). This process has an effect on the management of social complexities, personal problem solving and decision making, and achievement of success (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). According to Kragg et al. (2009), students can benefit from universal prevention programs that support stress reduction and coping skills by understanding the complexities and ranges of human emotions as outlined in Table 1. There is a significant deficiency in people recognizing, understanding, and managing their emotions (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009), Of the people tested by Bradberry & Greaves (2009), 64% could not accurately identify their emotions as they happen, meaning these people are controlled by their emotions and cannot identify them and use their emotions to their benefit. Because emotional intelligence is generally not taught in schools, people enter the workforce not knowing how to manage their emotions in difficult or challenging situations (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). "Good decisions require far more than factual knowledge. They are made of using self-knowledge and emotional mastery when they're needed most" (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 14). Because people feel such a wide range of emotions, it is no wonder that emotions can overwhelm them and become problematic, if not managed (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Humans have numerous words to describe their emotional feelings but "all emotions are derived from five core feelings: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and shame" (Bradberry

& Greaves, 2009, p. 14). As student attend school and go about their days, they will experience emotional reactions to nearly everything that happens to them, whether they notice or name the emotions or not (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Table 5 reveals the complexity of these wide-ranging emotions in their various forms of intensity.

Table 5
Five Core Emotions

Intensity	Emotion				
	Happy	Sad	Angry	Afraid	Ashamed
High	Elated	Depressed	Furious	Terrified	Sorrowful
	Excited	Agonized	Enraged	Horried	Remorseful
	Overjoyed	Alone	Outrages	Scared stiff	Defamed
	Thrilled	Hurt	Boiling	Petrified	Worthless
	Exuberant	Dejected	Irate	Fearful	Disgraced
	Ecstatic	Hopeless	Seething	Panicky	Dishonored
	Fired Up	Sorrowful	Loathsome	Frantic	Mortified
	Passionate	Miserable	Betrayed	Shocked	Admonished
Medium	Cheerful	Heartbroken	Upset	Apprehensive	Apologetic
	Gratified	Somber	Mad	Frightened	Unworthy
	Good	Lost	Defended	Threatened	Sneaky
	Relieved	Distressed	Frustrated	Insecure	Guilty
	Satisfied	Let down	Agitated	Uneasy	Embarrassed
	Glowing	Melancholy	Disgusted	Intimidated	Secretive
Low	Glad	Unhappy	Perturbed	Cautious	Bashful
	Contented	Moody	Annoyed	Nervous	Ridiculous
	Pleasant	Blue	Uptight	Worried	Regretful
	Tender	Upset	Resistant	Timid	Uncomfortable
	Pleased	Disappointed	Irritated	Unsure	Pitied
	Mellow	Dissatisfied	Touchy	Anxious	Silly

Note: Adapted from *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, by T. Bradberry & J. Greaves, 2009, p. 15.

Social Development

Some researchers refer to social development as a “non-cognitive” trait and describe skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social skills, executive and functioning skills (Josephson Institute, 2014, p. 8). However, researcher and practitioner Michelle Garcia Winner (n.d.-c) argued that “social learning affects life outcomes, so why call it non-cognitive?” (p. 1). Winner (n.d.-d) further argued:

It’s my understanding that cognition comes from our neurology and our neurology is parked in our brain. So technically if something is “non-cognitive” its origin is non-neural or non-brain based. So are these “experts” suggesting that social skills come from our knee-cap or elbow? Of course not, but loose labeling of a set of highly complex skills is troubling, to say the least, to me. (p. 1)

Winner (n.d.-c) argued that humans do not simply learn social skills by intuit. Social skills and abilities are by-products of many other social processes including development theories such as: perspective taking, theory of the mind, processing of concepts, executive functioning, social attention, auditory processing, interpretation of nonverbal cues, situational awareness and cultural factors (Winner, n.d.-c). Humans are continually and consciously thinking about and considering all of these social factors and more, within each moment of interaction. That is cognitive mental work (Winner, n.d.-c).

Social development is as defined by KSDE (n.d.-c), “developing skills that establish and maintain positive relationships and enable communication with others in various settings and situations” (p. 2). The rationale for having a social development standard is that “building and maintaining positive relationships and communicating well

with others are central to success in school and life. Recognizing the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others leads to effective cooperation, communication, and conflict resolution” (KSDE, n.d.-c, p. 2).

Social development is described in the areas of social awareness and interpersonal skills. Social awareness is having “the ability to be aware of thoughts, feelings and perspectives of others” (KSDE, n.d.-c, p. 2). Social competence is also a person’s ability to understand and to make inferences about other people’s behaviors, moods, and motives so they can create and maintain healthy relationships (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Social awareness is the ability to take perspective of other people (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). In order to take perspective of other people, students must be taught to listen and observe people that we work and live throughout the day (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009).

According to Winner (n.d.-c):

Human beings operate on a continuum of social understanding, from those who struggle dramatically because of brain based social learning challenges to the highly adept social processors who can handle any situation they find themselves in without so much as a twitch of their elbow or eyebrow. (p. 2)

To be an effective listener, students must be taught to stop talking, stop the chatter in our minds, stop anticipating what we think the speaker will say next, and stop anticipating what we will say in response (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Social awareness is the skill that students must be taught to recognize and interpret.

Other people’s emotions occur while the interaction is taking place (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). According to the SECD standards, teaching these skills allows Kansas citizens to gain understanding of cultural issues and create a pathway for having respect

for human dignity and differences (KSDE, n.d.-c). Interpersonal skills allow Kansas citizens to demonstrate “communication and social skills to interact effectively and to develop and maintain positive relationships and to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts” (KSDE, n.d.-c, p. 2). Relationship management is a component of social competence and relies on the skills of self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Relationship management is a person’s ability to use their self-awareness of their own emotions and those of others to have successful interactions with others (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Relationship management is also the ability to bond with other people over time (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). People that learn to be skilled relationship managers have the ability to connect with a variety of different people, even if they do not personally like them (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Some of the most difficult and stressful situations that people face are at work (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Loss of productivity can occur when people lack the skills to acknowledge and resolve conflict in constructive and successful ways (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). “I would argue that in these evidence-based times the broad acceptance of social teachings as core to every student’s development depends, in large measure, on how seriously we consider the process of social emotional learning itself” (Winner, n.d.-c, p. 4).

The core beliefs from KSDE (n.d.-c) explaining why social-emotional learning and character development are important include the following concepts:

- Personal management and relationship skills are vital in all aspects of learning and of life.

- Students are most able to act in respectful and responsible ways when they have learned and practiced a range of social, emotional and character development skills.
- Effective social, emotional and character development skills support academic achievement in students and constructive engagement by staff, families and communities.
- Students learn best in a respectful, safe and civil school environment where adults are caring role models.
- Bullying/Harassment Prevention and safe school initiatives are most sustainable when embedded systemically in whole school Social, Emotional, and Character Development (SECD) programming. (p. 1)

Winner (n.d.-c) pointed out that traditionally current education systems and policy architects struggle to take the notion of actively teaching social and emotional skills seriously. Winner (n.d.-c) posited that if educators and researchers continue to refer to social-emotional skills as non-cognitive that this implies an “off the cuff” or “no thinking needed” process that does not deserve our educational “time, attention, or fiscal dollars” (p. 3). If educational systems continue to emphasize and focus on only raising academic scores, in an era of hard-to-find funding for learning, and social-emotional skills are referred to as “non-cognitive” then school leaders and policy makers may not set aside funds for this important learning (Winner, n.d.-c, p. 3).

Researchers have discovered that assessing social skills competencies in early childhood programs can help educators and parents predict the likelihood of many outcomes including high school graduation rates, achievement of college degrees,

securement of full-time employment as young adults, living in public housing or receipt of public assistance, having a juvenile detention record, or an adult arrest record (Bornstein, 2015). “Children who scored high on social skills were four times as likely to graduate from college than those who scored low.” (Bornstein, 2015, p. 1) Bornstein (2015) made a strong case for investing in social-emotional learning:

Studies suggest that if we want many more children to lead fulfilling and productive lives, it is not enough for schools to focus exclusively on academics. Indeed, one of the most powerful and cost-effective interventions is to help children develop core social and emotional strengths like self-management, self-awareness, and social awareness—strengths that are necessary for students to fully benefit from their education, and success in many other areas of life. (p. 2)

College and Career Readiness

KSDE (n.d.-c), suggested that teaching the SECD model standards contributed to the college and career readiness success of Kansas students. To be college and career ready, students must have well developed social-emotional, personal development, and character development skills that contribute to successful academic, vocational, and individual success. KSDE (n.d.) described college and career ready students as having these characteristics:

- They demonstrate character in their actions by treating others as they wish to be treated and giving their best effort.
- They assume responsibility for their thoughts and actions.
- They demonstrate a growth mindset and continually develop cognitively, emotionally and socially.

- They exhibit the skills to work independently and collaboratively with efficiency and effectiveness.
- They strive for excellence by committing to hard work, persistence and internal motivation.
- They exhibit creativity and innovation, critical thinking and effective problem solving.
- They use resources, including technology and digital media, effectively, strategically capably and appropriately.
- They demonstrate an understanding of other perspectives and cultures.
- They model the responsibility of citizenship and exhibit respect for human dignity. (p. 1)

Bradberry and Greaves (2009) found that emotional intelligence and understanding are not typically taught in schools, that students enter the workforce with academic skills but often lack the ability to manage their emotions while navigating life's challenges, that effective decision making requires greater skills than just factual or academic knowledge, that relying on self-awareness and emotional control when faced with difficulties and that humans experience emotional reactions to every experience in life, whether they notice the emotions or not. According to Bradberry and Greaves (2009), 90% of people identified as high performers in their respective careers also have a high emotional intelligence. Conversely, only 20% of low performers are identified with a high emotional intelligence. In addition, researchers have discovered that employees, across all industries, with higher emotional intelligence make more money, an average of \$29,000 more, than their peers with low emotional intelligence (Bradberry

& Greaves, 2009). “The link between EQ and earnings is so direct that every point increase in EQ adds \$1,300 to an annual salary” (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, pp. 21-22). Having a foundation of self-awareness is so important that 83% of employees with self-awareness skills are identified as top performers, while 2% of bottom performers have high self-awareness (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Researchers continue to add to the growing body of literature that points to increased economic and societal return on investment for SEL programming in schools (Belfield et al. 2015).

According to the Collaborative for Social, and Emotional-Learning (CASEL, 2013), SEL is a dynamic process through which humans build skills to effectively manage themselves and their relationships with others (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). “Self-management, including the ability to focus attention, resist distractions, and regulate emotions is a fundamental skill that undergirds all academic learning” (Zinsser et al 2013, p. 2). Zinsser et al. (2013) reported that “children’s learning is tied to their emotional state” (p. 2). Because learning is an inherently a social collaboration between the teacher and student, both parties must use their SEL skills to complete lessons (Denham, Brown, & Domitrovich, 2010). It is important for educators and administrators to understand that children’s SEL competencies assist with preparing them to master the demands of classroom, engage in the learning process, and therefore benefit from academic instruction (Denham et al., 2010). Ultimately, developing SEL skills prepares students for a successful life after K-12 education as they begin careers and contribute to our society as productive citizens (Zinsser et al., 2013).

The CASEL Guide (CASEL, 2013) identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies that are critical for student's success not only in school but also in work and life. These include:

- Self-awareness. The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior.
- Self-management. The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations, and to set and work toward personal and academic goals.
- Social awareness. The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- Relationship skills. The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups, including the skills to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.
- Responsible decision-making. The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others. (p. 9)

Researchers have reported that students with higher SEL competencies are successful building positive peer relationships, are more positive about attending school, and generally have better grades and overall academic achievement (Raver & Knitzer, 2002). Mastery of SEL competencies prepares students for success in the areas of social-

cognitive development, academic achievement, school readiness, and adjustment to the school environment (Denham et al., 2010). Because aggressive behavior can increase during the elementary school years (Aber, Brown, & Jones, 2003), providing a foundation of SEL competencies from a young age is very important and educators are cautioned to understand that “SEL is a *process* of acquiring a set of skills or competencies, not the skills themselves” (Zinsser et al, 2013, p. 2). This process is established in the relationships children have with their partners including parents, peers, and teachers (Zinsser et al, 2013).

Increasingly, researchers have identified teachers as having an essential role in actively teaching SEL skills and competencies to their students (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser, 2012). Social-emotional teaching characterizes a variety of purposeful and planned or naturally occurring opportunities that teach and promote SEL in student’s education (Zinsser, Denham, & Curby, 2013).

The convergence of research demonstrating the importance of SEL for children’s school and life success and the role that teachers and schools can play in SEL is likely to provide a context that encourages administrators and education policy-makers to include SEL in their state’s learning standards. (Zinsser et al., 2013, p. 2)

Zinsser et al., (2013) reported that 9 states have free-standing standards for social and emotional development at the preschool level, but only three states have free-standing standards at the K-12 level. Regarding implementation of SEL standards, there is a lack of quality and inclusiveness with the core academic curriculum that limits effective implementation of SEL standards. The most debilitating to the successful

implementation of system-wide SEL standards is the lack of alignment between birth to pre-school and K-12 standards in the defining and teaching of the SEL standards. It is recommended that states establish fully aligned SEL standards ranging from preschool through high school (CASEL, 2013). This allows states to “create a common language and to establish progressive, developmentally appropriate expectations for children’s social and emotional learning that will assist educators and parents in preparing children for success in a social world” (Zinsser et al., 2013, p. 3).

Due to the emerging trend toward more global preschool through early elementary school SEL integration and alignment, Zinsser et al. (2013), encouraged school districts around the United States to not only align and integrate SEL standards pre-K-12, but to consider SEL standards throughout all areas of curriculum development, selection of professional development for teachers, assessments, and evaluations. When states include SEL standards with other academic learning standards, education leaders are communicating to stakeholders that the SEL competencies are important and valued and are a priority in the state’s educational system (Zinsser et al., 2013). Moreover, SEL standards help state educational leaders clearly define the meaning of a student prepared for life after K-12 education, and for social and behavioral expectations, contributing to a positive school climate and culture (Zinsser et al., 2013). When standards are clearly defined and developmentally appropriate throughout pre-K-12 education, using a common framework and grounded in research, the message becomes implanted in educational systems (Zinsser et al., 2013). In addition, researchers have provided evidence that when schools adopt high quality standards, their students have greater academic achievement (Finn, Julian, & Petrilli, 2016).

Zinsser et al. (2013) recognized Pennsylvania and Illinois as innovative states that have invested greatly in the establishment of SEL standards for their respective states. In both states, the SEL standards are not offered as an independent set of standards, but are included with all other subject areas (Zinsser et al., 2013). In addition, both Pennsylvania and Illinois not only acknowledge each of the SEL standards core competencies in their standards, but also use consistent SEL descriptive terminology throughout student's age ranges maintaining developmental appropriateness of the SEL skills (Zinsser et al., 2013). Altogether, these combined components of SECD programs give student's access to personal and community resources so that they feel like valued members of their community which develops higher intrinsic motivation to succeed (Greenberg et al., 2003). The result is increased academic performance, more use of positive self-care behaviors, and increased engagement in positive displays of citizenship (Greenberg et al., 2003).

Creation of the KS SECD Model Standards

Sue Kidd, Kansas Character Development Initiative Coordinator for the Kansas Department of Education, along with Meg Wilson, Principal at Hoisington High School, accepted the positions of co-chairs of the Kansas Social Emotional Character Development Standards in 2009 (personal communication, December 7, 2016). According to Beth Hufnagel (personal communication, November 21, 2016), SECD committee member, the initiative was inspired by the events in the book *Our Boys* by Joe Drape. Kidd reported that in 2010 a federal grant was secured under the Safe Schools Initiative to develop the KS SECD standards (personal communication, December 7, 2016). A committee was formed and members attended monthly meetings to develop

the KS SECD standards in Topeka, KS (Kidd, personal communication, December 7, 2016).

In 2012, the KS SECD committee presented the proposal for the SECD standards to the KS State Board of Education and the standards were adopted in April, 2012 (Kidd, personal communication, December 7, 2016). Hufnagel reported that there were certain characteristics important to the committee and to the state board of education. These included but were not limited to allowing individual school districts to have local control of the implementation of the standards reflecting the local community's individual values and principles. The KS BOE did not mandate the implementation of the KS SECD model standards, but rather hoped they would serve as a guide or blueprint for individual school districts (Hufnagel, personal communication, November 21, 2016). The committee envisioned that the KS SECD model standards would have to be supported by administration at every level in each district and that teaching of the KS SECD model standards would become part of the local school district's culture and core values (Hufnagel, personal communication, November 21, 2016). The KS SECD model standards were never intended to be a prescribed program or curriculum or thrust onto the plate of school counselors for implementation and support. The KS SECD model standards were intended to be taught, woven into the academic curriculum throughout the day, and not presented as a separate or individual curriculum component (Kidd, personal communication, December 7, 2016). The KS SECD committee members offered coaching cadres and presented the KS SECD model standards at numerous summer conferences and academies around the state of Kansas and at the Character Education conference in St. Louis, Missouri (Hufnagel, personal communication, November 21,

2016). According to Hufnagel, the KS SECD model standards align with the Rose Standards that were passed by the KS legislature in May 2014 (personal communication, November 21, 2016). According to Durlak et al., (2011), the positive effects of SEL programming are reduced without quality implementation.

Summary

The educational leaders and the stakeholders in Kansas have spoken and have committed to not only providing an academic foundation for Kansas students, but also have committed to the importance of providing a SECD education to Kansas student as well (KSDE, 2012). The benefits of providing Kansas students with an education with elements of SECD are vast and supported by extensive research. By understanding Kansas elementary teachers' lived experiences with the content in the KS SECD Model Standards, school leaders can then begin to design effective professional development and implementation strategies to prepare Kansas students for life. Chapter 3 includes an explanation of the study methods, research design, and details about how the study was conducted.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this study was to investigate KS elementary teachers' phenomenological experiences with teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. This chapter is an explanation of the methodology including an explanation of the research design, the researcher's perspective, a description of the selection of participants, and a description of measurement and data collection procedures. This chapter also include an overview of the analysis and synthesis of both data sets, the researcher's role, limitations, and a summary of the chapter.

Research Design

The study was a phenomenological research design. The most basic form of research, the phenomenological research design, describes the phenomena in our world (Lunenburg and Irby, 2008). According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008):

The phenomena described are basic information, actions, behaviors, and changes of phenomena; but always the description is about what the phenomena looks like from the perspective of the researcher and the participants in the research; it is not about how the phenomena function. (pp. 89-90)

The purpose of phenomenological research is to “investigate the meaning of the lived experience of people to identify the core essence of human experience or phenomena as described by research participants” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 33).

A twentieth-century philosopher, Edmund Husserl, is considered the father of phenomenological research (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Husserl believed that the researcher could study an experience from the individual's perspective (as cited in

Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Husserl concluded that the researcher “could approximate those experiences through intuiting and rigorous examination of the subjects, objects, or people’s lived experiences, behaviors, or actions” (as cited in Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 90). Husserl concluded that the researcher could observe “subjective experience, essential realities, and insights into a person’s motivations and actions” (as cited in Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 90). When the researcher interprets the phenomena, the researcher can “inform, support, or challenge policy, procedures, and actions in society and in organizations” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 90).

A phenomenological researcher attempts to clarify specific details and recognize “phenomena through the eyes of the participants” (Lunenburg and Irby, 2008, p. 90). The researcher offers comprehensive and meaningful descriptions of the phenomenon and may be collected via interviews, focus groups, and participant observations (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Although phenomenological research has been likened to other forms of qualitative research, it is more closely related to descriptive research and is used to describe rather than explain (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

“The phenomenological process starts with the researcher focusing on a phenomenon or lived experience that is an abiding concern” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 32). Next, “the researcher reflects on essential themes that constitute the nature of the lived experience” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 32). Finally, “the researcher writes a description of the phenomenon, maintaining a strong relationship to the topic of inquiry” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 32). Phenomenology requires the researcher to not only describe the experience but also to interpret the meaning of the experience (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

This study used two methods. One was the participant-direct observation method. The participant-observation method involves the use of the five senses, setting, people, occurrences, and meaning of what was observed (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). This method examines the “intricacies of the interactions and relationships of individuals ultimately investigating the phenomena of this” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 92). The observation is conducted onsite with the researcher conducting “systematic observation and documentation of the phenomena in its usual setting or location” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 93). The second method was a focus group which was scheduled after the observational data was collected. The focus group is a “form of interview, but with a group” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 92). The focus group “focuses on data generated via observation and communication between and among participants” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 92). Generally, the focus group protocol starts with more generalized questions and narrows the questions to more specific questions. The focus group questions consist of about ten questions (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), it is ideal for the researcher to start the research project without any preconceived hypotheses. However, Lunenburg and Irby (2008) acknowledged that it is nearly impossible that a researcher will be exempt from any preconceived notions, paradigms, purposes, or hypothesis. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) advised researchers to admit their own perspective in the study.

Researcher's Perspective

As a school counselor, the researcher believes that social-emotional learning and character development are essential to students' success, as preparation for a successful life. As a member of student intervention team, consulting with students, teachers, and

parents, and serving students through individual and group counseling, the researcher has come to believe that social-emotional learning and character development skills build a strong foundation for the ability to learn academically, to develop positive peer and family relationships, to development a positive self-concept, to learn valuable personal problem solving skills, and to set and reach goals. During the No Child Left Behind era, 2001-2011, schools narrowed their focus to building academic competence in reading and mathematics, leaving little time to focus on and teach social-emotional learning and character development (Kathy Fitzmaurice, personal communication, October 1, 2017). During the same era, educators reported more incidents of bullying, more students with suicidal ideation or attempts, more mental health issues, increased maladaptive behaviors that disrupted the learning environment, and decreased teacher satisfaction (Kathy Fitzmaurice, personal community, October 1, 2017). The researcher fully supports the Kansans CAN initiative and the re-focusing of the importance of a balanced approach to educating Kansas students through social-emotional learning and character development. The researcher is aware that her support of the Kansas CAN initiative could introduce bias into the study. Every attempt was made to be objective when collecting and analyzing the data to avoid bias.

Selection of Participants

There is one population for sampling, referred to as Elementary School A. Each part of the study was purposeful. The observational data was collected by the researcher acting in her role of school counselor as part of the school's annual school improvement plan. All K-5 classrooms, a total of 21 classrooms, were observed in the observational data collection. Participants for the observational data collection were selected because

they are employed as KS elementary teachers and they have received pre-service training on the KS SECD standards. Next, all K-5 elementary classroom teachers, from elementary school A, were invited to voluntarily participate in the focus group. The voluntary participants were solicited via email. This email solicitation for voluntary participants is included in appendix D. Eight teachers volunteered to participate in the focus group. Table 6 offers a profile of the participants.

Table 6

Profile of Focus Group Participants

Grade Level	# of Sections	Participant #	Years ^a
K	3	5	1
K	3	7	6
1	3	6	19
2	3	8	32
3	4	2	23
3	4	4	10
4	4	N/A	N/A
5	4	1	37
5	4	3	11

Note: ^a Years = Years of Teaching Experience

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), it is ideal for the researcher to have developed trust and positive rapport with participants. Participants from the focus group portion of this study were selected based on their acceptance of an invitation from the researcher to share their opinions, beliefs, and perspectives about teaching the content in the KS SECD model standards. Participation in the focus group was voluntary and respected as autonomous persons with caution for beneficence and justice. Participants were told that they would not be identified in the study.

Measurement

The researcher collected evidence through classroom observations in every K-5 classroom in Elementary School A, approximately every two weeks, for approximately 5 minutes, for five months. The researcher attempted to determine if teachers are consistently teaching the skills detailed in the content of the KS SECD model standards to answer research question one. The researcher designed a Google Form to collect the observational data. The researcher assigned a pseudonym to each class so that individual teachers were not identified on the form. The observational form was designed to capture evidence that teachers displayed while teaching the content in the KS SECD model standards. The researcher compiled the list of 13 categories that attempted to summarize the main content contained in the KS SECD Model Standards. The summary of the content of the KS SECD Model Standards produced the following 13 categories: character virtues, clear expectations, caring versus hurtful relationships, active listening skills, references to bullying, bystanders, tattling versus reporting, executive function skills, individual roles and responsibilities in the school, personal problem solving, emotional intelligence, stress management, social skills, and references to a caring community. These categories are a summary of the standards and may not be exclusive to only one standard. For example, character virtues is clearly under the standards of character development and may refer to virtues such as respect, self-discipline, or responsibility. But, character virtues may also be included under the standards of personal development when related to emotions such as empathy which moves a person to show compassion or when a student is reflecting on their personal behavior may use the virtues such as perseverance, responsibility, or respect to describe their choices or

behavior. Character Virtues may also fall under the standard of social development such as using resiliency to bounce back from an adverse event when the student feels sad.

Table 7 demonstrates how the researcher summarized the content of the standards into 13 categories and included in the content in the KS SECD Model Standards.

Specific language and descriptions were assigned that teachers had been exposed to in pre-service professional development training. Each of these language descriptions and teacher prompts were assigned abbreviations to assist the researcher to record the observations in an efficient manner. These tools are included in the appendix G and H. The researcher, in her role as a school counselor, tallied words or teacher prompts that described support, teaching, or modeling of the skills in the content of the KS SECD Model Standards as they were observed in the natural setting of the classrooms. For example, if a teacher prompted “what is expected” to the class, the researcher had to decide what skills she was teaching from the 12 categories that summarized the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. If she was speaking to the whole class, the researcher may have interpreted this to mean that she is asking the class to think about situational awareness and adjust their bodies and level engagement. The researcher may have coded the categories of clear expectations as the teacher was asking the students to think about the situational expectations of the moment and make adjustments to themselves accordingly. The researcher may have coded the social skills category because it was interpreted that she was asking the students to think about themselves and how they are interacting with one another socially and to match their actions with current expectations. If the teacher was talking to an individual student to redirect unexpected behaviors in the moment, the researcher may have coded clear expectations as she was asking the student

to adjust behavior, emotional intelligence or executive function because she was asking to student for self-regulation, or social skills because the student was being disruptive to the group and was not matching behavior with current classroom learning expectations.

The researcher hosted a focus group with the voluntary participants after data collections from the observational data were complete. Questions for the focus group were formulated from the original research questions, with some follow-up questions added to provide clarity to the responses from the participants. The focus group questions are described as FG Q denoting focus group question and FU Q indicating a follow up question tied to the original focus group question. The focus group questions (FG Qs) and follow up focus group questions (FU FG Qs) are:

FG Q1. Tell me about your experiences with teaching the content in the KS Social-Emotional Character Development Model Standards?

FU1 FG Q1. Anyone else have a similar experience?

FU2 FG Q1. Any ideas where the renewed emphasis is coming from and do you feel that the renewed interest is coming from your school, your district, or from the state level?

FG Q2. Describe how the content of the KS Social-Emotional Character Development Model Standards has had an effect on your classroom environment?

FU1 FGQ2. What social-emotional learning skills do you think your students are lacking in your classroom?

FU2 FGQ2. Do you feel learning the social-emotional skills and their improvement with those skills has given your students the ability to better access the academic curriculum?

FU3 FGQ2. What differences do you see in your students when comparing the classes of students prior to the last 2-3 years with classes of students within the last 2-3 years?

FG Q3. How should the content of the KS Social-Emotional Character Development Model Standards be delivered in KS elementary schools?

FG Q4. Describe what factors or conditions contribute KS elementary teachers' delivery of the content of the Social-Emotional Character Development model standards.

FG Q5. Describe what barriers prohibit you from teaching the KS Social-Emotional Character Development Model Standards.

FG Q6. Describe the effects of teaching the content of the KS Social-Emotional Character Development Model Standards on student academic success?

FU1 FG Q6. Is there anything else that anyone would like to add at this time? The focus group was designed to learn about the phenomenological experiences and perceptions of KS elementary teachers about the KS SECD Model Standards. All participants were assigned a pseudonym and were not identified in any way.

Data Collection Procedures

Permission from the large suburban school district was solicited and permission was granted on 10/27/17. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was completed on 9/27/17 and granted from Baker University on 11/15/17. The researcher submitted an application to conduct research to the large suburban school district's assessment coordinator. The researcher detailed the purpose, methodology, and participant selection for the study in the request to conduct research application. The

researcher agreed to use pseudonyms for both data sets and to refrain from identifying the participants, school, and school district in any way.

In her role as a school counselor the researcher observed elementary classroom teachers' use of the content in the KS SECD Model standards. The observations in the classrooms were in approximately 5-minute increments, approximately every 2 weeks. The observational data collection form is included in appendix G. The data was collected for the school's annual school improvement plan. The observational data were not intended to be evaluative in any manner for the teachers, but to give the school a baseline measure of how teachers were using information presented to them at a pre-service professional development training on integrating SECD content skills while delivering the academic curriculum. These data can guide the school team in planning future professional development for the KS SECD Model Standards. These data also helps the school locally measure their students' social-emotional growth. Each classroom was observed approximately once every two weeks in approximately 5-minute increments for a total of five months. Once approvals were granted from the school district on 10/27/17 and the IRB approval was received from Baker University on 11/15/17, the researcher accessed the data on Google Forms.

Once approval was granted from the school district on 10/27/17 and the IRB approval was received from Baker University on 11/15/17, voluntary participants were solicited by email to participate in the follow-up focus group. Eight participants agreed to participate in a voluntary focus group. The solicitation email is included in Appendix D. A disclaimer was issued to participants making them aware that a pseudonym would be assigned and that their identity would not be shared with any person or organization

beyond the researcher and no professional harm would come to them as a result of the answers they provided for the focus group. This disclaimer was acknowledged by participants when they signed the informed consent in appendix E.

The researcher welcomed the participants and explained that the focus group would be videotaped, and notes would be taken. The informed consent was read and reviewed and signed copies of the informed consent were collected by the researcher. The researcher encouraged the participants to try to be relaxed and assured there were no incorrect responses. Participants were reminded they would not be identified in any way. A school counseling intern, trained by the researcher, tracked and recorded participant numbers as they answered the questions. The informed consent provided to focus group participants is in appendix E.

Observational Part of the Study

The researcher studied the KS SECD Model Standards and attempted to condense them into the following categories to summarize the main ideas of the content in the Standards. The KS SECD Model Standards contain an abundance of content and many of the skills are grouped together under the various headings. The researcher used the following categories to summarize the main content of the Standards. Table 7 summarizes the 12 categories summarizing the content in the KS SECD Model Standards and examples of language that teachers used to prompt students, teach, model, or reinforce the skills detailed in the KS SECD Model Standards.

Table 7

Researcher Created Categories of the Skills Contained in the KS SECD Model Standards with Examples of Prompting or Language that Teachers May Have Used to Support the Skills

Category	Example 1	Example 2
Character Virtues	Respect, Self-Discipline	Empathy, Responsibility
Clear Expectations	What is expected?	Find the green zone
Caring vs. Hurtful Relationships	Help a neighbor	Be kind
Active Listening	Are you in the green zone?	Show me Whole Body Listening
Bullying & Bystanders-Tattling vs. Reporting	Be kind	Be respectful
Executive Function Skills	Use of the working clock	Use of the WOW Binder
Individual Roles and Responsibilities	Student Jobs	Help a Neighbor
Personal Problem Solving	What is expected?	What is our group plan?
Emotional Intelligence	Silly, sad, mad	Zones of Regulation
Personal Strengths & Weaknesses	Do your best	Help a neighbor
Stress Management	Brain Breaks	Use of Mind Yeti
Social Skills	Space Invader	Rock Brain
Caring Community	Watch D.O.G.	Parent Volunteer

Note: This list of examples is not all-inclusive and offers a sample from classroom observations.

RQ 1. What are KS elementary teachers experiences with teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards?

Observational data were collected to determine the extent and frequency that KS elementary teachers were teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards from the information as presented to them at the pre-service staff training. Focus group data was also used to answer research question one.

Focus Group Part of the Study

RQ 2. How has teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards affected the classroom environment?

RQ 3. How should the content of the KS SECD Model Standards be delivered in KS elementary schools?

RQ 4. What factors or conditions contribute to KS elementary teachers' ability to deliver the content of the KS SECD Model Standards?

RQ 5. What barriers prohibit KS elementary teacher from teaching the KS SECD Standards?

RQ 6. What are the effects of teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards on students' academic success?

Questions for the focus group interview were formulated based on the research questions after the observational data was collected. Participants were informed that any information provided would not reflect negatively upon their professional reputation and they would not be identified individually by name or other means. The researcher read the informed consent and collected signed informed consents from participants. The informed consent is included in appendix E. Participants had the opportunity to answer every question but not all participants responded to every question. Although the researcher encouraged a free exchange of ideas and responses, the group of inexperienced focus group participants coupled with an inexperienced researcher facilitator, were polite and reserved giving concise answers. The focus groups were videotaped and transcribed by the researcher. A school counseling intern, trained by the researcher, tracked the participants as they spoke. The intern only tracked who responded to each question and

in what order. The researcher took notes during the responses. A sample of the tracking tool used by the school counseling intern to track participants as they shared information is included in appendix I.

Analysis and Synthesis of Data

To analyze and interpret the data gathered from the observational interview, the researcher followed the process below:

1. The researcher recorded observed language prompts used by teachers at Elementary School A. Staff at Elementary School A had received training during a pre-service professional development training.
2. Once the data was collected, an Excel spreadsheet was created with the headings described above. Then the researcher tallied the responses collected for each heading group.

To analyze and interpret the data gathered in the focus group, the researcher used the following process:

1. The researcher transcribed and summarized the interview within two days of the end of the focus group.
2. The researcher created an Excel spreadsheet with the summary headings from the content of the KS SECD Model Standards described above and listed in the appendix J. The researcher also added additional headings as common themes emerged from the transcript of the focus group. These themes on the Excel spreadsheet were color coded by each research question or follow up question, so that visibly emerging themes were easily identifiable. A copy of this Excel spreadsheet is provided in the appendix J.

3. The researcher color coded the main focus group interview questions and follow-up questions, then coded the response content from the focus group by color into the heading categories. This allowed the researcher to observe and analyze common trends and themes that emerged from the respondents and is included in Appendix J. The transcript was analyzed and amended several times in an attempt to accurately capture the respondents' answers.
4. The researcher offered member checks to focus group participants, but none of the participants volunteered for member checking.

The observational data and the focus group transcripts were examined thoroughly by the researcher and coded for emerging themes and concepts. According to Saldana (2016), "A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3). For example if one focus group participant that they felt stressed out due to the many responsibilities required of an elementary teacher and another respondent responded they felt there was never enough time to get all the things required of them completed in a day, the researcher may have coded these perceptions as overwhelmed or lack of time. Data from both data sets were cross examined to attempt to analyze if the observational data and the subjective data from the focus group were aligned. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012) systematic coding forces a researcher to not only examine what they remember from the interview, but also forces the researcher to examine any data that might modify the researchers' ideas or help the researcher indicate when and how their ideas might be true or false.

Researcher's Role

In a phenomenological study, the researcher attempts to explore the data seeking depth and complexity in the responses; therefore, the researcher is an active participant in the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The researcher assumes the role of student, “someone seeking to understand and learn from the experiences of the research participants” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 74). “Qualitative research is primarily subjective in approach as it seeks to understand human behavior and reasons that govern such behavior. Researchers have the tendency to become subjectively immersed in the subject matter in this type of research method” (Explorable, 2009, p. 1). The researcher acknowledges that her personal beliefs and perceptions regarding teaching SECD may be biases and attempts were intentionally made to reduce or eliminate that personal bias. The researcher was careful to only record what was observed during the observations. When coding the focus group, the researcher only made inferences with data analysis that was contained within the focus group transcript. According to Creswell (2014), it is important for the researcher to clarify and explain their personal bias that they may bring to the study. “This self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers and is a core characteristic of qualitative research” (Creswell, 2014, p. 202).

The researcher attempted to provide credibility that would contribute to the trustworthiness of the data (DeVault, 2017). According to DeVault (2017), trustworthiness of the data, through credibility, is apparent with “prolonged engagement, persistent observations, triangulation, referential adequacy, peer debriefing, and member checks (p. 1). The researcher attempted to provide triangulation by looking for commonalities or differences between the observational data and the focus group data.

Prolonged engagement and persistent observations was satisfied as the observations extended over a period of five months. The researcher offered member checking opportunities to focus group participants, but none of the participants volunteered for member checking.

The researcher explained her role to the participants of the focus group to encourage honesty and open dialogue and to help the participants gain understanding of the type of conversation desired for the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The objective of the researcher's role in the study and of the responsive interviewing approach was to allow the researcher to guide the respondents' thought process and responses to evoke complete responses without having an influence on what the responses might be, so that "encouraging conversation, reacting to what interviewees say, and asking detailed questions to follow up initial answers" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 72). The researcher had to be cautious of potential personal bias. The researcher is a school counselor who teaches the KS SECD standards as part of her required job duties. Since the researchers' personal belief about teaching the KS SECD standards is favorable, it is possible that the researcher's personal bias may enter into interpretation of the focus group data.

Limitations

Limitations are factors that may influence and have an effect on the findings or the interpretation of the study's findings and are out of the researcher's control (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). While it is impossible for the researcher to prohibit all study limitations, it is important for the researcher to acknowledge potential limitations to avoid misrepresentation of the study's findings (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). This is not a

complete representative distribution of the population of all elementary teachers in the entire state of Kansas.

The researcher in her role as a school counselor, as part of the school's school improvement plan, may not capture complete analysis of the observational data. The researcher was not able to fully capture the extent of how often elementary teachers are actually teaching these skills because the observations were brief. Self-reported data in the focus group section of the study cannot be independently verified. It is possible that the focus group data can be biased or subjective reports from participants can be exaggerated.

The researcher is not an experienced researcher and conducting the focus group was her first experience with this work. Although care and consideration were given to follow all recommended procedures with administering focus groups, it is possible that because of the inexperience of the researcher did not fully capture every possible answer to the research questions. Additionally, the inexperience of the researcher with coding may have contribute to an inability to fully capture all relevant themes that emerged.

Summary

This chapter provided a description of the methodology and design used in conducting this research. Data collection procedures and procedures and policies for granting permission for the study were explained in detail. The limitations of the study were explained to caution the reader to potential parts of the study that were not able to be controlled by the researcher. The results of the data analysis are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 contains interpretations of the data and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 4

Results

In Chapter 3, the reader learned about how the study was conducted. Chapter 4 explains the study's results related to KS elementary teachers' phenomenological experiences with teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. The primary purpose of the study was to examine Kansas (KS) elementary teachers' phenomenological experiences with teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. This study involved KS elementary teachers who worked in a large suburban school district, in a K-5 grade building, during the 2017-2018 school year. This school is referred to as Elementary School A. All identifying information for the school, district, and participants has been removed or assigned an anonymous identifier to protect the anonymity of all parties. Two data sets were collected and utilized to attempt to answer the six research questions. One data set included observational data that had been collected by the researcher included in her job duties as a school counselor and as a part of the school's annual school improvement plan. The purpose of this collection was to help the building leadership team determine if KS elementary teachers were teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards. These data were collected in all K-5 classrooms during brief visits, typically about five minutes, and continued approximately every two weeks over a period of five months. Classrooms were assigned a pseudonym to maintain anonymity. The data were not used in any way to evaluate teaching.

The second set of data was collected using a focus group of voluntary participants from one KS elementary school, Elementary School A, and were used to describe KS elementary teachers' lived experiences with teaching the content in the KS SECD Model

Standards. The email solicitation for voluntary focus group participants was sent on November 21, 2017 and the focus group was conducted on December 12, 2017. Eight elementary teachers volunteered to participate in the focus group. Focus group participants were informed that they would remain anonymous and would not be identified in any manner.

The results of the study are described in this chapter. The results are separated and ordered into findings related to the six research questions. Each section below describes major findings for either or both sets of data as described in Chapter 3 and 4. Finding 1 is a description of the results related to research question 1 and used observational data. Key trends that emerged related to the findings, and summaries of responses.

Finding 1. The results answered in this section are related to Finding 1 is related to the first research question, “What are KS elementary teachers’ experiences with teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards?” Based on the results from the observational data, there is evidence that KS elementary teachers are consistently teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. Based on the focus group data, teachers from Elementary School A describe their experiences with teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards. A comparison between the two data sets is included in Table 10. The observational data revealed that one hundred sixty-six responses were collected in observations, in all K-5 classrooms, for approximately 5 minutes, every two weeks. One thousand seventeen instances of teachers teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards were recorded. These results are summarized below.

Prior to collecting the observational data, the researcher studied the KS SECD Model Standards and summarized the content of the standards into 13 categories, outlined in Table 5. The observational data collected by the researcher in her role as a school counselor for the schools' annual school improvement plan. The observational data was based upon the researcher's own experienced interpretation of the actions of the teachers and the responses of the students. The researcher listened for certain words, used as prompts by classroom teachers, to facilitate an action or response from students. For example, in relation to the zones of regulation, particularly the prompt of green zone, a teacher might say "please come to the carpet and meet me in the green zone." By saying this, the teacher is prompting students not only to come to the carpet, but also to manage their emotional state. In addition, the teacher may be attempting to give a clear expectation to students about what is expected for their learning and the learning environment. For example, a common learning expectation is for student voices to be quiet, students to face the teacher, and students to track the teacher with their eyes to show they are engaged in listening and learning. Teachers have learned to teach students that when they are in the green zone they are displaying these productive learning behaviors. This combined set of behaviors may also be referred to as whole body listening. Another example would be that in pre-service professional development training, teachers have been taught to use the language of expected or unexpected to describe clear expectations, personal problem solving, social skills, or emotional or stress management states. These could also relate to KS SECD Character Development Standards A1 (K-2), A1 (3-5), B1 and

B3 (3-5) (KSDE, n.d.-c). Many of the skills described in the KS SECD Model Standards are not exclusive to only one category or standard but may have multiple meanings of implications depending on the context in which the teacher or students are in at the moment. Therefore, depending on the context of how the teacher was using the language, the teacher's intent may have been to offer a clear expectation, a redirection, or a prompt for personal problem solving. The researcher's responsibility was to decide the teacher's intent with the language they used and the context of what was happening in the classroom at the time. This process was subjective in nature and was interpreted by the researcher in the moment. For example, if the group became unruly and the teacher stopped teaching and asked the class "what is expected?" it could be interpreted that the teacher is asking the students to use situational awareness to reflect on their individual behaviors to contribute to the group working better for a productive learning environment. If the teacher was not talking to the group but to an individual student and asked "what is expected" she may have been attempting to redirect the student's behavior related to social skills, clear expectations, or emotional or stress management.

Context and what was happening at the time of observation contributed to the researcher's decision to tally the observation in certain areas. The researcher did not take notes describing the context but was more interested in frequency and record of instance rather than the specifics about the context. The researcher utilized a Google Form tool with the 13 categories summarized from the content in the KS SECD Model standards so information could be collected efficiently on

an IPAD. This observational collection tool is in appendix G. The researcher also created codes for common prompts that teachers' used to facilitate SECD learning. The codes are listed in appendix H.

The skills categories that were observed being taught the most are listed with examples of the language the teachers may have used included in the parentheses: clear expectations (expected/unexpected, zones of regulation, whole body listening), reference to character virtues (respect, responsibility, self-discipline, perseverance), active listening skills (zones of regulation, whole body listening, thinking eyes, expected/unexpected), executive function (working clock, get ready, do, done, wow binder), and emotional intelligence (zones of regulation, silly, sad, happy). The skills categories that were observed being taught the least included: bullying, bystanders and tattling versus reporting (empathy, kind, respect), personal strengths and weaknesses (do your best, help a neighbor), social skills (space invader, thank you, topic twister), caring versus hurtful relationships (help a neighbor, kind, helpful), and caring community (parent helper, watch dogs).

Emphasis on the importance of teaching the skills in the categories of reference to character virtues, clear expectation, emotional intelligence, and management of stress and emotional state appeared in both the observational data and the focus group data. Categories that did not align between the observational data and the focus group data included categories that had a high number of mentions in the focus group but low instances in the observational data. These categories included: caring community, social skills, personal problem solving, and caring versus hurtful relationships. Conversely, categories that had low

number of mentions but high instances in the observation included: executive function and active listening. This data informs us of the frequencies of the skills areas contained in the content of the KS SECD model standards. The data does not answer why some skillsets were used more than others. Since observations were only conducted in each of the 21 classrooms every two weeks for approximately 5 minutes, it may not offer an accurate snapshot of the frequency that teachers literally embed into their teaching across the school day. The researcher tallied not only mentions of the skills categories in the observational data, but also the focus group data. Table 8 illustrates the relationships between observed instances in the categories from the observational data set and mentions from the focus group data.

Table 8

*Comparison of Observations of SECD Skills Taught and Mentions of the Skills**During the Focus Group Discussion*

Category	Observed	Mentioned
Clear Expectations	275	9
Reference to Character Virtues	144	8
Active Listening Skills	134	3
Executive Function	104	2
Emotional Intelligence	92	8
Manage Stress/Emotional State	92	9
Individual Roles & Responsibilities	56	1
Personal Problem Solving	45	6
Caring Community	42	6
Caring vs. Hurtful Relationships	28	6
Social Skills	26	8
Personal Strengths/Weaknesses	13	1
Bullying, Bystanders/Tattling vs. Reporting	8	2

Participant 3, in the focus group, stated that prior to receiving some foundational professional development skills on explicitly teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards that she had assumed that SECD content and skills were taught via management of the classroom in more of an inferred manner. Participant 3 stated that when she first started teaching “I did not know that I would be responsible for teaching social-emotional learning. I thought we would teach academic skills and social-emotional learning would be taught as we managed the classroom.”

Participants 1, 4, and 8 indicated that there has been more emphasis on teaching the content in the SECD standards since approximately 2015.

Participant 1 responded “the last two or three years there has been more emphasis on social-emotional and character development than at any other time in my career.” Participant 8 agreed and said “In the last two or three years, we have had more professional development training and emphasis on helping us as classroom teachers teach the content of the standards to our students.” Participant 4 added “in the last two or three years we have been given a lot of in-services on how to support student’ social-emotional learning.” Participant 7 offered “learning about the content in the standards has really helped with my classroom management. I think our kids know how to manage themselves better.”

Participant 6 noted that she felt like teaching social-emotional learning was not emphasized previously, but suddenly it feels like it is another expectation. “All of a sudden it is like we are expected to know how to teach this and prior to the last few years, we have not had any training on how to do that.” Participant 5 agreed and answered that it suddenly feels like teachers are responsible for an additional content area. She said “even though it is probably a good thing, it can be overwhelming, at times.”

Participant 7 also reported that having a building-wide common language support the content of the SECD standards helped her students with self-regulation and also helped her manage her classroom more effectively. Participant 7 added that she felt like using the Zones of Regulation (Kuypers, 2011) resources helped build emotional intelligence and helped students manage

their stress and emotional states. This was verified by the observational data with 186 instances of content specified by the Zones of Regulation (Kuypers, 2011) being taught in the classroom. These observed instances of the Zones of Regulation (Kuypers, 2011) were observed taught in the categories of clear expectations with 82 instances, active listening with 48 instances, personal problem solving with one instance, emotional intelligence with 37 instances, and manage stress/emotional state with 18 instances.

A follow up question to focus group question one, “Anyone else having a similar experience?” participant 4 answered that in 2015 Kindergarten teachers were directed to remove all of their play equipment including kitchens, cars, and other toys, to allow for more time focusing on the academic standards. However, this directive only lasted a few years when the teachers were asked to bring back the play equipment and schedule purposeful play into their student’s schedules. Participant 4 stated “kids learning cooperation and working together and things like that are foundational skills that they need to support their academic learning.” Participant 1 said “students come to us and many of them do not have any of these skills and really if we are going to be able to teach them anything academic we have got to get them to be able to sit at their desk or follow directions.”

A follow up question to focus group question one “tell me about your experiences with the content in the KS SECD Model Standards,” asked teachers if they had ideas where the renewed emphasis on teaching SECD came from and if it was being driven by the local district, or from the state level. Participants 1-6 reported feeling overwhelmed with the added expectation of teaching SECD and

felt like the directive to teach SECD was coming from the Kansas CAN program.

Participant 4 stated:

All of a sudden the emphasis on these standards came out of nowhere. It is not something we have ever focused on before. We had to change our perspective, as a classroom teacher, to understand that now in addition to the academic curriculum, teaching social-emotional learning standards are also part of our jobs.

Although teachers acknowledged that teaching SECD is important, some felt that being asked to teach a whole new content area feels overwhelming at times.

Based on examination of both data sets, it is clear that KS elementary teachers are regularly teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards. With over 1,017 instances of evidence of teachers teaching the content of the standards in 166, approximately five minute, observations over a period of five months, it could be assumed that there could be multiple additional opportunities throughout the school day and school year that KS students may be taught the content of the KS SECD Model Standards as teachers are delivering the academic curriculum.

Based on the focus group interview, teachers from Elementary School A, feel like there has been more emphasis in the last 2-3 years regarding teaching SECD skills and that SECD skills are foundational for academic learning, but they do not always feel prepared to teach the skills in addition to the delivery of the academic curriculum due to lack of professional development in the area of

SECD. Teachers at Elementary School A, perceived that the added responsibility of teaching the SECD content area feels overwhelming at times.

Finding 2. Finding 2 is related to the second research question “How has teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards affected the classroom environment?”

This finding was addressed using focus group data. Several teachers answered that valuing the benefits of hosting weekly class meetings. Participants 2-5 and 8 responded that hosting regular class meetings gave students an opportunity to have a voice in their classroom and also to practice their social problem- solving skills. Participant 8 said, “It gives students the opportunity to practice some problem solving and brainstorm what we have learned so far and what we can do to solve and sort out our own problems.”

Participant 8 also acknowledged that class meetings supported the expected structures and norms of the classroom environment.

I think class meetings have helped a lot in my classroom environment. I think it gives kids the chance to be involved in setting the structures and norms for their classroom. It gives students the opportunity to practice problem solving and brainstorm what we have learned so far. We can learn to sort out our own problem.

Participant 2 added that if she did not host a class meeting, students would “ask for it.”

Participant 6 stated that more teachers would be willing to make time for teaching SECD if there was an expectation to have class meetings regularly scheduled and not randomly incorporated. She continued “The class meetings work better when we schedule it on a set schedule. If there is a set schedule, teachers are more likely to make

time for class meetings.” Participant 6 also said she felt like, to be effective, teachers had to teach these skills consistently.

Participants 3 and 7 responded that the building climate was better when more adults were teaching SECD and using a common language to describe the specified skills in the content of the KS SECD Model Standards. These participants answered that having a common language to teach and describe the content in the KS SECD Model Standards helped students build their personal problem-solving skills. Participant 3 said:

I think the overall climate in the building is better in the fact that, as a school, we all use the same language. It does not matter if you are in the classroom, in specials, or if you are dealing with some other staff member. We are teaching them the same way to solve problems and we are talking about the language of social-emotional learning the same way. I really think that has helped manage things a lot better.

Participant 1 offered that prior to conferences, she was working on a self-reflection activity and asked her class to share with her what they had learned so far in the school-year. She was surprised that her class agreed that all skills related to the content in the KS SECD Model Standards such as sharing, being responsible or respectful, being kind or safe. The teacher offered that her students “didn’t really bring up academic stuff.”

A follow up question to focus group question 2 was asked “What kinds of social emotional learning skills do you think your kids are lacking?” Participant 4 stated that her students generally had challenges with managing their emotions, particularly anger. “Anger, a lot of kids are really angry and then they might hit or push, or yell at their

peers. Then it is hard to do any academic learning when that sort of stuff is happening in the classroom.” Participant 5 answered that she recognizes selfishness in her students. “So many students just think about me, and they are lacking empathy for each other.” Participant 8 reported that she has observed that students generally have a hard time getting along and being kind to one another.

A second follow up question to focus group question 2 was asked “So do you feel like learning some of the social-emotional learning skills and the improvement of those skills has given your students the ability to better access the academic curriculum?” Participant 4 stated that teaching the content of the KS SECD standards serves as a foundation to feel safe and that they are part of a family. Participant 1 answered that if her students are worried about friendship problems, or if someone did not play with them at recess, or someone has hurt their feelings during the school day, then it is “hard to come into the classroom and learn math if they have not had the opportunity to solve those social problems first.”

A final follow up question to focus group question 2 was asked “What differences do you see in your classes comparing classes after teaching content in the KS SECD standards and from classes before teaching the content in the KS SECD standards?” Participants 2, 6, 7, and 8 said that they felt that the consistency of teaching the content in the KS SECD Model standards, along with the use of a common language, has helped their students handle social problem-solving in more positive and effective manners. Participant 6 reported that she perceived that her students felt that adults were fairer and that students are more aware of adult expectations. Participant 6 also said that she perceived that this helps her students feel less anxious:

It helps with everyone kind of being on the same page and how the students know the expectations. Maybe they are a little less anxious and maybe they think things seem a little fairer because we have been more consistent with stating our expectations.

Participant 2 noted that she has noticed an increased number of students that are lacking SECD skills coming into her classroom than in the prior 10 years. Participant 2 reported that she felt that she, personally, learned the SECD skills from her parents, but she is not certain all kids are learning these skills from their parents. Participants 2, 7, and 8 responded that many students have difficulty persevering through difficult or non-preferred tasks, regulating their emotions so that they can engage in academic learning, or forming positive peer-relationships. Participant 7 said:

I see a lot of my kids just give up or shut down when things get hard and it is like they have no grit or perseverance to really tackle things that maybe they do not like to do or it is challenging for them.

Participant 8 said “It is really hard to keep teaching the group if you have a couple of kids that are crying, or some leave the room, or some crawl under the desk.”

Participant 5 offered that if schools have the desire for their environments to be orderly, they must teach the content in the KS SECD Model Standards.

I think classroom teachers should teach these skills explicitly. I also think that teachers have to model the skills each and every day and embed this learning into the classroom. We have social problems and meltdowns and things that occur throughout the day, so you are not only teaching skills, but giving the students the

tools to handle these situations. This gives students the opportunity to practice these skills when things just inevitably come up during the school day.

Participants 4, 5, and 7 responded that they felt the skills related to the content of the KS SECD Model standards are important life skills. Participant 7 said “They cannot quit every time something gets difficult, or maybe it is not something that they prefer to do, or want to do, or is interesting to them. Life is tough, baby.”

Participants 5 and 7 answered focus group question two and said that they perceived that the directive for teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards came from the Kansas CAN Initiative. Participant 5 answered:

Well personally, I think a lot of this renewed emphasis on social-emotional learning has been supported by the new Kansas Can program. KSDE is telling us that along with graduation rates, individual plans of study, and test scores that teachers really need to focus on teaching and supporting those social-emotional learning skills.

Participants 8, 2, 6 and 3 reported the effectiveness of regularly scheduled class meetings to teach the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. Participant 6 reported that having a regularly scheduled time for class meetings and teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards was more effective than leaving this learning to random incident.

According to participant 6, “class meetings work better when we schedule it on a set schedule.” Participant 2 noted “if we do not have our class meeting, my students ask for it.” Participant 3 offered that she felt that using a common language that all adults in the building were using to teach and support students SECD skills was important for consistency and generalization of the skills.

Participants 1, 2, 3, and 6 offered favorable perceptions about the importance of teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards because of the impact they see on their classroom environment. Those impacts are an improved climate in the building, especially when it related to managing their anger and persevering through difficult or non-preferred tasks. Participant 4 reported “students have trouble managing their emotions. Anger, a lot of kids are really angry and then they might hit or push their peers. Then, it is hard to do any academic learning when that sort of stuff is happening in the classroom.” Participant 2 said that there seems to be more students entering KS elementary schools with these skills deficits. Participants 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8 reported that consistently teaching the content in the standards have improved and resulted in a positive benefit to their classroom environments. Participant 2 reported that students responded favorably to learning the content of the KS SECD Model Standards and “asked for it” if the teacher did not schedule the class meetings.

KS elementary teachers at Elementary School A appear to believe that the renewed emphasis on teaching the KS SECD Model Standards is a result of the Kansas CAN initiative. Participants appear to believe that class meetings that are regularly scheduled and offered consistently contribute to students’ increased awareness of expectations and a positive school climate. Teachers at Elementary School A perceive that teaching the content in the SECD standards provide a foundation for an orderly school environment and that their training that that taught them to use a building-wide common language was beneficial to building an orderly and positive school environment.

Participants in the focus group stated that they perceive that there is a growing number of students coming to school that have SECD skill deficits. Specific examples

reported were students' anger, selfishness, and inability to form positive peer relationships. However, participants acknowledged that after teaching the content of the SECD standards, they feel their students are generally less anxious, have an increased sense of fairness from adults and are more aware of adult expectations. Participants agreed that students appear to be invested in receiving the content of the SECD standards and cited examples of students asking for it and reporting about it in their self-reflections.

Finding 3. Finding 3 is related to research question 3. "How should the content of KS SECD Model Standards be delivered in KS schools?" was addressed by the focus group data. Participants offered a variety of opinions in response to this question. Participants 8 and 5 offered that they believe that the content in the KS SECD Model Standards should be part of the curriculum and delivered by classroom teachers. Participant 8 stated "If it is just left to our counselors or just left to randomness then our kids are not going to learn it. But, if the classroom teachers deliver it and it becomes part of the classroom culture, it will have a better effect on the outcome for our students." Participants 3 and 4 agreed that it should be "everyone's job" and not just the classroom teachers' responsibility to teach the content in the standards. Participant 6 answered that professional development training should be offered to all teachers and should be guaranteed across the state. Participant 6 stated "Teachers also need training on how to teach the standards and we also need resources to support it. Here at our school, we have Second Step, which is great, and we have been through other professional development training. But, who knows what other schools in Western Kansas are getting? So I think there needs to be some sort of guarantee that all kids are getting this type of training."

Participants 5 and 4 agreed that teaching the skills from the content in the SECD Standards is important, but having adults model the skills and working on those “in the moment” social problems help students build the skills and they are important life skills. Participant 4 described a boy in her classroom generalizing the skills he has learned to overcome his anger and frustration so that he could complete his work. “I saw him starting to use his breathing and that kind of helped him calm down. Then I heard him say to a peer that his brain was unzipped and he had to take a minute to zip it up before he could finish his work. I thought it was really great that he was not just getting angry and stopping.”

Participant 7 discussed the need for more collaboration among classroom teachers and more follow through with students. “I would love to be able to have the opportunity to hear more about these kids that struggle in those younger grades and how they are progressing as they get older. I think we need to do more of that and work together so that we can kind of see the fruits of our labor.

The main result that emerged from finding three was participant 3, 4, 5 and 8 agreed that all staff members should be responsible for delivering the content of the KS SECD Model Standards. Participants 3, 4 and 5 expressed the desire for more collaboration and ownership from all adults that work in the building. Participant 5 felt that adult modeling of the SECD skills that are embedded into the classroom environment allow for better generalization of the skills. Participant 4 gave an example of a boy generalizing the skills he had learned when he was angry about the difficulty of his work.

KS elementary classroom teachers from elementary school A support the idea that classroom teachers are responsible for the delivery of the content in the KS SECD Model

Standards, but they do not believe it is only up to the classroom teachers. Participants 3 and 4 described their beliefs that all staff in an elementary building should deliver the content of the KS SECD Model Standards across the day, so that students can better generalize and better be supported in the moment. Participant 6 described her belief that the content in the KS SECD Model Standards should be guaranteed to students across the state of Kansas. Participants 8, 6, 5, and 7 stated that the content in the KS SECD Model Standards content is a foundation to support life-skills that are necessary for their student's success after their K-12 education.

Finding 4. Finding 4 is related to research question four “What factors or conditions contribute to KS elementary teachers’ delivery of the content of the KS SECD Model Standards?” Finding 4 is addressed by the focus group data, participants 1 and 6 noted time constraints due to the numerous responsibilities expected of elementary classroom teachers. This was the most common factor that affects delivery of the content in the SECD standards. All of the other participants nodded or verbally agreed with their statements. Participant 1 responded “yeah, time. We have so many responsibilities and expectations to get through all of the academic standards and academic curriculum. Now you are telling us that we have more responsibilities to teach social-emotional learning?” Participant 6 described the many responsibilities and expectations of KS elementary teachers to teach all of the academic standards. Participant 6 added “I totally agree. How are we supposed to keep adding and adding things on our plate and rarely, if ever, take things away?” “I mean all of these things are important, but we still only have so many hours in the day.”

Participant 7 stated that the main emphasis for teachers has been on scores for State Testing. “You know whatever gets emphasized really gets our attention, and now we are sort of getting mixed messages.” Participant 4 agreed and reported:

We are so used to testing everything and getting a score or an outcome. This sort learning really is not tested and so I guess the message is to us, well how important is social-emotional learning if we are not going to measure it or if we are not going to test for it? I think this is one thing education will have to figure out.

Participant 8 reported that if a principal sets the expectation to teach the content in the KS SECD standards and it gets put on the schedule, then it will probably be taught. However, if the principal does not support teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards then it will not be taught. Participant 8 said:

I think a factor and what is important is just having it be an expectation from the district and from the principal. We also need a set schedule, like actually finding time and putting it on the schedule. This says that this is important and we want you to teach this. If it is just a suggestion, it probably will not get taught.

Participant 2 answered that she feels that teachers need more professional development about how to teach and measure student growth regarding the content in the KS SECD Model Standards.

I mean we were only taught how to solve some of these problems and how to handle behavior or emotions really from our parents. So everybody learned something a little bit different. Now we are supposed to come together as a school and have this common language and it can be sort of confusing sometimes.

Participant 4 expressed confusion on how to measure student performance and growth with the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. “We’re so used to testing everything and getting a score. This sort of learning is not really tested, so I guess the message is, how important is it really, if it is not tested?”

Participants identified factors or conditions that contribute to their ability to deliver the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. This could be summarized in the following categories: time, professional development, administrator support or expectation, and the ability to effectively measure SECD growth. Feeling the limitations of time to deliver expected teaching standards is a common argument from teachers. Teachers also described feeling overwhelmed with the enormity of their many duties. School leaders must find a way to support classroom teachers in the delivery, monitoring, and assessment of SECD learning.

Finding 5. Finding 5 is related to research question 5 “What barriers prohibit KS elementary teachers from teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards?” This was addressed using the focus group data. Participants 1 and 6 said that they felt time was a barrier. Participant 1 responded “It seems to be a consistent theme in education. There is so much expected of classroom teachers and it feels overwhelming.” All of the other participants nodded in agreement when these participants mentioned time. Participant 4 described that teachers’ own perspective and perceptions based on previous experiences as barriers. “I think ourselves are sort of a barrier because we have these perceptions based upon our experiences and education that we are here to really teach what is being tested.”

Teachers have felt pressure for their students to produce high scores on these high stakes testing assessments, therefore feeling they cannot afford time to other areas, such as the content in the SECD standards. Participant 4 stated “We feel pressure for our students to do well on testing. But, we need to change our perspective that we also need to teach these students these skills and they can be just as important as academic skills.” Participant 1 stated “We are preparing our students for life. Not all students may have an academic future and go to college, but all students will benefit from learning the skills taught in the content of the SECD standards. Participant 3 added:

We get mixed messages with what we are supposed to focus on. At one professional development meeting, we focus on academic standards. Then we go talk about project-based learning, and so on, and so on. When you have so much to learn, the emphasis is not always on social-emotional learning.

Participant 8 added that the lack of professional development or training for her in this area can be a barrier to delivery of the content in the standards. “I think it is training. We have had more training in the last two or three years, but I feel like teaching some of these skills is a little bit foreign to me. So maybe I’ll just call the counselor or the principal to do problem-solving with kids when I have a behavior problem.” “I know more than I did a few years ago, but it will take time to shift our thinking that these skills are just as important to our students as the academic content.”

The barrier most frequently mentioned by KS elementary teachers at elementary school A was time with two participants mentioning time in the focus group and all of the other teachers nodding in agreement. Lack of professional development that builds the capacity of teachers learning to teach SECD model standards was mentioned by all

teachers throughout the focus group. Throughout the focus group session, six of the participants mentioned feeling overwhelmed with the numerous duties required by teachers throughout the focus group. Three of the participants mentioned feeling overwhelmed with the mixed messages that they receive about what is important to teach. KS elementary teachers identified the following emerging trends as barriers that prohibit them from teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards: time, mixed-messages on what is important from their administrators, their own pre-conceived ideas, experiences with what is important to teach based upon the pressures and demands associated with high stakes testing, and feelings of inadequacy or being unprepared to respond to student's immediate social-emotional or behavioral needs due to lack of professional development.

Finding 6. Finding 6 is related to research question 6 “What effect has teaching the content in the KS Social-Emotional and Character Development Model Standards had on students’ academic success? This was addressed using the focus group data.

Participant 2 offered that it is:

It is hard to say for sure, because we do not measure it. I do think the things I have learned about teaching the content of the standards the last couple of years have made my classroom easier to manage. I think my students maybe get along a little better and cooperate a little better.

Participant 8 noted that their efforts to support executive function skills, with teaching students about time management, has helped with student's task initiation, work completion, and just generally being better organized. Participant 3 stated feeling

empowered to better assist their students with solving social-problems and helping themselves to be calmer in response to a student's state of dysregulation.

It's hard to say, for sure, because it is not something we test for. But, I would say that teaching these skills have helped me help my students better. And, it helped me be calmer when my students are having a meltdown.

Three of the participants said that they had a sense that teaching the content of the SECD standards made their students build these skills. Participant 3 reported that teaching the content in the SECD standards made her feel calmer when her students became dysregulated.

Two of the participants acknowledged that they weren't certain about the effects of teaching SECD skill has had on their students' academic success because they do not test for or measure content in the KS SECD standards. The researcher observed that participants trepidation when responding to this research question. The participants paused before answering and seemed to be challenged to put into words how they were feeling. Participants could not provide the evidence to prove how teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards has supported academic success but anecdotally they feel that it has provided some benefit not only for their students, but for themselves also.

Summary

Teachers from Elementary School A were overall positive about the expectation to teach the content of the KS SECD Model Standards in their classrooms. Participants reported that they feel SECD skills are foundational for self-regulation and to allow students to access their academic curriculum. Teachers described observing that teaching the content in the SECD standards helped their students regulate their emotions,

have less anxiety, and have improved peer-to-peer relationships. Teachers stated that they perceive that it is all staff's responsibility to teach and support the SECD skills and that having a building-wide common language helps both adults and staff teach and model the skills throughout the school day.

Teachers at Elementary School A responded that they feel overwhelmed with their numerous responsibilities. Teachers at Elementary School A stated that administrators can support them with teaching SECD skills by scheduling time for it and offering professional development. Teachers at Elementary School A agreed they also have to work to change their personal perceptions on the benefit of teaching SECD and find valid ways to measure student's progress in this area. Throughout the focus group three participants emphasized that they felt teaching the content in the SECD Model Standards benefited their students. In addition, five participants reported feeling unprepared to teach the content in the standards due to lack of professional development training. Seven participants reported, throughout the focus group, that teaching the content in the SECD standards is a foundation for supporting academic skills.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

Kansas Commissioner, Dr. Randy Watson, and his team, conducted the largest qualitative study in Kansas History to determine what defines a successful 24-year-old Kansan (KSDE, n.d.-a). Watson and his team encouraged Kansas school leaders and teachers to consider redesigning Kansas schools to provide a more comprehensive and balanced approach to educating Kansas children (KSDE, n.d.-a). This chapter contains a study summary, which includes an overview of the problem, purpose statement, research questions, and a review of the methodology. This chapter concludes with highlighting the major findings of the study, how the findings are related to the literature, and implications for actions and recommendations for future research.

Study Summary

This study's objective was to attempt to understand the phenomenological, lived experiences, of KS elementary teachers with teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. Teacher perceptions were assessed by conducting a focus group. Tangential observational data was also used to assess the frequency in which KS elementary teachers were using concepts taught in the KS SECD Model Standards. This section includes information about the overview of the problem, purpose statement and research questions, the methods and major findings.

Overview of the problem. Schools have traditionally focused on academic objectives to ensure student success (Brannon, 2008). With the abundance of research available describing the benefits and value of SECD programs to prepare students for success, a change in perspective may be required by educational leaders to support the

Kansas CAN initiative, and the current student outcome goals adopted by the Kansas State Board of Education (KSDE, n.d.-a). In 2012, with the adoption of the KS SECD Model Standards, the KS State Board of Education sent a message to KS school leaders of the benefit and importance of including the content of the standards into KS student's educational experience (KSDE, n.d.-a).

Purpose statement and research questions. The purpose of this study was to investigate KS Elementary Teachers' experiences and perceptions with teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards at Elementary School A. The research questions and focus group questions were designed to investigate and understand the experiences and perceptions of KS Elementary Teachers at Elementary School A.

Review of the methodology. The researcher used a qualitative phenomenological approach to this study and the study utilized archived observational data that the researcher collected as part of her job responsibilities as a school counselor and as part of the school's school improvement plan to determine if and how KS elementary teachers were teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards. The researcher also designed and hosted a focus group with voluntary participants who were all KS elementary school teachers, for a KS elementary school, in a large suburban school district. The focus group investigated KS elementary teachers' phenomenological experiences with teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards as described in the research questions above.

Major findings. The first major finding of this study was related to the first research question investigating KS elementary teachers' phenomenological experiences with teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. Based on the data from

both the observational data, and the focus group, it was found that KS elementary teachers are consistently teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards from categories formulated from the Standards. Teachers that participated in the focus group acknowledged that there has been an increased emphasis on teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards, that the skills continued in the KS SECD Model Standards are foundational to a student's overall success, and they have a desire to have more professional development to help them teach the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. Categories in Table 9 that had a High-High alignment between data sets were taught the most at elementary school A. Categories that were either High-Low or Low-High were taught some but not as often as the categories in the High-High set. Categories that were Low-Low were taught the least at elementary school A. Table 9 offers an overview of the alignment between the observational and focus group data.

Table 9

Alignment of Categories between Data Sets

High-High	High-Low	Low-High	Low-Low
Character Virtues	Caring Community	Executive Functioning	Personal Strengths and Weaknesses
Clear Expectations	Social Skills	Active Listening	Bullying, Bystanders. Tattling vs. Reporting
Emotional Intelligence	Personal Problem Solving	Individual Roles & Responsibilities	
Management of Stress and Emotional State	Caring vs. Hurtful Relationships		

Note. High-High = High Mention in FG and High Instance in OB; High-Low = High Mention in FG and Low Instance in OB; Low-High = Low Mention in FG and High Instance in OB; Low-Low = Low Mention in FG and Low Instance in OB.

Participants indicated that they perceived that the new-found interest in teaching the content in the SECD standards is a result of the Kansas CAN Initiative and that policies related to expectations of instructional strategies and emphasis have changed recently. Participants explained that a few years ago Kindergarten teachers were asked to remove all play-based toys and equipment in their rooms and focus their time and attention on academic skills. However, this directive only lasted a couple of years, when Kindergarten teachers were asked to return the play-based toys and equipment, and schedule time for purposeful play during the school day. This example relates to the confusion and mixed-messages that teachers described as additional focus group questions are explored.

The second finding was related to the second research question that asked how teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards has had an effect on the classroom environment. Participants reported strong favorable perceptions about the importance of teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. Elementary teachers reported the perception of an improved classroom and building climate and that their students were better equipped to handle their emotions with the implementation of weekly class meetings. Further, teachers felt that students were better able to persevere with difficult or non-preferred task completion, as a result of teaching skills related to the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. Teachers discussed their perceptions that an increased number of students with skill deficits related to the content in the KS SECD Model Standards are entering their classroom each year. Veteran teachers described that “more and more” students are entering their classrooms without mastery of these soft skills. It is interesting to note that teachers reported that not only do they see favorable benefits to

teaching the contents in the KS SECD Model Standards, but also that students have responded favorable to this instruction and ask for it if it is not on the schedule.

Participants 5 and 7 reported that they perceived that the directive for teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards came from the Kansas CAN Initiative.

Participant 3 reported that she feels the building climate is better when the staff uses a common language. Participant 3 believes that throughout her teaching career that more students are coming to school that do not have social-emotional learning skills.

The third major finding was connected to the third research question asking KS elementary teachers their perceptions of how the content of the KS SECD Models Standards should be delivered in KS elementary schools. Based on the responses, it is clear that KS elementary teachers support the idea that classroom teachers' are responsible for the delivery of the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. However, the elementary classroom teachers do not believe this is only their responsible. The group reported that they think the delivery of the content in the KS SECD Model Standards should be a collaborative effort among all staff. Participants felt that a building-wide approach, supported by a common language, would help students generalize skills across settings. Further, participants reported that these skills are important enough that they should be guaranteed to be taught to all Kansas students as foundational life-skills.

A fourth major finding was related to research question four asking KS elementary teachers to describe the conditions or factors that contribute to KS elementary teachers' ability to deliver the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. Participants identified four major conditions and factors that contribute to their ability to deliver the

content in the KS SECD Model Standards. These included time, professional development, support and consistent expectations from the principal, and assessment tools to measure their student's mastery of the SECD content.

A fifth major finding was related to research question five asking KS elementary teachers to describe the barriers that prohibit them from teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. Teachers described the feelings of being overwhelmed with the numerous, ever-changing expectations as an elementary classroom teacher. Teachers described that they often feel confused by what is stakeholders perceive as the most important part of their job description. Although teachers feel like teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards is important, they have long been expected to prepare their students to perform at high levels on state assessments and other measures of high stakes testing. Teachers acknowledge they will need to change their own personal and paradigms based on previous teaching experiences related to high stakes testing. Finally, teachers identified a lack of professional development training preparing them to effectively teach SECD skills as a barrier.

The last major finding is related to research question six asking teachers to describe the effects of teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards on their student's academic performance. Although the elementary teachers perceived that teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards was a foundation to supporting their student's academic achievement, they reported that they did not know for sure if it has an effect, because they have not been taught to measure these skills and progress as they do their student's academic skills and progress. Teachers reported that supporting their student's executive function skills has helped with student's task initiation, task

completion, and time management, but they do not know how to describe this in quantitative terms. Finally, teachers reported that not only do they perceive their student's better able to manage their emotions, but also that they, themselves, are able to remain calmer when responding to a behavior or emotional disturbance in their classroom.

Findings Related to the Literature

Finding 1 provides evidence that KS elementary teachers at elementary school A are teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards. Participants in the focus group, recognized the increased emphasis on teaching the content in the SECD Model Standards and agreed that these skills are foundational for student's long-term success. According to KSDE (n.d.-d), "the purpose of the KS SECD Model Standards, is to provide schools a framework for integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) with character development" (p. 1). The KS SECD Standards were created so that students can "learn, practice, and model essential personal life habits that contribute to academic, vocational, and personal success" (KSDE, n.d.-d, p. 1). The committee that created the KS SECD Model Standards want Kansas students to have the opportunity to learn and acquire the following skills: kindness and civility, the ability to make healthy decisions, personal problem solving, respect, responsibility, good citizenship, empathy, ethical decision making, and to value excellence (KSDE, n.d.-d, p. 1). Early teaching and support of social-emotional learning helps young learners become classroom ready as they develop their peer-based interactive play skills (Coolahan, Fantuzzo, Mendez, & McDermott, 2000).

In finding 2, focus group participants discussed the effect that teaching the content of the SECD Model Standards had on their classrooms. Focus group participants felt that teaching these skills via weekly class meetings helped their students better generalize their skills. Teachers in the focus group acknowledged that students seem to have the desire to learn about the skills contained in the content of the KS SECD Model Standards. According to Browning Wright, (n.d.), there is evidence from literature that class meetings are one method of providing weekly structure to the delivery of the content in the standards and benefit students and the school community. “Family and class meetings provide the best possible circumstances for adults and students to learn cooperation, mutual respect, responsibility, and social skills” (Browning Wright, n.d., p. 1). “Class meetings should have a specific time set aside each week. The purpose of the class meetings is to develop the normative beliefs and also to address problems that students may be having” (Ophelia Project, n.d., p. 9).

In finding 2, focus group participants said that they felt that having a building-wide common language was beneficial to creating an improved overall school culture. Participants said that felt that their attempts to create a building-wide common language benefited both adults and staff to understand expectations. “When a common social skills language is developed and shared with everyone in the classroom, this is not only beneficial for use by teachers, but also by other students. When teachers spend all day redirecting students the classroom environment starts to sound like “‘I’m the teacher, I’m the boss, and this is my domain’” (Baker, 2009, p. 49).

There is evidence in the literature that teaching SECD skills improve academic performance as illustrated by a 2011 meta-analysis of 213 studies including over 270,000

students reported that students who were taught evidenced-based SECD competencies gained 11 percentile points in their academic achievement, compared to students that were not taught evidenced based SECD competencies (CASEL, 2018). Further, students that were taught evidenced-based SECD competencies also demonstrated improvement with their classroom behavior, increased competency in managing their stress, decreased symptoms of depression, and improved self-concept (CASEL, 2018). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2014), “Our nation’s schools should be safe havens for teaching and learning, free of crime and violence. Any instance of crime or violence at school not only affects the individuals involved, but also may disrupt the educational process and affect bystanders, the school itself, and the surrounding community” (p. iii). When students display anger or aggression it can have a negative impact on all stakeholders and disrupt the learning environment. Helping students to learn to manage their behavior and regulate their emotions contributes to the feeling of a safe and supportive school environment. According to the University of Minnesota’s College of Education and Human Development blog, Improving Lives, students who are hostile-aggressive are dreaded by most teachers. These aggressive students “are capable of dominating and controlling others through intimidation and irrational, often explosive behavior” (p. 1).

Participants also stated in finding 2 that they notice their students have improved perseverance to complete non-preferred or difficult tasks. Regarding the character development skills of perseverance, researchers have determined that deliberate practice works but is not generally perceived by students to be fun or enjoyable to students (Duckworth, Kirby, Tsukayama, Berstein, and Ericsson, 2010). Duckworth et al. (2010),

described a character trait they call grit, related to perseverance, which is evident when students keep trying and will not give up even when a task is hard or non-preferred.

“Perseverance is a skill that can be taught. Although most of us learn it through trial and error, it can and should be taught, just like any other key skill or competency” (Slade & Hoerr, 2014, p. 2).

In finding 3, participants indicated that they support the idea of classroom teachers having responsibility for teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards, but also agreed that teaching the SECD skills should be a collaborative effort among all staff. The idea of increased teacher collaboration is supported by the literature regarding professional learning communities. Professional learning communities (PLC) “are an indication of a broader trend toward professional development that is increasingly collaborative, data-driven, and peer-facilitated, all with a focus on classroom practice” (Barber & Mourshed, 2009, p 30). Schools that use PLCs offer a structure to create a supportive school cultures and professional conditions necessary for achieving achievement in teaching and learning targets. PLCs also allow staff to contemplate the teaching and learning process and to learn how to become more effective in their work with students. (Morrissey, 2000, p. 4)

Finding 3 also stated that students across the state of KS should be guaranteed access to the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. “In the world that our students will enter as adults, there can be no *either/or* of academic or social-emotional and character competencies. Students require *both/and*” (Elias, 2016, p. 2). Parents must receive feedback about their students that incorporate both academic and SECD, systematically and carefully (Elias, 2016).

Finding 4 addressed the conditions or factors that contributed to KS elementary teachers teaching the content in the SECD Model Standards. The factors and contributions stated by the focus group participants included: time, lack of effective professional development related to the content in the KS SECD Model Standards, support and consistency of expectations from building principals, and an effective assessment tool to measure student's SECD growth. "Every teacher needs more class time. And every year, it seems like there's more and more content that needs to be covered and less time to teach it in, due to excessive testing and other distractions" (Watson, 2016, p. 1). Although adding more hours to the school day or decreasing the content that is delivered to our students is generally considered not optional there are things that teachers can do to create more time to deliver academic and SECD content. Teachers must question traditional practices that may contribute to unnecessary tasks and they must evaluate their daily routines and cut out any time wasters (Watson, 2016).

Research has confirmed that "the most important factor contributing to a student's success in school is the quality of teaching. Professional development is the most effective strategy schools and school districts have to meet stakeholder expectations" (Mizell, 2010, p. 1). School districts use professional development as a strategy to provide educators with the ability to improve their practice throughout their career (Mizell, 2010). According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2018), "a key to promoting effective schoolwide SEL is ensuring that all staff members have initial and ongoing professional development and support for implementing programming" (p. 1). Additional things principals can do to support teachers delivering schoolwide SEL is communicating the message to all stakeholders

that schoolwide SEL is a priority and developing and articulating a shared vision of all student's development in the areas of social, emotional, and academic development (CASEL, 2018). Research indicates that student learning and achievement increases when educators engage in targeted and meaningful professional development (Mizell, 2010). Effective leadership is essential to organization improvement (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Leaders must establish a shared vision and shared norms with a clear meaningful direction (Louis et al., 2010). The leader must do whatever it takes to support staff to meet the organization's goals (Louis et al., 2010). Once a school-wide vision of a commitment to high standards and success for all students is established the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students is diminished and the achievement of all students increases (Wallace Foundation, n.d.).

The Kansas State Department of Education has recognized that assessments can be important tools to assist stakeholders monitor and assess a student's progress. But, KSDE recognizes that assessments are only one piece of data that should be considered in a child's education (KSDE, n.d.-e). The Kansas State Board of Education's vision for Kansas students and for Kansas education is "Kansas will lead the world in the success of each student" (KSDE, n.d.-e). KSDE (n.d.-e) recognizes that education may have overemphasized the importance of state assessments and is calling Kansas schools to think about educating the whole child. According to Elias (2016), "we all know that whatever gets measured usually gets attention and focus" (p. 1). It is a common belief in education that there is currently no widespread or practical manner for all schools to measure their student's SECD skills (Elias, 2016). Elias (2016) reminded educators that if they look at their current student report cards there is often a section for comments

about student behavior, character skills, motivation, and organization or preparation. It has been an established practice for classroom teachers to provide parents with comments about SECD alongside academic grades (Elias, 2016).

Related to finding 5, focus group participants discussed the barriers that prevent them from effectively teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards in their classrooms. The focus group participants identified barriers including feeling overwhelmed with the numerous and ever-changing expectations required of elementary school teachers, confusion regarding what is important for them to teach due to the mixed messages received from their administrators, and the paradigm in the era of No Child Left Behind that test scores on high-stakes testing matter most. According to CASEL (2018), school principals believe that SEL is important, but they also have the desire for more training, support, and guidance on how to effectively deliver SEL competencies and support their students. The majority of principals surveyed report that a commitment to teaching SEL would have a positive impact on the climate of the school, improve school citizenship, assist with the formation and retention of positive peer-relationships for their students, and teachers, and decrease incidents of bullying (CASEL, 2018). Principals report that they need more effective training for teachers and an increased availability to research-based strategies for teaching SEL to students (CASEL, 2018). They also want more dedicated plan time for teachers (CASEL, 2018). Further, a 2013 study found that 93% of teachers want more emphasis on SEL in schools (Hart, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). Those surveyed believe that SEL skills are essential and teachable and want their schools to make teaching SEL a priority by integrating those skills into the curriculum and school culture (Hart, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). In 2013,

The Chronicle of Higher Education and American Public Media's Marketplace surveyed 704 employers to assess their value on SEL. Half of the employers surveyed reported that they have challenges filling positions with recent graduates (CASEL, 2018). Many of the employees that were hired had good technical skills, but were lacking in the areas of "communication, adaptability, decision-making, and problem-solving skills" needed to successfully do their job (CASEL, 2018, p. 2).

There have been multiple school districts reporting that they have realized academic gains after implementing SEL programming in their schools. For example in the Reno, Nevada area, one school district realized a 21-point gain in math scores and a 20-point gain in English-Language Arts scores (CASEL, 2018). "By targeting elements of student emotional development that affect classroom environment, like student behavior and student-teacher interaction, SEL may actually support and promote growth from academic instruction for early childhood students" (Hansen, 2017, p. 1). Integrating content from SECD skills and not viewing the SECD content as an add-on, but as a catalyst for academic growth, can diminish the perception that teachers have a lack of time to teach the SECD skills and move the perception as an essential component of the student's education (Hansen, 2017).

A 2015 report by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Brookings Institution stated that "SEL competencies are critically important for the long-term success of all students in today's economy" (p. 4). The reports final recommendation was to increase effective, evidence-based SEL programs as a core component in educating American's youth (AEI & Brookings Institution, 2015). Other researchers have reported statistically significant associations between SEL skills in Kindergarten

students and positive outcomes for young adults in the areas of education, criminal activity, substance abuse, and mental health (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). One study concluded that students that have acquired early prosocial skills will have a reduced chance of accessing public assistance, not have any negative interactions with law enforcement prior to adulthood, and will not spend time in prison (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015).

A study by Columbia University reported that the benefits of teaching students SEL far exceed the costs (Belfield et al. 2015). According to Belfield et al., “The aggregate result of the analysis showed an average benefit cost ratio of about 11 to 1 among six evidence-based SEL interventions studied” (p. 45). Since schools are the bedrock of healthy and vibrant communities the cost-benefit of providing Kansas youth with evidenced-based SEL programs is undeniable.

This study discovered that generally Kansas teachers support the concept of teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards, but feel like they need support from their principal, professional development, assessment measures, and a way to balance their numerous and varied duties. According to CASEL (2018), school principals believe that SEL is important, but they also have the desire for more training, support, and guidance on how to effectively deliver SEL competencies and support their students. The majority of principals surveyed report that a commitment to teaching SEL would have a positive impact on the climate of the school, improve school citizenship, assist with the formation and retention of positive peer-relationships for their students, and teachers, and decrease incidents of bullying (CASEL, 2018). Principals report that they need more effective training for teachers and an increased availability to research-

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Related to finding 6, focus group participants reported that they are unsure of the effect of teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards has on academic performance due to the perceived lack of effective measurement tools available to measure SECD skills. However, participants hypothesize that SECD skills may support academic learning because they see their student and themselves with better emotional control. The Kansas State Department of Education recognizes that assessments can be important tools to assist stakeholders monitor and assess a student's progress. But,

KSDE recognizes that assessments are only one piece of data that should be considered in a child's education (KSDE, n.d.-e). The Kansas State Board of Education's vision for Kansas students and for Kansas education is "Kansas will lead the world in the success of each student" (KSDE, n.d.-e). KSDE (n.d.-e) recognizes that education may have overemphasized the importance of state assessments and is calling Kansas schools to think about educating the whole child. A 2015 report by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Brookings Institution stated that "SEL competencies are critically important for the long-term success of all students in today's economy" (p. 4). The reports final recommendation was to increase effective, evidence-based SEL programs as a core component in educating American's youth (AEI & Brookings Institution, 2015). Other researchers have reported statistically significant associations between SEL skills in Kindergarten students and positive outcomes for young adults in the areas of education, criminal activity, substance abuse, and mental health (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). One study concluded that students that have acquired early prosocial skills will have a reduced chance of accessing public assistance, not have any negative interactions with law enforcement prior to adulthood, and will not spend time in prison (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015).

Conclusions

Historically, schools have always been thought of as academic institutions with their main objective being to educate our children through the acquisition of academic skills (Watson, personal communication, June 3, 2016). The era of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), education entered into an era of success defined by outcomes determined by high stakes testing (Watson, personal communication, June 3, 2016). Because school's

federal funding dollars were tied to these NCLB outcomes, schools participated and narrowed their focus on academic achievement (Watson, personal communication, June 3, 2016). And, as educators complied and narrowed the focus on academic outcomes, those outcomes in reading and math improved dramatically (KSDE, n.d.-a). However, those increased academic indicators did not translate to postsecondary success and data measuring postsecondary enrollment, postsecondary retention, and postsecondary remediation remained flat (KSDE, n.d.-a). As we enter the 21st Century, school leaders and educators have begun to attempt what it means to prepare their student's for a life with their 21st century-skilled education. Dr. Watson, commissioner of the Kansas State Department of Education, and his team turned to the people of Kansas and asked them what skills does a 24-year-old Kansans need to succeed? (KSDE, n.d.-a). Dr. Watson and his team conducted the largest qualitative study in the state's history and determined that Kansas needed to do things differently (KSDE, n.d.-a). Stakeholders in business and industry and education concluded that the majority of skills needed for post-secondary success fall under the category of soft skills (KSDE, n.d.-a).

The research is clear that teaching the content in the KS SECD Model standards benefits Kansas students. Research supports that teaching these skills to Kansas students is not another feel-good initiative but an essential foundation to their future success (CASEL, 2018). This study's findings provided evidence that Kansas elementary teachers recognize the benefits of teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards and support teaching SECD competencies, along with delivery of the academic curriculum. However, teachers are asking for support. Teachers need time for planning and collaboration. They need consistent and effective expectations tied to their

professional development, and they want assessment tools to measure SEL so that they can measure their student's progress. Most teachers chose the profession of education because they want to make a difference in the lives of their students. Teachers want to be a piece of the educational puzzle that builds a strong foundation, so that their students can enter the postsecondary world and find personal-social, academic, and career success. School leaders can build the capacity of their classroom teachers to support both academic and social-emotional learning. This is the key that will contribute to the Kansas Board of Education realizing its goal of leading the world in education (KSDE, n.d.-a).

Implications for action. The first finding indicated that Kansas elementary teachers are consistently teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards. A limitation of this study is that both data sets were collected from one Kansas elementary school. It is unclear if elementary teachers across the state of Kansas are teaching these skills or if middle and high school students in Kansas are receiving instruction in SECD. One of the participants of the focus group stated that all Kansas students deserve to be taught the content in the KS SECD standards. If the Kansas State Board of Education is serious about achievement of their outcomes, particularly social-emotional growth, then an evidenced-based concerted effort must be lead to support all Kansas teachers in teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards.

The results reported in the second finding indicated that Kansas elementary teachers are aware that an increasing number of their students are entering their classrooms lacking SECD skills. Research supports this assertion, but teachers perceive that school systems have been slow to recognize that many Kansas students need direct

instruction in SECD skills. Both students and teachers feel that teaching the content in the SECD standards are beneficial, but school leaders must find ways to make it feasible, while not compete with delivery of the academic curriculum.

The results reported in findings three through six indicate the need for all staff to be responsible for teaching, modeling, and supporting SECD skills, and the need to find time and resources for teachers to collaborate. Professional learning communities have been recognized in the literature as the gold-standard model for building capacity of classroom teachers (Morrissey, 2000). However, especially at the elementary level, 60 minutes per day of plan time, is not sufficient time to effectively plan, collaborate, review data, design formative and summative assessments, and respond to immediate student and parent needs. School leaders must revisit the traditional elementary school schedule and offer adequate time for all of those important duties. Increased plan time, will not only provide benefit for teaching and learning of both academic and SECD skills, but will also theoretically improve teacher retention and satisfaction. Effective and consistent professional development that builds classroom teachers' capacity to teach the content of the SECD Model Standards is essential. As elementary classroom teachers' capacity for teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards, culture and climate in the classroom and school will improve and academic scores will improve (CASEL, 2018). School leadership teams must also investigate and adopt an evidenced-based SECD measurement tool to guide teachers in their work and to comply with the Kansas Board of Education's directive to measure SEL growth locally (CASEL, 2018).

Recommendations for future research. In order to build upon the findings of this study, future researchers could extend the study to not only one elementary school in

Kansas, but to all schools, including middle and high schools, across Kansas. Further research studies that answer the implications for action are necessary including finding additional time for teachers to collaborate, plan, and attend professional development. Research to determine effective SECD skills measurement tools, and how to report the findings to students and parents is necessary. Teachers recognize what gets measured, gets attention, and valid data can guide their work and benefit students and their parents as they grow and develop throughout their K-12 educational experience. If research tells us that SECD skills are extremely important to student's future success, additional research as schools add SECD programming, would be beneficial to support the work.

Concluding remarks. This research provided a sample of KS elementary teachers' phenomenological experiences with teaching the content in the KS SECD Model Standards and encourages future research in this area as the school redesign efforts continue in Kansas. As Watson and school leaders across Kansas focus on school redesign, school leaders must consider a more balanced approach to educating the whole child. This would include teaching the content of the SECD Model Standards to all Kansas Students. Kansas stakeholders and the KS State Board of Education have realized that teaching the content in the SECD Models Standards is essential to preparing Kansas students for life.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Baker IRB Request



IRB Request

Date 9/27/2017

IRB Protocol Number _____
(IRB use only)

I. Research Investigator(s) (students must list faculty sponsor)

Department(s) Graduate School of Education

Name	Signature	
1. <u>Mindy Wells</u>	<u>Mindy Wells</u> <small>Digitally signed by Mindy Wells Date: 2017.09.28 20:56:47 -05'00'</small>	Principal Investigator
2. <u>Dr. Harold Frye</u>	<u>Harold B. Frye</u> <small>Digitally signed by Harold B. Frye Date: 2017.10.01 14:32:31 -05'00'</small>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor
3. <u>Dr. Margaret Waterman</u>	<u>Margaret Waterman</u> <small>Digitally signed by Margaret Waterman Date: 2017.10.31 11:37:08 -05'00'</small>	<input type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor
4. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor

Principal investigator contact information
Note: When submitting your finalized, signed form to the IRB, please ensure that you cc all investigators and faculty sponsors using their official Baker University (or respective organization's) email addresses.

Phone 913-488-5374
Email mmmwells@gmail.com
Address 12813 Bluejacket Street
Overland Park, KS 66213

Faculty sponsor contact information

Phone 913-344-1220
Email harold.frye@bakeru.edu

Expected Category of Review: ☐ Exempt ☒ Expedited ☐ Full ☐ Renewal

II. Protocol Title

A Phenomenological Study of Kansas Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of the
Kansas Social Emotional Character Development Model Standards

III. Summary:

The following questions must be answered. Be specific about exactly what participants will experience and about the protections that have been included to safeguard participants from harm.

A. In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

The first purpose of the study is to determine if KS elementary teachers are teaching the content contained in the KS SECD Model Standards delivered throughout their daily teaching practice? The second purpose is to study KS elementary teachers lived experiences with the content contained in the KS SECD Model standards. How are KS elementary teachers aware of the existence of the KS SECD Model standards? Are KS elementary teachers aware of and familiar with the content contained in the KS SECD Model standards? Do KS elementary teachers feel ownership for teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards? What barriers exist that prevent KS elementary teachers from teaching the KS SECD Model Standards? The purpose of the observation data is to

B. Briefly describe each condition, manipulation, or archival data set to be included within the study.

There are no conditions or manipulations included in this study.

IV. Protocol Details

A. What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.

Archived phenomenological data from a KS elementary school will be used for the study. A focus group will be formed with voluntary participants as a follow up to investigate deeper understanding of KS elementary teachers' experiences with the phenomenological data.

Attached is the observational tool used to collect the archived phenomenological data.
Attached are the focus group questions.

B. Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical, or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

All voluntary participants of the focus group will be made aware that no subjects will encounter any risk of physiological, social, physical, or legal risks.

C. Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

The voluntary subjects in the focus group will not experience stress of any kind. Minimal stress may be experienced by volunteer subjects as a normal part of classroom observations.

Page 3 of 4: document to follow

D. Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.
The voluntary subjects will not be deceived or misled in any way.

E. Will there be a request for information which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.
There will be no request for information which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive.

F. Will the subjects be presented with materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.
The voluntary subjects will not be presented with any materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading.

G. Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?
The voluntary participation in the focus group will take approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour. Review of the transcript of the focus group will take approximately 30 minutes.

H. Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.
Kansas Elementary teachers from whom the phenomenological archived observation data was gathered will be the subjects in this study. Voluntary participants for the focus groups will be solicited via email communication.

I. What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?

In email communication, introductory information will make it clear that participation in the study is voluntary. Responses will be confidential, combined with responses of other participants in summary form and answers will be included in summary form. Information recorded in the focus group session will not include any individual names or names of schools or school districts. No inducements will be offered to the voluntary subjects for their participation.

Page 4 of 4: document to follow

J. How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

By attending the focus group session, participants will be giving their voluntary consent for participation.

K. Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

No aspect of the data will be made part of any permanent record that can be identified with any participant in archived data or focus group. A pseudonym will be assigned to each participant in the focus group and archived data.

L. Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher, or employer? If so, explain.

The fact that the subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study will not be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher, or employer.

M. What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data? Where will it be stored? How long will it be stored? What will be done with the data after the study is completed?

Only the researcher will have this information and it will not be shared or publicized. Focus group participants will be assigned a pseudonym. Information from the survey and focus group participation will be stored on the researcher's personal computer. This personal computer is secure and with no other person having access to the records. Data will be archived and available for 3 years after the completion of the study.

N. If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

There are no risks involved in the study.

O. Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

Archival data from a KS elementary school will be used. Data are phenomenological by nature and investigate KS elementary teachers teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards. This data was collected by the KS elementary school as part of the school's annual school improvement plan.

Appendix B: Baker University Institutional Review Board Approval

Baker University Institutional Review Board

November 15th, 2017

Dear Mindy Wells and Harold Frye,

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.

Please inform this Committee or myself when this project is terminated or completed. As noted above, you must also provide IRB with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,



Nathan Poell, MA
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Scott Crenshaw
Erin Morris, PhD
Jamin Perry, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD

Appendix C: Approval from School District



October 27, 2017

Dear Mindy:

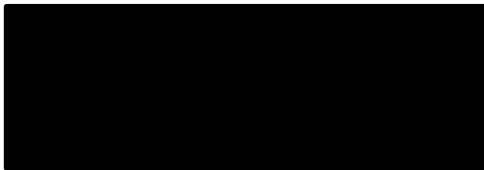
I am pleased to inform you that your request to do research in the [redacted] has been **approved**. As you have stated in your research application, we will look for your IRB approval through Baker University in the near future.

In any of your work, please do not make any reference to the [redacted] Elementary School— please reference us as a “large suburban district in the mid-west” or a “suburban elementary school in the state of Kansas”— or some other reference name of your choice, but do not use the Olathe name or any school names. Additionally, please do not use any student identifying information.

When your research is completed, we would love to see your results.

Good luck with your research!

Sincerely,



Appendix D: Email Solicitation for Voluntary Focus Group Participants

Please consider participating in a voluntary focus group scheduled for Monday, December 11, 2017 at 4:00 pm in your school's conference room. The purpose of the focus group is to understand your perceptions' as a KS elementary school teacher regarding the KS Social Emotional Character Development Model Standards (SECD). The first purpose of the study is to investigate if Kansas (KS) elementary teachers are aware that the KS Social Emotional Character Development Model Standards (SECD) exists. The second purpose of the study is to investigate KS elementary teachers' familiarity of the content contained in the KS SECD Model Standards. A third purpose of the study is to investigate if KS elementary teachers' perceptions of personal ownership of teaching the KS SECD Model Standards. A fourth purpose of the study is to investigate KS elementary teachers' identification of barriers that may prevent them from effective teaching of the skills in the KS SECD Model Standards. A fifth purpose of the study is to investigate KS elementary teachers' perceptions as to the identity of what barriers exist to teaching the skills described in the KS SECD Model Standards. A sixth purpose of the study is to identify KS elementary teachers' experiences with the perceived barriers to teaching the KS SECD Model Standards.

No aspect of the data will be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with any participant in study. A pseudonym will be assigned to each participant in the focus group. The fact that you do or do not choose to participate in this focus group will not be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher, or employer. Only the researcher will have access to the confidential information and your identity will not be shared or publicized in any way. Participation in the focus group will take approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour. Thank you for your consideration to participate in this voluntary focus group. If you have questions or concerns, you can reply to this email for more information. Please reply to this email if you plan to participate in this voluntary focus group.

Sincerely,
Mindy Wells
Baker University
Doctoral Candidate in the Graduate School of Education

Appendix E: Informed Consent for Focus Group Participants

You are being asked to take part in a research study, focus group, to understand Kansas elementary teachers' perceptions of the KS Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD) Model Standards. You are asked to take part because you are a Kansas elementary teacher and archived observational data is being used from your school team. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What the study is about: The first purpose of the study is to determine if KS elementary teachers are teaching the content contained in the KS SECD Model Standards delivered throughout their daily teaching practice. The second purpose of the study is to study KS elementary teachers lived experiences with the content contained in the KS SECD Model standards. Are KS elementary teachers aware of and familiar with the content contained in the KS SECD Model standards? What are KS elementary teachers' perceptions of how the content KS SECD Model Standards should be delivered? What are KS elementary teachers' perceptions of barriers that prevent them from teaching the KS SECD Model Standards? What are KS elementary teachers' perceptions of the effects on their student's academic success from teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards? The purpose of the observation data is to triangulate classroom practices.

What we will I ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study, I will conduct a focus group interview with you. The interview will include questions about your experiences with the content of the KS SECD Model Standards. You will be asked to describe how the content of the KS SECD Model Standards has had an effect on your classroom environment. You will be asked your perception of how the content of the KS SECD Model Standards should be delivered in KS elementary schools and any factors or conditions that contribute to KS elementary teachers' delivery of the content of the KS SECD Model Standards. You will be asked what barriers prohibit you from teaching the KS SECD Model Standards and if you can describe the effects of teaching the content of the KS SECD Model Standards has on your student's academic success. The interview will take about 30 minutes to 1 hour to complete. With your permission, I would also like to tape-record the interview.

Risks and benefits: I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

There are no benefits to you for your participation in this study.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I make public I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researcher will have access to the records. I will destroy the recorded interview after it has been transcribed, which I anticipate will be within one month of its taping.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current or future relationship with your employer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Mindy Wells. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Mindy Wells @ mmmwells@gmail.com or at 913-488-5374. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Baker University or access their website at www.bakeru.edu. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of person obtaining consent _____ Date _____

Printed name of person obtaining consent _____ Date _____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study.

Appendix F: Focus Group Questions

Q1: Tell me about your experiences with the content in the KS Social-Emotional Character Development Standards Model Standards?

Q2: Describe how the content of the KS Social-Emotional Character Development Model Standards has had an effect on your classroom environment?

Q3: How should the content of the KS Social-Emotional Character Development Model Standards be delivered in KS elementary schools?

Q4: Describe what factors or conditions contribute KS elementary teachers' delivery of the content of the Social-Emotional Character Development model standards.

Q5: Describe what barriers prohibit you from teaching the KS Social-Emotional Character Development Model Standards.

Q6: Describe the effects of teaching the content of the KS Social-Emotional Character Development Model Standards on student academic success?

Appendix G: Phenomenological Collection for Elementary School A

***Phenomenological Collection SECD Standards

Date Data Collected

Date

Class Observed

Choose

Reference to character virtues

Your answer



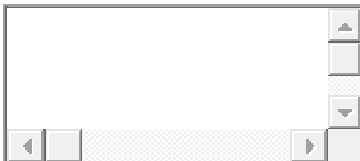
Clear Expectations

Your answer



Caring vs. Hurtful Relationships

Your answer



Active Listening Skills

Your answer



Training on bullying, bystander training, tattling vs. reporting

Your answer

A rectangular text input box with a light gray border. On the right side, there are three small square buttons stacked vertically, each with a small upward-pointing triangle. On the bottom left, there is a small square button with a left-pointing triangle. On the bottom right, there is a small square button with a right-pointing triangle.

Executive Function

Your answer

A rectangular text input box with a light gray border. On the right side, there are three small square buttons stacked vertically, each with a small upward-pointing triangle. On the bottom left, there is a small square button with a left-pointing triangle. On the bottom right, there is a small square button with a right-pointing triangle.

Individual roles/responsibilities in school

Your answer

A rectangular text input box with a light gray border. On the right side, there are three small square buttons stacked vertically, each with a small upward-pointing triangle. On the bottom left, there is a small square button with a left-pointing triangle. On the bottom right, there is a small square button with a right-pointing triangle.

Personal Problem Solving

Your answer

A rectangular text input box with a light gray border. On the right side, there are three small square buttons stacked vertically, each with a small upward-pointing triangle. On the bottom left, there is a small square button with a left-pointing triangle. On the bottom right, there is a small square button with a right-pointing triangle.

Emotional Intelligence

Your answer

A rectangular text input box with a light gray border. On the right side, there are three small square buttons stacked vertically, each with a small upward-pointing triangle. On the bottom left, there is a small square button with a left-pointing triangle. On the bottom right, there is a small square button with a right-pointing triangle.

Personal Strengths/Weaknesses

Your answer

A rectangular text input box with a light gray border. On the right side, there are three small square buttons stacked vertically, each with a small upward-pointing triangle. On the bottom left, there is a small square button with a left-pointing triangle. On the bottom right, there is a small square button with a right-pointing triangle.

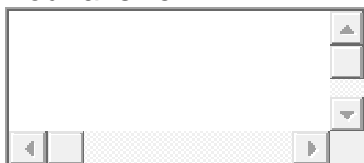
Manage Stress/Emotional State

Your answer

A rectangular text input box with a light gray border. On the right side, there are three small square buttons stacked vertically, each with a small upward-pointing triangle. On the bottom left, there is a small square button with a left-pointing triangle. On the bottom right, there is a small square button with a right-pointing triangle.

Social Skills

Your answer

A rectangular text input field with a thin border. To the right of the field are three small, vertically stacked square buttons with upward, neutral, and downward arrow icons. Below the field are two small square buttons with left and right arrow icons, and a larger square button with a right arrow icon.

Caring Community

Your answer

A rectangular text input field with a thin border. To the right of the field are three small, vertically stacked square buttons with upward, neutral, and downward arrow icons. Below the field are two small square buttons with left and right arrow icons, and a larger square button with a right arrow icon.

SUBMIT

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_Forms

Appendix H: Codes for Observation Tool

Blue Zone	BZ
Body in Group	BDIG
Brain Break	BB
Brain in Group	BRIG
Bystanders	BYS
Clear Desk	CD
Compassion	Com
Courage	Cou
Do Your Best	DYB
Does Things	
Differently	DTD
Empathy	Emp
Expected	Exp
Frustrated	FR
Get Help	GH
Get Ready, Do, Done	GRDD
Good Choices	GC
Green Zone	GZ
Happy	HAP
Help A Neighbor	HAN
Helpful	HF
Honesty	Hon
Included	Inc
Kindness	Kind
MAD	MAD
Mind Yeti	MY
Parent Helper	PH
Perseverance	Per
Personal Space	PS
Plan	PL
Red Zone	RZ
Report	REP
Resiliency	Rcy
Respect	Re
Responsibility	Res
Rock Brain	RB
SAD	SAD
Second Step	SS
Self-Discipline	SD
Silly	Silly
Space Invader	SI
Stand Stretch	SST
Take A Break	TAB

Take a Deep breath	TAB
Thank You	TY
Thinking Eyes	TE
Topic Twister	TT
Turn Toward	TT
Unexpected	Unexp
Was Funny Once	WFO
Watch Dog	WD
What is expected	WIE
Whole Body Listening	WBL
Working Clock	WC
WOW Binder	WB
Yellow Zone	YZ

Appendix I: Tracking Form Used by the Trained School Counseling Intern

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Q1								
Q2								
Q3								
Q4								
Q5								
Q6								
Final Thoughts								
Q1A								
Q2A								
Q2B								
Q3A								
Q4A								
Q5A								
Q5B								
Q6								