School Psychologist's Tiered Social-Emotional Recommendations in Response to Data Gathered From Social-Emotional Screening

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School Psychologists’ Tiered Social-Emotional Recommendations

in Response to Data Gathered From Universal
Social-Emotional Screening

Audrey Anita Andersen

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Educational Specialist

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Universal school-wide social-emotional screeners identify at-risk students with social-emotional behavior problems (Romer et al., 2020). Identifying such students alone cannot prevent these social, emotional, and behavioral concerns from becoming problematic. However, data gathered from social-emotional screening can guide the development of strategies, supports, interventions, and progress monitoring students at risk across all tiers (Yates et al., 2008), leading to the prevention of social-emotional and behavioral problems from turning maladaptive (Humphrey & Wigelsworth, 2016; Walker et al., 2004).

A school district in the Mountain West area of the United States developed a screening survey that addresses school climate, culture, and connectedness to administer to their student body. Their survey aims to identify students’ needs in the following character social-emotional learning (SEL) skills that contribute to student well-being: self-awareness, compassion, resilience, and respect. Their screening survey can potentially identify the general student body’s social-emotional behavioral needs. The data gathered may be used to create tiered supports that address students’ needs.

In this study, we conducted two focus groups that provided a forum for school psychologists in this Mountain West school district who work in an elementary school to discuss what tiered supports may be appropriate to implement in response to needs identified by the survey. The discussion also included professional development topics the participants perceived necessary for school teams responding to the survey data.

The findings from this study contribute to the existing literature by recognizing that school psychologists may understand implementation science and can help lay the needed groundwork before implementing social-emotional screeners so that the process can be more efficient and effective. The findings emphasize the understanding that from the perspective of school psychologists, social-emotional learning should be applied universally and collaboratively at school and at home. School teams need to allocate time to teach social-emotional learning at school. The findings also suggest that school psychologists can determine appropriate interventions if screening data suggest a weakness in social-emotional and behavioral areas and that data collected from the screener can be used to guide topics for professional development.

Keywords: social-emotional and behavior screener, implementation science, multi-tiered system of support, emotional behavioral disorder (EBD), social-emotional learning (SEL)
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Students, educators, and school staff face various problems that interfere with the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Not only are teachers educating diverse cultural populations, but they are also educating children with varying abilities, motivations, and social competence levels (Lane et al., 2013). On one hand, many students are equipped to deal with the school experience and have the necessary skill set to achieve academic and social success. On the other hand, some students do not have an adequate skill set to meet the demands of school (Lane et al., 2012) and struggle with a wide range of behavioral and social challenges. These students may be identified as students with social, emotional, and behavioral disorders (EBD), a broad term used to describe various social-emotional behavioral concerns ranging from minor problems to extreme and chronic disorders. We will use the term EBD interchangeably with social-emotional and behavior problems. The definition of EBD has been problematic and is often subject to misinterpretation, lack of understanding, and stigma (Forness & Kavale, 1997). However, EBD is a commonly used term in the research literature. It will be used in this document to refer to the emotional, social, and behavioral issues that students experience in schools.

EBD affects approximately 20% of students (Costello et al., 2003; Simon et al., 2015) and negatively impacts academic performance and social relationships within the school setting (Kauffman, 2009). Students who are experiencing EBD challenges may be served in a variety of ways in schools. Specifically, to improve outcomes for every student, schools are moving toward a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) model which offers tiered support, including broad universal assistance for all students in both academic and the social or emotional areas. In this
tiered framework, social-emotional screeners can be used to identify students with EBD and offer a steppingstone to preventative support. Interventions can have a universal application within the MTSS framework that benefits the entire school population and individual supports targeted to students’ needs (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

School psychologists play a vital role in the application of MTSS. They are involved in implementing social-emotional screening (Forman et al., 2014). They also bring expertise in a broad range of tiered interventions to support students at risk for developing concerns in academics, social-emotional, or mental and behavioral health issues (National Association of School Psychologists, 2016). School psychologists can provide rich insight into interventions to support students with social-emotional needs. This study explores school psychologists’ perspectives regarding tiered strategies identified by a survey created by a Mountain West school district that addresses school culture, climate, and connectedness. To maintain the confidentiality of the district, we will refer to the survey as the screening survey. The screening survey is similar to a universal social-emotional screener that is intended to broadly identify students’ needs in the following character SEL skills that contribute to student well-being: self-awareness, compassion, resilience, and respect. In this way, the survey can potentially identify the general social-emotional behavioral needs of students in the school and offer proactive and preventative strategies for at-risk students.

It is also vital to understand what professional development topics school psychologists perceive necessary for school teams responding to data collected by the survey. By understanding their perspectives, we can help other school teams select tiered strategies from data gathered from social-emotional screeners and provide constructive, professional
development topics to support school staff. By understanding their perceptions, we can help to ensure that the process is reasonable to implement in the schools.

**Research Questions**

1. What tiered strategies would school psychologists recommend when the screening survey data shows opportunities to address concerns related to the following SEL skills: self-mastery, compassion, resilience, and respect?

2. What professional learning opportunities would be helpful to school psychologists and their school team members who are responding to data from the screening survey?
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Social-emotional wellness is important in education and human development (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), n.d.). This process includes learning to “develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.” (CASEL, n.d.). Students who struggle with social-emotional and behavioral problems experience the opposite of social-emotional wellness and may feel inadequate in many of these areas. Because of this, they often have a difficult time academically, behaviorally, and socially in school (Kauffman, 2009).

Emotional Behavioral Disorder

Emotional behavioral disorder (EBD) is a broad term used to describe youth whose performance is adversely affected by emotional and behavioral responses, including performance in the home, school, social relationships (Kauffman, 2009), and mental health (Darney et al., 2013; Kim-Cohen et al., 2005). The manifestation of EBD looks different for each student. One child can have minor issues such as shyness, while another can be impulsive or aggressive, yet another can struggle with mental illness such as depression or anxiety. EBD may also include students who qualify for special education under the classification of emotional disturbance (ED). ED is characterized by social, emotional, and behavior problems continuing over a long period of time (ED; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 2004). Students who are classified with ED are students with an educational disability and requiring specialized instruction. Students who struggle with EBD may not be classified as a student with ED because they do not fully meet the IDEA criteria. In fact, less than 1% of K–12 students meet the
requirements for ED eligibility to qualify for special education services (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). However, it has been found that 5.8% of U.S. children from 6–11 years old have serious EBD, and 17.3% in this age range have minor EBD (Simon et al., 2015). An average of 9.5% of children and adolescents struggle with major depressive disorder (S. Wagner et al., 2015). According to the National Association of School Psychologists (2020b), around 18% of ninth to 12th graders seriously considered suicide, while 9% have attempted suicide one or more times. Teachers may often avoid students that have EBD because they do not feel equipped to handle students who exhibit behavior problems (Lane et al., 2012).

There is a range of needs of students with EBD, from those who qualify for special education with ED, to those with chronic and troublesome social-emotional difficulties, to those who experience social-emotional or behavioral issues intermittently or on infrequent occasions. Effectively implementing social-emotional screening for all students leads to early identification of youth at risk for EBD. This is key to offering intervention, support, and prevention of worsening problems (Hester et al., 2004; Silver et al., 2010) and helping children develop social-emotional wellness.

Students with EBD often experience academic difficulties in school (Kauffman, 2009), such as trouble completing and turning in assignments, paying attention, and problem-solving (National Association of School Psychologists, 2014). Students with EBD can have behavior problems impacting their learning and their classmates’ learning (Hartman et al., 2017). They are also at risk of dropping out of school (Tobin & Sugai, 1999). Some students with EBD struggle socially. They can withdraw from their peers and experience bullying (Farmer et al., 2013). It
can be hard for them to make and maintain meaningful friendships. They may feel lonely and isolated (Kauffman, 2009).

For students with EBD to succeed in school, they need support to help them gain social competence and meet social-emotional developmental goals. We cannot offer support to students unless we can identify them. Correctly implementing social-emotional screening can help identify students at risk for EBD, which leads to early intervention and prevention (Dever et al., 2015).

**Emotional Disturbance**

In the past, the federal terminology and definition for emotional and behavioral disorders under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was serious emotional disturbance (SED). In the reauthorization of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 2004), the terminology was slightly changed to emotional disturbance (ED). ED is a condition that includes five criteria, of which a student must exhibit at least one. These criteria must also have been experienced for a long period of time and affect the child’s academic performance:

1. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (IDEA, 2004).
**Externalizing Behaviors**

Children who are struggling with EBD often behave in a variety of ways. Some students may have few observable concerns, while others may have more problematic behaviors that have the potential to lead to chronic misbehavior and poor outcomes. It is critical to understand predictors of EBD because children manifesting risk factors early in life are more likely to struggle more often and throughout their education (Gresham et al., 2001; Walker et al., 1995) which may lead to dropping out of school (Tobin & Sugai, 1999). These risk factors are variables that increase the likelihood of the child experiencing EBD at some future point (Nelson et al., 2007). Furthermore, students with social-emotional concerns exhibit common behavioral features, including internalizing and externalizing behavior patterns that are noticeably different from typical students (Lane et al., 2014).

Externalizing behaviors tend to be disruptive, directed outward towards the environment or people, and easily observed. Examples of externalizing behavior include physical and verbal aggressiveness, noncompliance, defiance, temper tantrums, and rule-breaking (Gresham, 2015). These behaviors often disrupt classroom function and impact other students’ learning and social relationships (Hartman et al., 2017). The prevalence of externalizing behavior in students is found to be between 7% and 10% in early education and around 30% in secondary school (Beaman et al., 2007). Teachers often feel they do not have the training or support to adequately deal with students who have disruptive behavior (Westling, 2010), which can be associated with externalizing behavior.

In Nelson et al.’s (2007) research, the authors identified three predictors of problem behavior in kindergarten and first-grade children. The first risk factor focuses on a child’s temperament and the interaction between parents and child (Abidin, 1995). When a child is being
difficult (e.g., demanding, moody, easily upset) and does not adapt to the environment, or the parents struggle to set appropriate limits, the child is at risk for EBD. The second risk factor was destroying their own toys. Researchers found that children were nearly four times more likely to have behavior problems when this behavior was present. The third predictor was maternal depression. It is thought that mothers struggling with depression find it overwhelming to parent, may not exercise effective parenting skills, and some may perceive themselves as poor models for their children (Nelson et al., 2007).

Students who express social-emotional concerns externally while in elementary school often bully other students later in middle school (Farmer et al., 2013; Tobin & Sugai, 1999), which can lead to chronic discipline problems and suspension. One study by Tobin and Sugai (1999) found that discipline referrals were predictive of violent behavior, chronic discipline problems, and dropping out of school. Sixth graders referred for fighting and harassing behaviors continued to receive referrals for the same behavior in 8th grade and for discipline problems and suspension. The number of discipline referrals in 6th grade was found to be a predictor of dropping out of high school. “Boys referred for fighting more than twice in 6th grade and girls who were referred even once for harassing sixth graders were not likely to be on track for graduation when in high school” (Tobin & Sugai, 1999, p. 48).

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), psychological disorders commonly associated with externalizing behavior patterns include attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, and conduct disorder (APA, 2022). Students who express externalizing behaviors are more often identified as needing behavioral support services than those who exhibit internalizing behaviors (Lane et al., 2014).
Internalizing Behaviors

Internalizing behaviors, as opposed to externalizing behaviors, are typically harder to identify because they do not generally impact classroom instruction. These behaviors are directed internally, which makes them less visible to others. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2022) gives examples of internalizing behaviors that include sadness, worry, fear, withdrawal, and psychological disorders such as depression or anxiety. Students with internalizing behaviors are generally quiet and less likely to disrupt the classroom. Furthermore, they are often overlooked, do not receive behavioral support services (Lane et al., 2014), and are underserved in schools (Cunningham & Suldo, 2014).

Risk factors associated with internalizing disorders in young children in elementary school are good indicators of potentially developing maladaptive EBD. Anxiety risk factors include separation anxiety, phobias, temper tantrums, crying, freezing, and social anxiety. In middle school and high school, anxiety can be marked by panic attacks, phobias, and generalized anxiety (Beesdo-Baum & Knappe, 2012). Anxiety is more commonly manifested in elementary school, whereas depressive episodes occur more often during adolescence (Merikangas et al., 2010).

Depression is a common mood disorder in children and adolescents (Merikangas et al., 2010). Adolescent females are nearly twice as likely as males to experience major depression (Merikangas et al., 2010). Risk factors for depression include inward self-focus, experience with a traumatic event, family history of depression, lower socioeconomic status, sexual orientation issues, substance abuse, academic performance concerns, anxiety, social skill deficits, and family dysfunction (Birmaher & Brent, 1998; National Association of School Psychologists, 2014).
Sleep problems such as insomnia are risk factors for depression and can lead to worsening symptoms and increased duration of depressive episodes (Franzen & Buysse, 2008).

Identifying children with internalizing behavior challenges is important because they are more likely to be bullied (Farmer et al., 2013). Students with internalizing behaviors like depression or anxiety have a higher likelihood of poor academic and social functioning along with increased family problems, substance abuse, and suicidal behaviors (S. Wagner et al., 2015). It is essential to effectively implement social-emotional screening to identify students with internalizing behaviors (Farmer et al., 2013). This can lead to opportunities to provide support.

**Academic Performance**

Students with social-emotional and behavioral concerns tend to underperform academically in the classroom. Oftentimes, students with EBD have additional learning disabilities that affect their ability to master academic concepts (Coleman & Vaughn, 2000). These students are likely to perform below grade level and struggle with reading and math (Kauffman, 2009). Behavior problems correlate with academic performance (Kauffman, 2009). Failure in academic performance can increase behavior problems, and behavior problems can affect academic performance, their relationship seeming to be reciprocal in nature. (Kauffman, 2009).

Students with social-emotional and behavioral concerns have a difficult time academically and are also in danger of dropping out of school (Tobin & Sugai, 1999). Indeed, students with EBD have the highest dropout rates of any disability category (M. Wagner et al., 2006). Furthermore, among the students who do graduate, very few pursue post-secondary education. In a study done by Malmgren et al. (1998), the authors found that of the students with
EBD who graduated from high school, only 28.6% had completed a post-secondary program within ten years, compared to 66.9% of students without EBD who graduated high school at the same time.

The same study done by Malmgren et al. (1998), found that individuals with EBD had lower employment rates, were paid less, had less stable employment, and held short-term or part-time jobs in comparison with those who did not have emotional or behavioral disorders. This study reiterates the importance of identifying students with EBD because, without intervention, EBD conditions can lead to negative lifelong problems.

**Social Interactions**

The need for social interaction is comparable to other necessary elements for survival, such as eating and sleeping (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In fact, lack of social interaction or loneliness can have adverse mental and physical health consequences, even leading to increased mortality (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). Social interactions are particularly important for adolescents. “Adolescence might represent a period of enhanced sensitivity to social signals in the environment, and these signals might influence an adolescent’s life course trajectory by motivating certain behaviors” (Blakemore & Mills, 2014, p. 202). EBD students face another challenge because they often feel isolated and struggle to build and maintain healthy social connections (Kauffman, 2009).

Teachers tend to avoid these students to ward off conflict, reducing teaching opportunities for students to learn acceptable behavior (Kauffman, 2009). In fact, research suggests that teachers do not feel equipped to manage students with social-emotional behavior problems (Lane et al., 2012) because they are often disruptive in class (Farmer & Hollowell, 1994). Furthermore, teachers generally have negative interactions with students with EBD. Shore
and Wehby (1999) found that teachers seldom interact positively with students with EBD. This is problematic for these students because “the research has also been consistent in finding that if increases in positive behaviors by teachers occur, decreases in students’ inappropriate behavior are likely to follow” (p. 197).

According to Kauffman (2009), youth with social-emotional concerns can often provoke negative feelings in others. It can incite negative behavior from those around them, impacting students with EBD’s ability to maintain positive social relationships. Some students with EBD fight and harass classmates (Farmer & Hollowell, 1994), which can be a pattern that follows students with social-emotional concerns throughout their school experience (Tobin & Sugai, 1999).

Students with EBD, primarily externalizing behaviors, can have conflicts in their relationships when they are young, and these challenges continue into adulthood. Kauffman (2009) noted that “their disabilities are the result of their behavior, which is discordant with their social-interpersonal environments. Their behavior costs them many opportunities for gratifying social interactions and self-fulfillment” (p. 5). These problematic social behaviors can follow EBD students in adulthood, leading to negative interactions with their community (Jolivette et al., 2000). Individuals with EBD who display externalizing behaviors are more likely to engage in criminal behavior, leading to arrest or incarceration (Jolivette et al., 2000). Effectively implementing social-emotional screening early is needed to identify students with EBD to help prevent and support them before these behaviors turn maladaptive.
Risks of Failing to Identify Students with EBD

There are negative consequences if we do nothing to help students with EBD or those at risk of developing EBD. Walker et al. (2001) reiterated the dangers of not identifying at-risk students:

(a) the majority of behaviorally at-risk students are not identified until well after the point where early intervention could have a substantive, positive impact on their problems; and
(b) by deferring the point of referral, school personnel allow destructive patterns of student behavior to develop and expand to the point where they exceed the tolerance levels and accommodation capacities of teachers within mainstream classroom settings.

(p. 30)

In summary, students who have EBD are at risk for a variety of concerns ranging from social isolation, which can negatively impact their physical and mental health (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010), to aggressive and disruptive behaviors that make it difficult to build relationships and engage in academic instruction (Kauffman, 2009). Many are in danger of not graduating high school and pursuing post-secondary training (Malmgren et al., 1998; Tobin & Sugai, 1999). Intervention and support can provide a critical opportunity to effect positive change. Early identification can lead to the prevention of EBD (Walker et al., 2004). Implementing universal social-emotional screenings can offer insight into students who are at risk for violence, chronic discipline problems, and dropping out of school (Tobin & Sugai, 1999). School is the ideal setting to identify at-risk youth and offer early interventions to address problems before they become permanent and maladaptive (Humphrey & Wigelsworth, 2016).
Multi-Tiered System of Support

In the past, teachers and schools have had a reactive approach to supporting students who were not meeting expectations (Lane et al., 2013). This approach focused on students’ deficits and learning problems. After the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, schools moved toward a preventative search and serve approach (IDEA, 2004). Many schools are shifting away from the older wait-to-fail model and toward a more collaborative, coordinated, and preventative tiered support system. This system is called the multi-tiered system of support [MTSS] (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

MTSS is a framework that gives educators the capacity to support and offer interventions to students with various skill deficits: academic, social, and behavioral. An MTSS framework combines an academic and schoolwide behavior support model, providing students with the best opportunities to succeed academically and behaviorally in school (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). McIntosh and Goodman (2016) described MTSS as a “preventative approach to improving schoolwide and individual achievement through high-quality universal instruction and additional tiered supports provided in response to student need” (p. 6).

RTI/PBIS

Within the MTSS framework, the academic response to intervention (RTI) model is often used. RTI is typically understood to be a framework that addresses the academic needs of a struggling student as well as the academic needs of the entire school. This RTI approach is preventative in nature and seeks to improve schoolwide academic achievement (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). This process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening for all students (RTI Action Network, n.d.). In some schools, data from academic assessments and screening provide information about students’ skills and are also used to guide decisions such as
determining special education eligibility (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Students’ academic progress is monitored to gauge the curriculum’s effectiveness and provide needed intervention (RTI Action Network, n.d.). The goal of RTI is to ensure students have the academic skills to meet grade-level expectations.

Another component of MTSS is schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). Schoolwide PBIS is similar to RTI, but instead of focusing on academics, PBIS focuses on social and emotional behavior. This is a universal application of behavior expectations articulated to all school community members (e.g., students and teachers) who are given many opportunities for developing, teaching, and practicing appropriate behaviors (Lane et al., 2012). PBIS is also a tiered framework that provides tools that offer a range of interventions and supports for students; PBIS also emphasizes using data to improve both behavior and academic outcomes for all students (Freeman et al., 2016). “PBIS emphasizes an instructional approach to behavior support, prevention through environmental change, adaptation to the local context, and using the science of applied behavior analysis to achieve outcomes that are valued by staff, students and families” (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016, p. 6).

MTSS is not just the implementation of RTI and PBIS but an integration of these systems to strengthen and improve the efficiency of all school systems. MTSS, PBIS, and RTI are interrelated and cooperative systems to serve students better. These models incorporate a strong academic and behavioral curriculum core, using data to make instructional decisions and provide a range, or tiers, of intensified instruction (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

**Tiered Levels of Support**

Within MTSS, there are typically three levels of support. Tier 1 is universal proactive support for everyone in the school, including students, teachers, and staff, and is preventative in
nature. This tier is used across all settings within a school (Sugai & Horner, 2006). The general focus of this support can be academic, social, or behavioral. The goal within Tier 1 is to give equal opportunity by providing consistent, robust, high-quality instruction for all students and is generally expected to meet the needs of about 80% of students (Lane et al., 2013).

Tier 2 support is secondary prevention for a few students with specific skill deficits and concerns. This tier aids students approaching grade-level mastery but who need targeted assistance to address a specific skill. Supports are offered to students who have shown they are falling short in their academic or behavioral performance after systematic screening tools were administered. This tier can make up 10–15% of the student population (Lane et al., 2013). Tier 2 encompasses low- to moderate-intensity supports and is intended to add to Tier 1 supports (Lane et al., 2013). Tier 2 offers targeted support, which is tied to core instruction and utilized in smaller groups of students. Some examples of targeted support could include study skills, social skills, behavior, attendance, or dropout prevention (Freeman et al., 2016). Students are frequently monitored, and adjustments are made if goals are unmet. If this level of support is unsuccessful, students can move to individualized supports and strategies, which is indicative of Tier 3 supports.

Tier 3 delivers individualized instruction and support reserved for students who may have had Tier 1 and Tier 2 support but have not adequately responded or progressed academically, socially, or behaviorally. Tier 3 is reserved for students with the greatest need who would benefit from individualized instruction and support. These students comprise about 5% of the typical student body (Lane et al., 2013). Tier 3 supports are the most intensive and restrictive individual strategies and practices (Lane et al., 2013). These strategies are intensive due to the high level of support needed and restrictive because students are likely to be pulled out of regular instruction.
Frequent data is collected to monitor these at-risk students’ progress and make instructional changes. Some examples of Tier 3 support are individualized behavior plans, academic instruction, or wraparound supports that require collaboration with various educational services (Freeman et al., 2016).

**Universal Social-Emotional Screening**

When MTSS is effectively implemented in schools, a screening process is used to determine which tier of support students need. Universal screening is part of the MTSS Tier 1 framework and is utilized to examine the entire school population for risk. Federal policy requires public schools to routinely monitor the progress of students’ academic skills and physical and mental health (Romer et al., 2020). Mental health may be monitored by universal social-emotional screening. Social-emotional screeners are often easy to use, sometimes taking only 10–15 minutes for a teacher to screen an entire class (Lane et al., 2016). To identify all students, who may need social, emotional, and behavioral interventions, social-emotional screeners must be administered at least two times a year (Romer et al., 2020).

By effectively implementing social-emotional screening, the data gathered is used to guide curriculum development, make data-based decisions, formulate plans, and set goals and progress monitoring for at-risk students across all tiers (Yates et al., 2008). This information can guide effective Tier 1 supports as well as planning Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports, which aim to prevent behaviors related to EBD from becoming more intense and requiring more resources to address (Kauffman, 2009). The MTSS framework and three-tiered support system are useful to assimilate social-emotional screening, early intervention, and ongoing monitoring of programs and students’ progress (Stiffler & Dever, 2015). Effectively implementing social-emotional screeners can be a valuable tool to help inform educators in meeting student needs.
Social Emotional Screeners Lead to Early Intervention

Effectively implementing social-emotional screening can help identify students with internalizing behavior (Lane et al., 2008) along with other students at risk for EBD, leading to early intervention and prevention (Dever et al., 2015). In the past, traditional sources of data such as office discipline referrals (ODRs) or teacher referrals have been used to determine who is at risk for EBD (Walker et al., 2004), and this type of process is more likely to identify students who have externalizing behavioral concerns (Walker et al., 2004). Bruhn and associates (2014) said, “These assessments, or screening tools, are designed to identify students with externalizing (e.g., disruptions, over defiance, aggression) and internalizing (e.g., social withdrawal, anxiety, depression) behavioral patterns. Students who are identified as at-risk may go on to receive intervention or additional assessment” (pp. 612–613).

Early intervention in a Tier 1 setting can offer all students academic, social, emotional, and behavioral benefits. In a meta-analysis done by Durlak et al. (2011), researchers looked at 213 universal school-based (Tier 1) intervention programs using social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum that included 270,034 students ranging from kindergarten through high school and compared these students with others not receiving SEL curriculum. The students in the SEL program had an increase in academic performance by 11% and also had improvements in social, emotional, and behavioral skills, such as a decrease in conduct problems, emotional distress, and drug use. This same study found these programs had lasting positive effects 18 years later.

In addition, it is much more cost-effective to intervene early than to react to fully developed disorders (Dowdy et al., 2010). In fact, research shows that there is a positive return on investment with school-wide (Tier 1) early intervention. Looking at six evidence-based
social-emotional learning programs, researchers found that for every dollar spent on these programs, there was a return on investment of $11 (Belfield et al., 2015).

When an at-risk child is identified, interventions can be implemented to help support them. A study by Luiselli et al. (2005) concluded that schools offering school-wide (Tier 1) social-emotional or behavioral interventions could address students’ academic performance, which can, in turn, contribute to improved learning in the classroom. This study implemented a schoolwide intervention to improve behavior in an elementary school with 500–600 students over three years. This school was selected because it had recurrent discipline problems, poor academic performance, and low teacher morale. Teachers and school staff were instructed on how to implement the new intervention, and students were taught the new expectations. “These expectations were taught to students, reviewed with them routinely, and posted conspicuously within the school” (Luiselli et al., p. 188). A token system was put into place. Teachers were encouraged to recognize students who exhibited desirable behavior. Students received a slip of paper that said they were “Caught in the Act.” Desirable behavior included following rules, cooperating, getting along with others, and making academic improvements, among other things. They were entered into a drawing to receive a prize. After three years, a decrease in office referrals and suspensions was found, as well as an improvement in both reading comprehension and math by 18 to 25 percentile points. Student discipline problems decreased, and academic performance improved.

**Schools are an Optimal Place to Offer Social-Emotional Screening**

Schools have a unique opportunity for serious impact by moving from a reactive and individual approach to a preventative, universal and systematic approach, which has the potential to benefit the entire school population and reduce the functional impairments associated with
mental health problems (Dowdy et al., 2010). It is important to note that for school-aged youth, schools are generally the main providers of mental health services (Dowdy et al., 2010). This puts schools in a position where screening for students at risk for EBD is imperative. Bruhn et al. (2014) assert the following, “schools offer the best setting for identifying at-risk students through universal screening because of (a) the large number of youths in schools, and (b) schools may be more likely to follow through with service provisions” (pp. 612–613).

While we understand that screening and early identification are effective tools to aid in the prevention of EBD, schools do not widely use social-emotional screeners. In research by Bruhn et al. (2014), the authors estimated that only 12–13% of schools use social-emotional screeners. Despite the known benefits of using social-emotional screeners, their usage is not common. The reasons social-emotional screeners are not broadly used in schools are not well understood, and few empirical studies have evaluated barriers to school-based social-emotional screening.

**Barriers to Implementing Social-Emotional Screeners in Schools**

According to Siceloff et al. (2017), school hesitancy to use screeners falls under two main categories: (a) practical challenges and (b) misconceptions and concerns related to the implementation of social-emotional screeners. The practical challenges discussed in this article included finding a contextually and developmentally appropriate screener and having adequate resources to collect data and implement strategies to support student needs. The discussed misconceptions and concerns included buy-in from stakeholders, teachers, staff, and parents.

Bruhn et al. (2014) surveyed school administrators on screening practices in their schools and indicated they did not have adequate awareness of screening measures. In fact, a recent study by Burns and Rapee (2022) found that half of their sample of school psychologists did not feel
adequately trained to run social-emotional screening. Another barrier is that schools do not have enough funding to implement screening (Bruhn et al., 2014; Burns & Rapee, 2022). Burns and Rapee (2022) looked at what school psychologists viewed as barriers to implementing social-emotional screeners. Their findings affirmed that limited resources are one of the most considerable barriers to using screening. The authors concluded that insufficient resources included money and time, which indicated that schools are not prioritizing screening. In the same study, the researchers found that 16% of participants, who did engage in screening, did not follow up with students who were identified as at-risk. One study found that teachers would not complete a screener (Goodman, 2001) due to time constraints (Lane et al., 2008).

For social-emotional screening to produce positive change, it must be implemented appropriately in the school setting (Forman et al., 2014). To further understand why social-emotional screeners are not commonplace, we will explore what is needed to implement them in schools effectively.

**Process of Implementing Social Emotional Screeners**

Implementation is the introduction of a new evidence-based initiative, such as a universal social-emotional screening, and the process of putting it into action in an efficient, effective, and sustainable manner to facilitate lasting change (National Implementation Research Network, n.d.). This can be a complex and long process. In best-case scenarios, a well-researched initiative with a strong implementation infrastructure can take between 2–4 years to fully implement (National Implementation Research Network, n.d.). According to the National Implementation Research Network (n.d.), implementation can be divided into four phases: exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation. The four stages are not independent of one another but instead overlap.
**Exploration**

During the exploration stage of implementation, identifying the school’s needs is of primary importance, along with learning which new program will provide solutions and is the best fit. For instance, the new social-emotional screener must meet the student population’s needs and work within the school system (Forman et al., 2014). During this phase, communication about the importance of the social-emotional screener is conveyed within the organization and how it will impact the primary implementor’s workload and responsibilities (Forman et al., 2014). This creates readiness. By creating readiness, individuals can get more information and have time to better understand what is needed and what the change means for them (National Implementation Research Network, n.d.).

Part of the exploration phase understands potential barriers to implementation (Metz & Bartley, 2012). Current literature points to the following potential barriers that exist in implementing social-emotional screeners: time constraints, competing priorities, limited resources, lack of personnel and funding, lack of administrative support, privacy protection, and inability to address the needs of students once identified (Bruhn et al., 2014; Dever et al., 2012).

Another important component in the exploration phase is having an implementation team in place and assessing the organizational supports needed to implement the new universal social-emotional screener. An implementation team needs to be composed of personnel who collectively support and sustain the social-emotional screener. Combined, they must have the expertise to implement new programs and refine and manage the systems and infrastructure to support effective implementation (National Implementation Research Network, n.d.). It is also important to assess whether the school has adequate organizational resources to implement the
new social-emotional screener (e.g., staff, budget, technology, training, and data analysis). Once organizational supports are in place, installation can begin.

**Installation**

The focus of the installation phase is to put into place the necessary structure and resources to initiate the new program (e.g., universal social-emotional screener). This phase constitutes the practical efforts needed to make the change happen, such as acquiring resources and developing the competence of practitioners (Metz & Bartley, 2012). It is essential for implementation teams to build their own capacity to support the implementation process and infrastructure (National Implementation Research Network, n.d.) along with securing necessary financial resources. In this phase, it would be important to know what to do with the information received from social-emotional screeners and how to provide support to address student needs. Another important component of this phase is to examine and strengthen referral pathways, reporting frameworks, and outcome expectations (National Implementation Research Network, n.d.). Another building block of this phase is making sure human resources are in place and that new policies, procedures, and materials are understood and available (Metz & Bartley, 2012; National Implementation Research Network, n.d.). Once these supports are in place, initial implementation can begin.

**Initial Implementation**

During the initial implementation stage, the new program (e.g., universal social-emotional screener) is put into practice. Failure or faltering can occur during this stage as the awkwardness associated with trying new things can lead to the desire to return to what is comfortable (Metz & Bartley, 2012; National Implementation Research Network, n.d.). The focus of this stage is on continuous feedback and improvement. Problems occur when a lack of
support is available to utilize the new social-emotional screener. This phase is a time to look at weaknesses and find ways to strengthen them. Implementation teams must provide support, assistance, and encouragement as the staff manages the new expectation (National Implementation Research Network, n.d.).

**Full Implementation**

Full implementation occurs when the new universal social-emotional screener is integrated by the staff into school policy and the procedures of the school. In this phase, staff skillfully and successfully administer services from the new program (Metz & Bartley, 2012). According to Fixsen et al. (2005), “the anticipated benefits should be realized … as the new evidence-based program staff members become skillful, and the procedures become routinized” (p. 17). The desired outcome of this phase is that staff feel confident and that programs become an integral part of the school. This is the mark of successful implementation. It is important to incorporate the four stages of implementation to successfully integrate universal social-emotional screening practices.

**School Psychologists’ Role in Implementing Social-Emotional Screeners**

School psychologists have a major role in implementing universal social-emotional screening practices. During the exploration phase of implementation, school psychologists can help identify the need for a social-emotional screener and research which screener meets the school’s needs. School psychologists act as change agents by communicating the importance of the screener, how the screener works, and how implementing the screener will affect those involved. In later stages of implementation, the school psychologist can be part of the implementation team that provides guidance and coaching to staff and makes adaptations that can better fit the needs and structure of the school (Forman et al., 2014). Finally, school
psychologists can work with teams to use data obtained from social-emotional screeners to help determine appropriate intervention strategies (National Association of School Psychologists, 2016).

**Implementing the Screening Survey**

A school district in the Mountain West has a newly developed survey that measures school culture, climate, and connectedness. To maintain the confidentiality of the district, we will refer to the survey as the screening survey. The screening survey is in the beginning stages of implementation and is similar to a social-emotional screener. This screening survey uses character SEL skills to describe social-emotional skills. This survey, which students complete, broadly identifies needs in the following character SEL skills contributing to student well-being: self-awareness, compassion, resilience, and respect. In collaboration with district representatives, the character SEL skills currently have working definitions and are as follows: (a) Self-awareness: I am aware of my emotions and manage them in healthy ways at the moment; (b) Compassion: I have empathy for others and respond with kindness; (c) Resilience: I can recover in a timely manner and persevere in challenging situations; (d) Respect: I genuinely value our school environment and all people around me and treat them accordingly with appropriate actions. The screening survey can identify the general student body’s social-emotional behavioral needs. The data gathered may be used to create universal Tier 1 and targeted Tier 2 supports.

School psychologists play a crucial role in using the data from universal social-emotional screeners to develop and implement instructional strategies and interventions. School psychologists are key players in using data to drive decision-making and recommending strategies to support students (National Association of School Psychologists, 2016). It is essential
to understand school psychologists’ perceptions of how they would use the data from the screening survey to develop interventions, collaborate with teachers, or generally respond to data from the survey. For screening to be implemented effectively and to use data to support students, we need to understand the perceptions of how school psychologists anticipate using the data to meet the needs of students, both individually and as a group. We also need to understand what professional learning experiences their teams would need to respond to the screening survey data.

**Summary**

Youth with social-emotional and behavioral problems generally have poor academic performance (Kauffman, 2009) and are often not identified until their behaviors are severe and difficult to address (Humphrey & Wigelsworth, 2016). When schools move toward fully implementing an MTSS framework, which is preventative in nature, universal social-emotional screening is a key component in that process (Romer et al., 2020). Effectively implementing universal social-emotional screening can lead to a long-lasting program that can benefit many students (Dever et al., 2015). School psychologists play a vital role in the implementation process of social-emotional screening (Forman et al., 2014) and in determining how to support students identified as at-risk from screening data (National Association of School Psychologists, 2016). We have not yet located research that has specifically reported school psychologists’ perceptions about how they would enact preventative and proactive strategies for students at risk for EBD. Understanding the ideas and insights of school psychologists regarding how they would use data from a screening measure can help district leaders plan for implementing the universal screener and identify what professional learning experiences are needed.

**Rationale**
This study explores school psychologists’ perspectives regarding how they would use data from a universal social-emotional screener that is key to the implementation of MTSS. The screening survey is similar to a social-emotional screener, although it also addresses school culture, climate, and connectedness, and the data will be used to broadly identify students’ needs in the following character SEL skills that contribute to student well-being: self-awareness, compassion, resilience, and respect. In this way, the survey can potentially identify the general student body’s social-emotional behavioral needs and offer proactive and preventative strategies for at-risk students.

It is also vital to understand what professional development topics school psychologists perceive necessary for school teams responding to data collected by the survey. By understanding their perspectives, we can help other school teams select tiered strategies from data gathered from social-emotional screeners and provide constructive, professional development topics to support school staff and ensure that the process is reasonable to implement in the schools.

**Research Questions**

1. What tiered strategies would school psychologists recommend when the screening survey data shows opportunities to address concerns related to the following SEL skills: self-mastery, compassion, resilience, and respect?

2. What professional learning opportunities would be helpful to school psychologists and their school team members who are responding to data from the screening survey?
CHAPTER 3

Method

This study aimed to understand elementary school psychologists’ recommendations for Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategies that could meet student needs if data from the screening survey conveyed a weakness in the following SEL skills: self-awareness, compassion, resilience, and respect. We also wanted to understand what professional development topics these participants perceived necessary for school teams responding to data collected by the survey. This study received approval from the Institutional Review Board (Appendix A) and all district approvals were given. This section focuses on the focus group participants, data collection procedures, data analysis, and trustworthiness of the research.

Participants

The participants were 19 school psychologists that were employed in a Mountain West district and currently working in an elementary school setting. We conducted two focus groups, with 12 participants in the first group and seven in the second group. According to Krueger and Casey (2009), five to seven participants in each focus group should be an appropriate number for this study to ensure a rich discussion. Due to time constraints, workload responsibilities, and district preferences our first focus group consisted of 12 people, five more than the recommended, and the second focus group consisted of seven school psychologists.

According to Krueger and Casey (2009), when choosing focus group participants, it is essential to identify people with rich information that can provide the greatest insight into the topic chosen for research and have homogeneity, meaning participants need to have something in common. We were interested in this sample because of their involvement or future involvement in implementing the screening survey. We assumed they had rich information that could provide
thoughtful insight into this topic. Furthermore, we inferred that the participants had commonalities because they worked in the same school district and an elementary setting. In addition, the participants were familiar with the online meeting platform, Zoom, because they used it for their monthly meetings.

The primary researcher and the research assistant were invited to a meeting with the school psychologists. In this meeting, both researchers introduced the purpose of the study and asked for participation. In addition, a consent form (Appendix B) and a demographic survey (Appendix C) were distributed to everyone in the meeting. Thirty-nine demographic surveys were returned. Our study consisted of a total of 19 participants, a subset of the group of 39 school psychologists. This study had a corresponding sister study which included school psychologists in a secondary setting, with 15 participants. The returned demographic surveys totaled 39, but in actuality, 34 participants contributed to both studies. Table 1 includes the demographic of all school psychologists who returned the demographic survey, totaling 39. Due to a lack of proper coding, we do not know which five school psychologists did not participate nor can we distinguish between the demographics of the participants in either study. We acknowledge this is a limitation of the study and will be discussed further in the limitation section.
Table 1

Demographic Data of 39 Participants at School Psychologist District Meeting

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<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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**Data Collection**

A contact in the local school district facilitated recruiting school psychologists who were involved in implementing the screening survey in that district. This contact invited the researcher and assistant researcher to a meeting with the school psychologists. After an introduction to the study, a $25 Amazon gift card was offered to those who volunteered to participate. Those who volunteered returned the demographic survey and consent form. The consent form asked participants to maintain the confidentiality of other participants but also addressed the fact that
confidentiality cannot be ensured due to the group format. The district coordinator scheduled a
time for the focus groups to meet.

Focus groups gather opinions and allow a deeper understanding of how participants feel
or think about an issue (Krueger & Casey, 2009). A focus group is a research method of
gathering qualitative data through group interaction using open-ended questions (Krueger &
Casey, 2009). We used Krueger and Casey’s (2009) approach, which suggests using a
predetermined question route with questions that are straightforward, short, and open-ended
(Appendix D). An example of a predetermined question was, “What universal school-wide Tier
1 intervention would you use to address secondary schools.” Some of the questions the
researchers asked were not predetermined, allowing the researchers to follow up with more
detailed questions evoking a more in-depth discussion.

Two researchers moderated the focus group. One researcher was the primary moderator
and was responsible for helping the participants feel at ease, such as ensuring confidentiality,
directing the discussion, and keeping the conversation flowing. This moderator provided a brief
introduction with the following outline (Appendix A):

1. Establish rapport.
2. Go over ground rules (e.g., how to help the discussion go smoothly).
3. An overview of the topic (i.e., introduction of the screening survey).
4. Begin the question route.

The second researcher helped to manage the Zoom meeting and assist with unexpected issues.

Data collection occurred in two focus groups conducted and recorded via Zoom. Each
focus group was approximately 60 minutes in duration. Transcripts were retrieved from Zoom
and compared to the recording by the researchers to ensure accuracy. Brantlinger et al.’s (2005)
research recommended using sound measures to ensure confidentiality. We ensured confidentiality by using password protection on Zoom to protect the participants’ identities and by having them sign the consent form mentioned above. Participants’ identities were kept confidential, and their responses were not connected in a personally identifiable way.

According to Krueger and Casey (2009), three to five focus groups with four to seven participants in each group are considered an appropriate number for this study. We conducted two focus groups. We could not conduct a minimum of three focus groups due to time constraints and district limitations. We had limited access to additional participants because of the district directives that were related to COVID-19 stress. The goal of focus group data is to reach saturation. Saturation is a term used to describe the point at which gaining new insights has stopped (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In this study, we strove for saturation. Although we did not have a minimum of three focus groups in this study, we believe we met saturation because the data between the focus groups were similar to those conducted by a sister study that used the same questions targeted toward secondary school psychologists.

**Data Analysis**

The data were qualitatively analyzed using the classic approach as outlined by Krueger and Casey (2009). This approach uses participants’ experiences to summarize common themes, sub-themes, categories, and sub-categories, particularly those experiences that are common amongst the participants. This qualitative approach aims to read and reread the Zoom transcripts looking for emergent themes relevant to the research questions (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In addition, the primary researcher took a more interpretive approach to get a deeper understanding of the data (Elliott & Timulak, 2005). This process is outlined below:
1. The researcher obtained copies of the Zoom transcripts and watched the recordings multiple times to ensure the transcripts matched the recordings. The recordings were watched in gallery mode to take note of the body language expressed by participants that indicated agreement or disagreement. Body language was coded by nodding (in agreement) or shaking head (in disagreement).

2. Filler words such as “like, ah, so, and um” were removed.

3. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, the researcher substituted a number for focus group one and a letter for focus group two for each participant. Elementary school names were changed to “my elementary school.”

4. Each line was numbered in the transcript, and each focus group had a different text color.

5. The transcripts were separated into individual quotes. The quotes were categorized according to the questions in our question route using the following format suggested by Krueger and Casey (2009):

   a. Did the participant answer one of the research questions? If so, the quote was saved under the relevant research question if the participant commented on responding to students’ social-emotional or professional development needs. If the quote did not address the research questions, it was put in a pile to review later.

   b. The primary researcher read the quotes in the review pile. At this point, the primary researcher determined if the comment added any insight or was important to the research topic questions. If so, the comment was saved under the relevant question. If it did not, the quote was discarded.
The primary researcher looked for emerging themes. Specificity, extensiveness, and frequency helped the researchers know which themes to look at more closely. The themes were determined by reading and rereading all the saved quotes looking for specificity, meaning the comments provided specific detail such as a personal experience. In addition, the researcher looked at the frequency, such as the number of times different people commented on the same idea throughout all the focus groups and if there was agreement among the participants, indicated by head nodes or verbal agreement. Furthermore, the researcher looked at extensiveness, which is the preponderance of comments on a particular theme. Finally, the researcher noted if a comment was made with emotions such as passion, excitement, frustration, enthusiasm, or intensity. This was indicated by a change in voice pitch, word choices (absolutes, repeating words, using feeling words), facial expressions, and body language were noted in the quotes.

Krueger and Casey’s classic approach was helpful in our data analysis, although it had limitations. The pillars of this approach (frequency, extensiveness, and specificity) did not seem sufficient to determine all meaningful themes, subthemes, and categories. We added components of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) which explores the meaning of participants’ lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Similar quotes were gathered, and general themes emerged. The quotes were examined closely to determine possible sub-themes and categories. For example, an “Integration of SEL Skills” theme emerged. Many quotes spoke to this theme. As we examined the quotes closer, we realized there seemed to be two sub-themes, “Prioritize Integration of SEL Skills” and “Team Approach.” Looking even closer, we determined that the quotes could be broken down into categories under each sub-theme. For example, quotes under the sub-theme “Team Approach” seemed to have three categories: “Buy-In,” “School Staff”
Collaboration,” and “Family Collaboration.” To ensure the data analysis was valid, the primary researcher followed steps to establish trustworthiness, as mentioned below.

**Trustworthiness**

Brantlinger et al. (2005) suggested that participants should be represented sensitively and fairly in the report. We accomplished this by making sure our conclusions were trustworthy. Validity in qualitative research refers to *trustworthiness*, meaning that the results accurately reflect the participants’ feelings and thoughts on the topic (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Credibility measures help to ensure trustworthiness (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

The credibility measures listed in Brantlinger et al.’s research (2005) that we used were triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefing. The primary researcher created a summary of the emerging themes, subthemes, categories, and sub-categories with quotes supporting each category. Triangulation was accomplished by having another graduate student (assistant researcher), familiar with the study and literature, independently review the summary. The two researchers cross-checked the data with each other. The primary researcher, assistant researcher, and peer debriefer reviewed the summary and suggested changes to reflect more accurately what was shared in the focus group. When two or more of the group agreed a change was warranted, changes were made. Lastly, we used member checks to address trustworthiness. Member checks were accomplished by allowing the focus group participants to look at the common themes to see if they were consistent with their experience in the focus group and was accomplished by emailing the participants of the focus group a data summary. The participants were encouraged to give open feedback and suggest corrections to the themes. If the participants had revisions, they would have been included in a revised data summary. Ultimately, the participants did not provide suggestions to correct the themes.
CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter presents the focus groups’ results in themes, subthemes, categories, and subcategories. Figure 1 presents the hierarchy of themes, subthemes, categories, and sub-categories. These themes emerged from questions regarding recommendations from school psychologists about how they would respond to data from a survey about students’ social-emotional learning (SEL) needs concerning self-mastery, compassion, resilience, and respect. Specifically, participants were asked about student-focused Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions and professional learning opportunities they would recommend based on the data.
Figure 1

Recommendations for Tier 1 and Tier 2 Interventions and Professional Learning Opportunities
Theme 1: Integration of SEL skills

One central theme that originated from the focus group data is that strategies to teach and support these SEL skills (e.g., self-mastery, compassion, resilience, and respect) must be integrated in various school settings and with collaboration among a variety of school personnel. For example, the participants frequently spoke about integrating teaching strategies for the SEL skills into the classroom and throughout school activities. Integration of these strategies requires a team approach, buy-in from school staff, and a collaborative effort to support staff members and collaboration with families.

Prioritize Integration of SEL Skills

Structured Daily Time to Incorporate SEL Skills. The participants pointed out that teachers are pressured to teach the academic curriculum and do not have enough time to teach content related to SEL. Many participants suggested a need to build a structured time during the day to teach about character SEL skills. Participant A provided one example of creating focused time to teach SEL skills: her current school has dedicated intervention time built into the schedule. She elaborated that this time is a structured time during the day committed to teaching children that may be struggling academically. She suggested that this could be an excellent time to incorporate teaching about the SEL skills to children who need additional support. Participant E made the following statement that many of the participants seemed to support because they nodded in agreement:

And we’ve mentioned this before, but … giving time (F nods). … figuring out ways to structure the day where teachers can have that time to implement some of these things, because you will get pushed back if they feel like it’s another (D, A and F nod) thing on their plate and you don’t have the resources or the time to do it.
Integration of SEL Skills School-wide and in the Classroom. The participants indicated that the SEL skills need to be integrated into the classroom and throughout the school. One example of how this could be done was described by participant G, who shared her experience of how mindfulness was integrated into one of her previous schools. She said teachers had mindfulness moments and shared a short mindfulness video daily in class. The school played calming music as children came to school. Positive affirmations and mindfulness messages were integrated into the daily announcements and the weekly newsletter. She mentioned that this integrated approach received positive feedback from parents and students. Participant A mentioned that she has seen some teachers integrating “The Power of Yet” (a growth mindset lesson) into everything they did in their classrooms. Participant 1 suggested integrating the SEL skills into school mottos and then building interventions around those mottos. Participant 6 pointed out that it may not be best to rely on once-a-month lessons on the SEL skills but instead have them ingrained in Tier 1 of the classroom.

Team Approach

Buy-in. Participants in each focus group mentioned the need for administrators, leadership teams, and teachers to accept, actively support, and participate in teaching the character SEL skills. Leadership teams can include administrators, school staff, teachers and sometimes parents who make important decisions, develop policies, and oversee school improvement initiatives (Great Schools Partnership, n.d.). Participant 1 suggested that leadership teams must have buy-in before providing professional learning opportunities for the character SEL skills. She stated:

I feel like you have to have a lot of buy-in from your leadership team (7 nods) in order to be able to implement effective professional learning opportunities because, I found that if
the leadership teams are not on board, then oftentimes it’s very difficult to not just give those professional learning opportunities, but have people interested in those learning opportunities.

Participant 7 mentioned that she has been in schools where the principal suggested that teachers need autonomy. This participant said that it makes it difficult to “sell the idea of having school-wide behavioral expectations.” Participant B pointed out that teachers know the character SEL skills need to be addressed but do not make them a priority. He stated:

Yeah, kind of along that with my schools. I feel like we still need buy-in. I feel like a lot of times our teachers know that these are concerns that need to be addressed, but a lot of times prioritizing academics and not carving out time. I see the same thing like “A” was saying. (F and E nod).

**School Collaboration.** Some participants suggested that collaboration between teachers, school psychologists, administrators, secretaries, and other school team members could help integrate the teaching of the SEL skills. Participant L mentioned that it might be helpful for the school teams to know the best ways to support one another by knowing the roles of the wellness teams. One example of integration was shared by participant D who stressed the importance of working as a team with a common goal and going to the same trainings together to be more effective. She said,

And I was thinking something very similar more as the team itself, defining how they can support each other best, and maybe that would involve going to the same kind of trainings together so that we can work together best and you know, sometimes I feel like behavior’s the bottom line. … If that is the bottom line if we could talk as a team, how
we can all support that and not be so separate from the other. If you’re doing a Friendship Group, … let it be part of the goals of the behavior plan (K, I and F nods).

Another idea that generated a lot of agreement and support by multiple participants (e.g., shown by head nods, verbal agreements, and follow-up comments) was the importance of school secretaries and involving them in professional development related to the SEL skills. Participant G mentioned that secretaries are the “face of the school” and impact the school’s climate and should be included in training around SEL skills. Participant A followed participant G’s statement by saying, “I love that because our secretaries are the ones the parents come to when they are worried. They are the first contact (E, D, E, I and F nodded). ‘I am worried about my kid. We are going through a divorce.’ They are the first ones that hears that usually.”

**Family Collaboration.** A few participants in both focus groups mentioned the importance of family collaboration. Family collaboration ideas ranged from informing parents and families about the SEL skill, modeling the skill, and reinforcing behaviors at home.

Participant J recommended communication between the school and family. She suggested using newsletters to inform families about the SEL skills. This participant thought it would be valuable to send families resources so they can model, monitor, and implement them at home. Participant H thought that sending family challenges home would increase a child’s SEL skills. Participant G said her school is getting presenters to speak to parents about helping their children with resilience. She mentioned that collaborating with parents to help children with resilience is a big focus at her school. Participant 1 reiterated the importance of reinforcing the SEL skills at home.

She stated the following:

I’m kind of going back to the Tier 1 as well on this. I think when there’s a problem we’re really good about contacting parents and saying, ‘oh your child needs more instruction in
this.’ It is really hard to tell a parent that they need more instruction in respect or in kindness, you know, those kind of things. But I think it’s really important as a school when you decide on values that you want to go with and if you’re going to be focusing on respect and kindness and self-mastery and all those things you want the parents to know and you want them to be able to help reinforce those things as well.

**Theme 2: Instruction of SEL Skills**

The second central theme that emerged from the focus group data was that students need to receive direct instruction for SEL skills (self-mastery, compassion, resilience, and respect) to build those skills successfully. Instruction must be delivered explicitly with clear expectations and modeled by adults. Regarding instruction, teachers and school staff need resources to teach the SEL skills. Resources suggested included a curriculum toolbox to address the different SEL skills, lesson ideas, and specific resources to support a need in a particular disposition.

*Instruction*

**Explicit Instruction and Clear Expectations.** Creating clear expectations and explicit instruction are a key component of students mastering each character disposition. Many participants emphasized the importance of defining the character SEL skills. Participant 3 said, they needed to be “making sure that those expectations are well known and understood in all settings of the school environment.” Participant F mentioned how some of the SEL skills can feel broad, such as respect, and that it is helpful to define and explicitly teach students how to act respectfully in different school settings (i.e., at recess, in the cafeteria, with other students, with us, using the facilities). Participants 7 and G mentioned that expectations must be clear and consistent school-wide, in assemblies, and in the classroom, with reminders posted in visible places.
**Adult Model Expectations.** The focus group members highlighted that students learn best when teachers model the expected SEL skills. Two participants suggested that adults can sometimes be poor models of appropriate behavior. Participant 7 mentioned that teachers sometimes use sarcasm, and some students may not understand the meaning behind the words and assume the teacher is mean. Participant 1 relayed that sometimes adults model poor behavior in the hallways but should “explicitly and purposefully model and remind what it looks like to be respectful.”

**Resources**

Many of the participants mentioned a need for resources that address each SEL skill. They suggested a need for a curriculum toolbox that is accessible for all school staff to use to teach and support each SEL skill. The participants provided ideas for lessons they are currently implementing in their schools and ideas for resources that could support students if a need arises in a particular disposition.

**SEL Framework/Curriculum Toolbox.** Many participants mentioned that teachers need professional development training to address and teach each SEL skill. Participant J suggested that to build competency, there needs to be a framework for each character disposition and a specific strategy or curriculum to help the teachers teach each disposition. This participant continued by saying, “and to have those professional learning opportunities on how to implement or run those specific strategies for teachers.” A couple of participants mentioned that it might be helpful to have a curriculum toolbox available to staff to support the instruction of the SEL skills. Participant 1 mentioned,
A lot of times I hear teachers say, ‘I just need something to be able to teach my kids that skill.’ So, we need to have curriculum to be able to help them, or at least give them ideas on how to guide those conversations.

**Current Lessons.** The participants provided many examples of lessons currently being implemented in the classroom and schoolwide. These lessons ranged from classroom lessons on mindfulness to assemblies focused on different SEL skills. Participant 3 shared an idea she used while teaching about respect. She helped a class make a YouTube video about respect, defining what it is, how it should look in the classroom and schoolwide with other people, and what it is to have self-respect. Participant A mentioned a mindfulness moment practice in her school. She pre-recorded her voice, guiding the school through mindfulness activities played every Monday during announcements. Participant I said that in their school, the school psychologists and social workers pair up and teach social-emotional lessons with activities to two classes at a time. Many participants mentioned that Hope Squad (i.e., a student-led organization that targets suicide prevention) is a way to teach compassion schoolwide (Hope Squad, n.d.). Participant F mentioned that bibliotherapy lessons could be helpful resources to teach SEL skills. Participant 3 mentioned it could be helpful to incorporate yoga into the PE curriculum to support resilience.

**Ideas for Resources to Support a Particular SEL Skill.** All the participants brought up ideas for resources to support students if the screening survey showed need in a particular disposition. The resources mentioned included curriculum, cell phone apps, books, websites, and other support strategies. More details are available in Appendix E. Hyperlinks are included for many of the resources. The books the participants mentioned are included in Appendix E.

**Self-Mastery.** Some participants suggested resources to offer support if there is a need in Tier 1 or Tier 2 for self-mastery. Some of the resources were apps such as ClassDojo (ClassDojo,
2023) and Head Space (Headspace, 2023). Other resources included social-emotional curricula such as Responsive Classroom (Responsive Classroom, 2023), Zones of Regulation (Kuypers, 2011), and Mind Up (Mind Up For Life, n.d.). The Incredible Five-Point Scale (Buron & Curtis, 2022) was a recommended book to address self-awareness.

**Compassion.** The participants mentioned a few resources to target compassion if a need arose in Tier 1 or Tier 2. They mentioned the curricula Character Strong (Character Strong, n.d.) and Mindful Schools (Mindful Schools (n.d.). One participant shared a link for self-compassion. Two books were suggested.

**Resilience.** Many participants had ideas for resources to support resilience. These participants mentioned that resilience is a main focus in their schools. This disposition had the most ideas. Ideas ranged from books such as Bubble Gum Brain (Cook, 2017) to curricula such as Zones of Regulation (Kuypers, 2011), Strong Kids (Carrizales-Engelman et al., 2016), Why Try (https://whytry.org), and Character Strong (https://characterstrong.com). Support strategies such as positive self-talk, the power of yet, and websites were also mentioned.

**Respect.** Three resources were discussed concerning the respect character disposition. These resources focused on respecting yourself and others and included strategies such as “I” statements and following a peace path. One book mentioned is called Personal Space Camp (Cook & Hartman, 2007).

**Interventions Can be Adapted by Tier and by Disposition.** Both focus groups mentioned that the same intervention strategy could be adapted for Tier 1 or Tier 2. For instance, Participant 5 mentioned that a particular intervention strategy could work for Tier 1 and Tier 2, and the only difference would be targeting. She said,
I think that the difference between the Tier 1 and Tier 2 is going to be just targeting (2 nods), and so Tier 1 is to the whole classroom and very general kind of basic (6 nods) this just works in a lot of different situations, whereas with Tier 2 you’re looking at a smaller group and you’re looking at those specific student issues (2 nods). So you will teach them strategies that are more specific to their problems (2 nods). … It’s not that the strategy itself is so different but it’s more specifically targeted to those students and their specific issues.

Multiple participants commented that many SEL skills could be addressed with similar strategies. For example, Participant 7 said that the intervention strategy for compassion may be similar to respect. Participant 7 said, “I was just thinking that my thoughts for resilience are the same as for self-mastery (1 and 6 nod).” Many participants commented that a social-emotional curriculum could address multiple character-building skills. For example, Participant 2 mentioned that the same curriculum or approaches could be used for different SEL skills. She said,

I feel like it’s hard, because a lot of the curriculum that we do use, talks about all these skills, because these are ultimately all social skills or self-mastery skills and so … they’re all kind of grouped in the same thing. … I feel like we still will be using similar, if not the same curriculums or same approaches.

**Theme 3: Safe and Welcoming School Climate**

The third central theme that emerged was that schools need to feel safe and welcoming. The participants noted that many things could contribute to a safe and welcoming school environment. The main subthemes mentioned were a need for safe spaces, building relationships
and belonging, having a school climate that promotes the practice of the SEL skills, positive reinforcement, and training teachers on how to have a safe and welcoming classroom.

**Safe Spaces**

Many participants mentioned the need for safe spaces in school to process emotions and to create an atmosphere that feels welcoming. For example, some participants talked about calming corners in the classrooms. The participants described these calming corners as areas in classrooms that children can go to if they feel stressed out or overwhelmed by emotion. Here they can take a break, regroup, process their emotion and return to their desk once they have calmed down. Participant E said, “I’m thinking about resiliency. And having kids bounce back. I think it’s important for classes to have built-in safe spaces, a place for students to go to (A and F nod).”

Some participants mentioned the importance of creating a safe space in the school to manage emotions, such as wellness rooms. These participants currently have a wellness room in their school. Some participants described wellness rooms as similar to calming corners but are a designated room in the school where children can go to de-escalate when feeling overwhelmed. The room can have sensory toys, calming music, coloring books, playdough, comfortable chairs, and other elements to promote safety and calm. Participant 2 expounded on wellness rooms by saying, “… our elementary school has created a wellness room, as a result, children are able to manage their emotions, so creating a space in your school for a Tier 1 intervention” (1 nods).

Other participants mentioned the importance of creating an inviting physical environment inside the school. An example given by Participant E was the following:

I think about the physical environment, even just putting things up on the walls like positive affirmations or making the school environment feel really welcoming (A nods). I
think that has a powerful effect too. You don’t want your school to look like a prison, right? So I think that’s something that could be done easily.

**Building Relationships and Belonging**

One idea related to having a welcoming and safe school climate was the need for students to build relationships and have a sense of belonging. Several participants mentioned that building rapport with children and building relationships with students can be therapeutic. Participant D encapsulated this idea in the following comment, “… the biggest thing is, I think, the rapport with them is going a long way. I try to get them connected to other people at the school that they can trust and that’s building their resiliency, I think.” This comment by Participant 4 also summed up the thoughts related to this sub-theme:

Theoretical approaches to therapy don’t matter nearly as much as the connection that’s involved…. Even though we go about doing … the various curricula and what not, it’s a therapeutic relationship ultimately that makes the change for most of the kids. This is the reality of the situation.

**School Climate that Promotes Practice of SEL Skills**

Many participants suggested the need for students to practice the SEL skills. These participants gave examples of strategies they have used in their elementary schools to foster practice, encompassing school-wide activities, school-wide challenges, clubs, small groups, older children helping younger children, and practice in the classroom. For example, kindness club was one activity that promotes practicing the SEL skills. Members of the club promote kindness by doing acts of service for other students and in the community. Another participant talked of a school-wide initiative called the Buddy Bench. There is a bench on the playground where students can sit if they feel left out or lonely. The school has taught the student body that if they
see someone on the buddy bench, they are encouraged to invite that person to play with them. Many participants mentioned that Hope Squad, a school-wide, student-lead suicide prevention initiative, offers opportunities to practice compassion with other students. A participant suggested having posters around the school to remind students of the SEL skills with dares or challenges to encourage practice.

A few participants suggested having opportunities to practice learning the skills related to specific skills in small groups. Participants suggested friendship club, recess club, and lunch bunches, giving a small group of students the opportunity to practice empathy and social skills by playing games together under adult supervision. Participant 3 mentioned that her school provides service opportunities for the older students to help the younger students. Sometimes the older students help the younger students with reading and homework, and sometimes they are asked to be good examples to the younger students.

Some participants mentioned that providing opportunities to practice the SEL skills in the classroom is essential. Participant E gave an example of practicing self-awareness in the classroom. He said,

I have a student I do counseling with and he has a hard time managing his emotions, but when he goes to that space that’s in the classroom (calming corner) he’s able to just kind of sit. I gave the teacher this coping skills folder. Essentially you open it up there’s a bunch of feelings and you take it off the Velcro and you put it on right under where it says what am I feeling right now, and you just kind of move that over. Then you identify what’s the size of your problem, and after that, what can you do, so, it helps them have this systematic way of figuring out how to deal with whatever they’re going through at
that moment. I think that’s something that if teachers were to implement, they could do something simple like that just in their own classrooms.

Positive Reinforcement

A few participants mentioned that a safe school climate provides positive reinforcement to students practicing the SEL skills. Some participants mentioned the importance of a PBIS system to offer reinforcements. Another participant mentioned that reinforcements could be randomly given, meaning when a student engages in schoolwide behavior expectations school staff take notice and reinforced that behavior through praise or earning a prize. Participant F gave an example of a positive reinforcement strategy used in a previous school. She said,

I don’t know if it’s particular to compassion, but we were talking about goals, and I think one of the trickiest things is trying to get kids to do the things you talk about in real life. I had a school several years ago that had the 200-club chart (H and A nod) where they could earn tickets, and it was a link to a drawing, but you could focus it on a goal for the month. So, if you wanted them to practice compassion and watch for compassion to award tickets, so that you can catch kids doing the skill. Whatever it is, and implement like so they’re using it, not just in the lessons.

She also mentioned how noticing a child practicing a disposition could lend itself to discussing what the child did, which would be reinforcing what they are learning.

Theme 4: Data Driven Decision Making

One central theme that originated from the focus group data is that the screening survey that examines student risk regarding SEL skills of self-awareness, compassion, resilience, and respect can offer insight into the needs of the student population. Data collected from the screening survey can inform decision-making for the student body and guide targeted
interventions that address students’ needs. Understanding school-wide student needs in a particular disposition can help inform lesson planning and teacher training.

Another subtheme that emerged was the need to collect data to determine if the current strategies supporting students in a disposition are meeting student needs. For example, if the school targets the disposition of compassion, the school must design strategies to measure this skill. Once integrated instruction of compassion begins, the school must take data to measure if students are using compassion-related skills. This data can inform the school and determine if more instruction and practice are needed for this particular disposition.

**Screening Survey Can Expose Need**

Participant G noted that the school staff needs training to use the screening survey, interpret the results, and understand the next steps. A few participants speculated that using the survey could provide insights into students’ needs and possibly school climate issues. Participant 1 summed it up by saying, “So I think what it could do is help us to target some of the social-emotional needs better than just kind of throwing darts and hoping that it hits right (5 nods).”

**Social-Emotional Screeners can Inform Lesson Planning**

Many participants relayed that the district-created social-emotional screener could inform what lessons could meet student needs if there were a weakness in one of the SEL skills. A few participants noted that currently, their schools have school counselors teaching social-emotional lessons each month. Many participants hypothesize that data gathered from the social-emotional screener could inform what lessons the school counselors could use for their monthly lessons to meet student needs better. Participant 1 said,
I know the school counselors do school-wide classroom lessons, so I feel like if we were to know if there are certain areas that are a significant problem, it would help us guide our services better. And, better use our time basically.

**Social Emotional Screening Can Inform a Need for Professional Development**

Another subtheme related to data-driven decision-making is that the survey data could inform areas needed to enhance teacher learning. Participants mentioned the need to train teachers and administration in trauma-informed practices, neurodevelopment and diversity, and rates of praise. Participant A comment captured the main idea of this subtheme,

> Sometimes you might want to start with, depending on what the survey showed, but if it’s a pretty broad thing across your whole school, you may want to do some teacher training on rates of praise and on their interactions with the students to model (K and E nod).

Many participants mentioned that teachers, school staff, and the participants (i.e., school psychologists) need professional development training in how to use the screening survey, interpret the results, and address the needs revealed from the survey. They also mentioned that teachers need professional development related to teaching each SEL skill and a need for teachers to learn how to have a safe and welcoming classroom.

**Data Collection to Inform if Strategies are Meeting Student Needs**

One participant mentioned the need to collect data to monitor if the implemented strategies to support students are effective. He said,

> I’d say it would be helpful to have a meaningful data collection and analysis process or system to make sure that the efforts, especially the Tier 1 level in the classrooms and school-wide, are having an intended effect. I think [we need to make] sure we have some good data-driven practices. I mean if we are going to look to implement strategies or
systems to improve these specific outcomes in the schools, we want to make sure that we have a good way to collect data on that, and then make sure that we can have time to look at the data and make adjustments as we go. Have it as data-driven as possible because I think a lot of schools and a lot of teachers and individuals do a lot of things to try to teach and support a lot of these skills, but it is hard to know what kind of effect or impact it is having (E nods) in the classroom or the school.

**Summary**

The analysis of the focus group transcripts from school psychologist participants highlighted recommendations for elementary school students that support student needs in the areas of self-mastery, compassion, resilience, and respect, as well as professional learning opportunities. In this process, the participants emphasized the importance of integrating the disposition school-wide by allocating time to teach the SEL skills and teaching them in different settings in the school. Part of this integration included staff and families united in this effort. The instruction of the SEL skills must be taught explicitly and modeled by the adult staff. Creating a welcoming and safe school environment was a key support strategy mentioned. Furthermore, data-driven decision-making seemed to play a vital role in understanding student needs and determining the efficiency of support strategies.
CHAPTER 5

Discussion

School psychologists play a vital role in the implementation process of social-emotional screening (Forman et al., 2014) and in determining how to support students identified as at-risk for EBD from screening data (National Association of School Psychologists, 2020b). We found no research that has specifically reported research summarizing preventative and proactive strategies for at-risk students. This study aimed to learn more about school psychologists’ perspectives on responding to school-wide screening data and offering preventative social-emotional and behavioral support strategies.

Nineteen school psychologists from a Mountain West state participated in two focus groups. This study’s findings highlight what Tier 1 or Tier 2 strategies the participants would consider using in elementary schools to address self-mastery, compassion, resilience, and respect and what professional development topics school psychologists perceive necessary for school teams responding to data collected by the survey. Table 2 summarizes the current literature on implementation science, PBIS, the interconnectedness of social-emotional learning competencies, and using screening data to inform decision-making. Table 2 also connects these current literature topics to the findings from this study.
Table 2

Contributions to the Literature

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Review of Literature</th>
<th>Findings of this Study</th>
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<td>Current literature points to the following potential barriers that exist in implementing social-emotional screeners: time constraints, competing priorities, limited resources, lack of personnel and funding, lack of administrative support, privacy protection, and inability to address the needs of students once identified (Bruhn et al., 2014; Dever et al., 2012). During the exploration phase of implementation science, communication about the importance of the social-emotional screener is conveyed within the organization and how it will impact the primary implementor’s workload and responsibilities (Forman et al., 2014). This creates readiness. By creating readiness, individuals can get more information and have time to better understand what is needed and what the change means for them (National Implementation Research Network, n.d.). The participants had an understanding of implementation science. School psychologists believe time is a valuable resource and a barrier to implementing interventions. They expressed the need for readiness or buy-in from vested partners (teachers, admin, parents). The participants shared that professional development is needed to ensure competency in understanding data from the screener and delivering SEL support. The participants noted that teachers and administration need professional development regarding how to teach SEL skills, create safe and welcoming classrooms, handle trauma-informed practices, strengthen growth versus fixed mindsets, manage neurodiversity in students, and increase rates of praise.</td>
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The installation phase constitutes the practical efforts needed to make the change happen, such as acquiring resources and developing the competence of practitioners (Metz & Bartley, 2012). Another building block of this phase is making sure human resources are in place and that new policy, procedures, and materials are understood and available (Metz & Bartley, 2012). Another component of MTSS is schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and focuses on social-emotional behavior. It is a universal application of behavior expectations articulated to all school community members (e.g., students and teachers) who are given many opportunities for developing, and teaching, and practicing appropriate behaviors (Lane et al., 2012). School psychologists in this sample indicated that it is necessary to have a universal application for SEL instruction. This universal application included collaboration with teachers, working as a team, and prioritizing SEL. The participants reported that teachers need hands-on resources with scripted lessons. Another part of this universal application of SEL is prioritizing SEL instruction enough to teach SEL and attend to the emotional needs of students. |

Another component of MTSS is schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and focuses on social-emotional behavior. It is a universal application of behavior expectations articulated to all school community members (e.g., students and teachers) who are given many opportunities for developing, and teaching, and practicing appropriate behaviors (Lane et al., 2012). Social-emotional learning comprises distinct yet interconnected competencies (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.-b). School psychologists in this study saw an overlap of the SEL skills. The SEL curriculum can address multiple SEL skills despite different working definitions of each disposition. |
School psychologists can work with teams to use data obtained from social-emotional screeners to help determine appropriate intervention strategies (National Association of School Psychologists, 2020a).

The recommendations for Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports are examples and extensions of what they already do.

School Psychologists Understand Implementation Science

An important finding of this research revealed that the participants appeared to have an implicit understanding of implementation science. However, the connection between implementation science and the participants’ responses was not explicitly made. The key items associated with implementation science mentioned by the participants were having adequate resources (time), creating readiness, and professional development. The current literature points to the following potential barriers that exist to implementing social-emotional screeners: time constraints, competing priorities, limited resources, lack of personnel and funding, lack of administrative support, and inability to address the needs of students once identified (Bruhn et al., 2014; Dever et al., 2012) and participants’ responses reflected key ideas found in implementation science. The participants’ responses related to implementation science provide evidence of the face validity of implementation science.

Time as a Resource

Support strategies that the participants mentioned include having adequate resources before implementing an innovation, and one of the most important resources emphasized was time. A key finding that emerged from the analysis of the focus group transcripts was that the participants believe that time is a valuable resource for teachers and a potential barrier to implementing interventions. Many participants mentioned that teachers are under pressure to
teach academic curricula and that teaching social-emotional curricula to support the disposition may not be prioritized due to time constraints.

**Readiness**

Another component of implementation science that the participants emphasized was the need for readiness or buy-in from vested partners (e.g., teachers, admin, parents). The current literature points to the implementation phases (e.g., exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation), which participants referred to without explicitly mentioning implementation science. One researcher (Forman et al., 2014) noted that to create readiness, communication about the importance of the social-emotional screener should be conveyed within the organization and how it will impact the primary implementor’s workload and responsibilities during the exploration implementation phase. When readiness is achieved, individuals develop understanding about the competencies needed and what the change means for them (National Implementation Research Network, n.d.). Participants in each focus group mentioned the need for buy-in from administrators, leadership teams, and teachers to accept, actively support, and participate in teaching character SEL skills. Participant B pointed out that many teachers know the character SEL skills need to be addressed but still do not make it a priority, and buy-in was needed.

**Professional Development**

The participants indicated that teachers and administration need professional development to achieve competency to provide student supports. Competency is one of the key implementation drivers (National Implementation Research Network, n.d.). The current research reveals that the installation phase constitutes the practical efforts needed to make the change happen, such as acquiring resources and developing the competence of practitioners. Another
building block of this phase is ensuring that human resources are in place and that new policies, procedures, and materials are understood and available (Metz & Bartley, 2012). Participant G mentioned a need for professional training on the use of the screening survey for everyone who will be involved in the use of the screener. This participant mentioned training should include how to look at the results, the types of data that can be gathered and what the future steps are. These participants seem to have an implicit understanding of the need for building the capacity to initiate, support, and sustain change, which is one of the vital implementation drivers (National Implementation Research Network, n.d.).

Many participants noted that teachers and administrators needed professional development regarding how to address and teach SEL skills, how to create a safe and welcoming classroom, handle trauma-informed practices, manage neurodiversity, strengthen growth versus fixed mindsets, and increase rates of praise. However, the participants in this study only indicated that teachers and administrators needed additional professional development but did not mention they themselves needed professional development other than learning how to use, interpret, and determine future steps from the screening data.

**School Psychologists Understand the Need for Universal Application**

Past research has indicated that positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) is a universal application of behavior expectations articulated to all school community members (e.g., students, teachers, and parents) who are given many opportunities to develop, teach, and practice appropriate behaviors (Lane et al., 2012). Another important finding was the participants’ idea of a universal application of a social-emotional curriculum that reflected foundational components of universal supports and strategies. The participants specified that it is necessary to collaborate with teachers, administrators, and parents to teach a social-emotional
curriculum. They shared that this process needs to be a team effort with unified support and systematic school-wide integration. They pointed out that the social-emotional curriculum should be prioritized, taught by teachers, and reinforced throughout the whole school and at home. The participants indicated that teachers need hands-on resources with scripted lessons and professional training that is explicit and concrete. The participants offered many examples of resources and SEL curricula that could meet this need. Part of this universal application was to have safe spaces within the school for students to process emotions. Participants mentioned wellness rooms or classroom calming corners where students could deescalate and, when ready, could come back to learning.

**School Psychologists Can Identify Appropriate Interventions**

An interesting finding was the ease at which the participants could recommend preventative strategies to support students at Tier 1 and Tier 2 levels pertaining to the SEL skills. Current literature suggests that school psychologists work with teams to use data obtained from social-emotional screeners to help determine appropriate intervention strategies (National Association of School Psychologists, 2020a). The participants’ ability to identify a broad range of interventions was evident in our data.

In years past, school psychologists have been gatekeepers to special education, waiting for students to fail before conducting special education evaluations (Deno, 2002). With the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, schools are shifting from reactionary strategies and moving towards MTSS (IDEA, 2004), which is proactive and preventative (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). The school district the participants work for has a broad service delivery model. These participants displayed a fluid and broad sense of strategies that could be used to respond to screening data.
Disposition and Tier Overlap

The focus group questions were intended to probe the participants’ recommendations for Tier 1 and Tier 2 support strategies to address students’ need in self-mastery, compassion, resilience and respect. An interesting finding was that many of the participants did not see much differentiation in the strategies they would use to support the different SEL skills. Each SEL skill had a distinct working definition associated with it, yet distinct recommendations for each SEL skill were not consistently given. Participant 2 mentioned that the same curriculum or approaches could be used for different SEL skills. This is supported by the literature that defines distinctive yet interconnected social-emotional competencies (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.-b). School psychologists in this study seem to suggest that most social-emotional curricula can be adapted to meet student needs across multiple SEL skills. However, the overlap could also imply that the school psychologists do not see distinct differences between the SEL skills. Because they have not yet used data from the survey, they may not have sufficient familiarity with the differences in the SEL skills to plan interventions and supports.

In addition, the participants seemed to notice little difference in how they would approach Tier 1 versus Tier 2 support if screening data suggested a weakness in one of the following social-emotional and behavioral skills: self-awareness, compassion, resilience, and respect. The research suggests a distinction between teaching Tier 1 and 2 social-emotional competencies. Tier 1 is universal and proactive, allowing for equal opportunity for all students (Sugai & Horner, 2006). Tier 2 strategies address a specific skill when students are not meeting expectations (Lane et al., 2013). In contrast, the participants did not discuss the explicit distinctions presented in the literature. It is possible that because the questions were asked targeting a particular weakness in a social-emotional wellness skill, the participants had a more
targeted intervention in mind which would align with Tier 2 support and elicit little distinction between Tier 1 and Tier 2. On the other hand, this could indicate that the participants may see little difference in teaching a social-emotional skill between Tier 1 and Tier 2. It is possible that the practitioners’ real-world experience does not lead them to distinguish between the tiers the same way researchers and writers of the tiers suggest.

**Implications for Practice**

The results of this study describe how school psychologists from one district talk about implementing social-emotional learning across Tier 1 and Tier 2. The findings of this study can be applied to other school districts to inform and strengthen school practices in various ways, even if the population of the student body is different. Other districts or elementary school teams may find this research useful when selecting Tier 1 or Tier 2 social-emotional and behavioral support strategies. Appendix E has suggestions that the participants offered, including video links, websites, books, and a social-emotional curriculum that could support students with social-emotional and behavioral needs.

In addition, the information presented in this study can be helpful for elementary schools or districts to give information on the needed groundwork before implementing a social-emotional screener so that the process can be more efficient and effective. Furthermore, this study aimed to gain school psychologists’ insight when rolling out a new screening measure. This group valued and emphasized preventative and proactive support strategies for students at risk for EBD in elementary schools. Knowing that these participants were not expecting or needing quick implementation of the screener seems important. In the future, administrators and leaders may want to clarify that implementing a screening process will be implemented over time.
Other school districts and elementary schools may find this research helpful in providing reasons to integrate and prioritize social-emotional learning. The participants in this sample accentuated the importance of social-emotional learning and the value of integrating new practices school-wide. They also highlighted the value of allocating time to teach social-emotional learning, which they mentioned needs to be prioritized in school-wide efforts and in different school settings such as the cafeteria, the playground, and in specialty classes. For this integration to be successful, the participants’ noted the importance of collaboration between school staff and families to reinforce lessons in multiple settings. The participants suggested that school staff and families be united in this effort.

The participants suggested that the instruction of social-emotional learning must be explicit and modeled by adult staff with opportunities for students to practice. Finally, the participants noted that the school environment must reinforce the disposition and be safe and welcoming. For example, calming music can be played over the speakers when students come to school. Positive affirmations and mindfulness messages can be integrated into the daily announcements and the weekly newsletter sent home to parents. Teachers could allocate time to have a mindfulness moment. They could explicitly teach what mindfulness is and model a deep breathing exercise. Teachers could give opportunities to practice short relaxation or deep breathing exercises after transitions and in other specialty classes. Parents could reinforce this learning at home by offering chances to use deep breathing when the child feels strong emotions.

The school psychologists in this study emphasized that before a social-emotional screener is implemented, all vested partners (i.e., teachers, staff, administration, and parents) need information about how the screener will be administered and what data will be generated and how the data will be used. They understood and highlighted that data-driven decision-making
plays a vital role in understanding student needs and determining support strategies. Furthermore, they pointed out it is crucial to have a plan in place if a need arises in a particular disposition. These participants reiterated that it is essential to have a “curriculum toolbox” with lessons that are easy for teachers to use and are explicit. Detailed recommendations for Tier 1 or Tier 2 support strategies can be found in Appendix E.

In conclusion, this research may give additional guidance to school district leaders when planning to implement a social-emotional screener. It may be advantageous for school district leaders to recognize that school psychologists may be a good resource because of their seemingly intuitive understanding of implementation science and knowledge of how to help students. They may be an excellent resource to train others, such as district employees and school staff, and could help advocate for those resistant to SEL, such as parents and teachers.

**Limitations**

Limitations of this study could include our participants or focus group questions. According to Brantlinger et al.’s (2005) research, it is essential to select appropriate participants. Appropriate participants are identified as those typical of the population of interest (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Our participants were school psychologists and were a population of interest because their district was rolling out a social-emotional screener. The participants primarily participated in this district’s Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports. However, our questions focused on Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategies if the data suggested a need in the areas of self-awareness, compassion, resiliency, and respect. Teachers, social workers, and school counselors mainly deliver Tier 1 instruction. We may have needed to adjust the research question to target Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports or recruit different participants.
Another limitation of this study could have been the Zoom environment. Brantlinger et al. (2005) state that one must use sufficient mechanisms to record and transcribe interviews. We used Zoom to conduct, record, and transcribe our focus group. This format allowed the participants more accessibility to the focus group due to the lack of need for travel. The Zoom environment allowed the participants to stay at work, Zooming in from their schools. Some of the participants had to step away from the focus group to engage in something work-related for a short period. This distraction could have impeded their responses and engagement with the focus group questions. Furthermore, Zoom could be a problematic format for open communication due to the nature of unmuting to speak. In addition, it is difficult to read body language in this online environment.

An additional limitation of this study is that the participants appeared to display a fluid and broad sense of strategies that could be used to respond to screening data. Determining appropriate intervention strategies seemed to be part of their job description. Although the participants knew what to do to support youth with Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions, they did not express awareness that there may be other ways to support students, indicating there could be confirmation bias in the support strategies they mentioned.

Another limitation of this study was the number of focus groups conducted and the number of participants in each focus group. According to Krueger and Casey (2009), a minimum of three focus groups must be conducted before saturation can be met. Saturation is a term used to describe the point at which gaining new insights has stopped. Our study conducted only two focus groups. This was due to the participants’ time constraints and the district’s preference. Krueger and Casey (2009) suggested that four to seven participants in each group should be an appropriate number for this study. This number ensures that the focus group has enough
participants to bounce ideas off while not having to compete to speak. There was a total of 19 participants in our study. The first focus group had 12 participants, and the second had 7. According to Krueger and Casey (2009), the first focus group may have been too large and impacted the participants’ responses. A few participants spoke only a couple of times, indicating that the focus group size may have been too large and that a smaller focus group could have elicited more responses.

Furthermore, additional limitations of this study came regarding the difficulty related to gathering the participants’ demographic data. This study had an additional sister study which posed challenges in distinguishing which participants were in which study. In future studies, the participants could print their names and which study they would be joining to ensure a more accurate depiction of the demographics of the study.

**Future Research**

There are many ways school teams and districts can respond to meet the social-emotional and behavioral needs of students. This study aimed to learn more about school psychologists’ perspectives on responding to these needs with Tier 1 and Tier 2 support. The perspectives were gathered from a group of school psychologists in a school district in a Mountain West state. The participants in this district have not frequently worked with Tier 1 strategies, although it appears that district leaders hope to include school psychologists as key players in Tier 1 work. Future research could include participants primarily delivering Tier 1 instruction, such as teachers, school counselors, and social workers. Future research could also include choosing participants in different states with different social-emotional and behavioral needs. These additional perspectives could provide a depth of insight into what is needed to provide proactive and preventative strategies for students with social-emotional and behavioral concerns.
A critical finding of this study was the participants’ idea of a universal application of social-emotional curriculum, specifically collaboration between school staff and parents. Participants pointed out that the social-emotional curriculum should be prioritized and taught by teachers and reinforced throughout the whole school (i.e., classroom, specialties, recess, assemblies) and at home. Future research could be aimed at school staff and parents’ perspectives on integrating social-emotional curriculum into all areas of the students’ lives.

Another study finding was that time is considered a valuable resource for teachers and school staff. A lack of time was mentioned by many participants as a barrier to implementing social-emotional and behavioral curriculum. Participants specified that social-emotional learning was not prioritized due to time constraints and pressure to cover the academic curriculum. Future research could be aimed at understanding teachers and other school staff perspectives to determine practical ways to prioritize social-emotional learning and increase time resources effectively.

Conclusion

This study aimed to learn more about school psychologists’ perspectives on responding to school-wide social-emotional and behavioral screening data and offering preventative and proactive support strategies. The participants discussed ideas for professional development to prepare other school staff to use a social-emotional screener and respond to the data it provides, although they did not identify professional learning experiences that may be helpful to them. Nineteen school psychologists were recruited using a convenience sample from a Mountain West state. Two focus groups were conducted over Zoom. The data were analyzed using Krueger and Casey’s (2009) classic approach, as well as a more interpretive approach using components of IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The findings from this study contribute to the existing literature by
recognizing that school psychologists may understand implementation science and can help lay the needed groundwork before implementing social-emotional screeners so that the process can be more efficient and effective. The findings emphasize the understanding that from the perspective of school psychologists social-emotional learning should be applied universally and collaboratively at school and home and to allocate time to teach social-emotional learning at school. The findings also suggest that school psychologists can determine appropriate interventions if screening data suggest a weakness in social-emotional and behavioral areas. Furthermore, it may be advantageous for school district leaders to recognize that school psychologists may be a good resource because of their seemingly intuitive understanding of implementation science and knowledge of how to help students. They may be an excellent resource to train others, such as district employees and school staff, and could help advocate for those resistant to SEL, such as parents and teachers.
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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Memorandum

To: Ellie Young
Department: BYU - EDUC - Counseling, Psychology, & Special Education
From: Sandee Aina, MPA, HRPP Associate Director
            Wayne Larsen, MAcc, IRB Administrator
Date: November 01, 2021
IRB#: IRB2021-309
Title: Perceptions of Implementing Universal Social Emotional Behavioral Screenings in Schools

Brigham Young University’s IRB has approved the research study referenced in the subject heading as exempt level, Categories 1 and 2. This study does not require an annual continuing review. Each year near the anniversary of the approval date, you will receive an email reminding you of your obligations as a researcher and to check on the status of the study. You will receive this email each year until you close the study.

The study is approved as of 11/01/2021. Please reference your assigned IRB identification number in any correspondence with the IRB.

Continued approval is conditional upon your compliance with the following requirements:

1. A copy of the approved informed consent statement can be found in IRIS. No other consent statement should be used. Each research subject must be provided with a copy or a way to access the consent statement.
2. Any modifications to the approved protocol must be submitted, reviewed, and approved by the IRB before modifications are incorporated in the study.
3. All recruiting tools must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to use.
4. Instructions to access approved documents, submit modifications, report adverse events, can be found on the IRB website, IRIS guide: https://irb.byu.edu/iris-training-resources
5. All non-serious unanticipated problems should be reported to the IRB within 2 weeks of the first awareness of the problem by the PI. Prompt reporting is important, as unanticipated problems often require some modification of study procedures, protocols, and/or informed consent processes. Such modifications require the review and approval of the IRB. Please refer to the IRB website for more information.
APPENDIX B

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction

This research study is being conducted by Ellie Young PhD at Brigham Young University to explore perspectives on (1) the implementation of initiatives based on data collected from the district-designed social-emotional competency survey and (2) opportunities for professional learning that will support school psychologists and school staff in implementing these initiatives. You were invited to participate because you are a school psychologist who is involved in responding to the data collected by the district-designed social-emotional competency survey.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:

- You will complete a demographic survey after signing this document that will take about 5 minutes to complete.

- You will participate in a small group discussion, or focus group, with 4-10 other participants for approximately 45 minutes about your perspectives on (1) the implementation of initiatives based on data collected from the district-designed social-emotional competency survey and (2) opportunities for professional learning that will support school psychologists and school staff in implementing these initiatives.

- The focus group will take place directly following the professional learning meeting you attended. A Zoom link will be provided to you that will allow you to join the focus group.

- The focus group will be video and audio recorded to ensure accuracy prior to data analysis.
- The researcher will contact you later with a summary of what was said in your focus group. You will be asked to determine if this summary is accurate; if not, you will be asked to detail what needs to be changed or added to make it accurate.

- Total time commitment will be approximately 60 minutes.

**Risks/Discomforts**

Participating in this research involves minimal risks. There is potential for minimal discomfort when discussing the implementation of complex initiatives in school settings as this may involve the sharing of personal opinions, experiences, and ideas. Participants may stop participating at any point if there is discomfort; participants may choose to not answer any questions if they feel discomfort.

**Benefits**

There will be no direct benefits to you. It is hoped, however, that through your participation researchers may contribute to the growing body of research literature that improves the implementation of initiatives in response to survey data collected in schools.

**Consent to Use Audio and Video Recording**

During the study, researchers will audio and video record you. Your consent below allows BYU to use these recordings for purposes associated with the study. I understand that researchers will take audio and video recordings of me as part of this study. I give permission for BYU to use the media in scientific publications, scientific conferences or meetings, educational presentations, public presentations to non-scientific groups, and other uses related to the study so long as my
name is not used. I agree that all media will become the property of BYU, and I waive my right to inspect, approve, or be compensated for BYU’s use of the media.

**Confidentiality**

The focus groups will be audio and video recorded and then transcribed. Transcription will be kept on password protected computers that only the primary researchers have access to. No identifying information will be used in any research summaries or analyses. Due to the nature of focus groups, the researcher cannot ensure that other focus group participants will keep information shared confidential. However, at the beginning of each focus group, the moderator will ask that all information shared be kept confidential. The audio and video recordings will be deleted after 2 years of the completion of the study.

**Compensation**

Focus group participants will receive a $25 Amazon gift card after the completion of the focus group. Compensation will not be prorated.

**Participation**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely without affecting your employment or standing in the school district.
Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Ellie Young at (801) 422-1592 for further information.

Questions about Your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant contact IRB Administrator at (801) 422-1461; A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; irb@byu.edu.

Statement of Consent

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and agree to its terms. I understand my participation in this study is of my own free will and accord.

________________________________      _____________________      ______________
Name (Printed)                                    Signature                          Date
APPENDIX C

Demographic Survey

- What is your age?
  - __________

- What is your gender?
  - Male
  - Female
  - Other __________
  - Prefer not to answer

- What is your ethnicity?
  - African American/Black
  - Alaska Native
  - American Indian
  - Asian
  - Caucasian/White
  - Hispanic/Latino
  - Mixed/Multiracial
  - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
  - Other __________
  - Prefer not to answer

- What school setting do you currently work in?
  - Elementary School
  - Secondary School
  - Other __________

- Cumulatively, how long have you been a school psychologist?
  - __________

- What is your highest degree earned?
  - Bachelor’s Degree
  - Master’s Degree
  - Education Specialist Degree
  - Doctorate Degree
  - Other __________

- What licensures do you have?
  - __________
APPENDIX D

Focus Group Questions for School Psychologists

Introduction

Welcome! Thank you for being willing to take part in this research study. My name is Audrey Anderen and I will be the moderator for this focus group. I am a second-year graduate student in the School Psychology Ed.S. program at Brigham Young University. This focus group is a part of my master’s thesis. This is Haley, another graduate student who will be assisting me in collecting and analyzing the data. Please make yourself comfortable and feel free to ask any questions along the way.

I would like to establish some ground rules before we begin. I want you all to feel comfortable sharing your ideas and points of view even if those views differ from other participants’ comments. Please contribute your honest opinions. There are no right or wrong answers, only personal experiences or perspectives that can add to a rich discussion. I want to remind you all that I am recording this session for the purpose of data collection and analysis. Your name will remain confidential. We ask that the ideas that are shared here are kept confidential; please do not discuss ideas shared here with people outside of this focus group.

We ask that you keep yourself muted until you are ready to share your opinion. Please keep the discussion related to the topic and don’t get sidetracked. Please let others finish what they are saying before you speak. We ask that you do not leave the Zoom meeting until it is over. We estimate it will not last any longer than 45 minutes.

You may be aware that [name of district] has created a survey to identify student needs in the following character SEL skills that contribute to student well-being: self-mastery, compassion, resilience, and respect. The purpose of this focus group is to explore school
psychologists’ perspectives regarding tiered strategies that may be used to address student well-being needs, as well as professional learning opportunities that may be needed to implement these strategies.

**Opening Question**

1. Tell us who you are, your job title, where you work, and what you most enjoy doing when you are not working.

**Introductory Question**

2. As a school psychologist, what comes to mind when you think about using the data from the [district-designed social-emotional competency] survey?

**Key Questions**

**Self-Mastery:** I am aware of my emotions and manage them in healthy ways at the moment.

3. What universal, school-wide tier-1 interventions would you use to address students’ self-mastery needs in elementary schools?

4. What are some tier-2 or small group interventions that you might use to address self-mastery needs in a elementary setting?

**Compassion:** I have empathy for others and respond with kindness.

5. What universal, school-wide tier-1 interventions would you use to address students’ compassion needs in elementary schools?

6. What are some tier-2 or small group interventions that you might use to address compassion needs in a elementary setting?

**Resilience:** I can recover in a timely manner and persevere in challenging situations.
7. What universal, school-wide tier-1 interventions would you use to address students’ resilience needs in elementary schools?

8. What are some tier-2 or small group interventions that you might use to address resilience needs in an elementary setting?

**Respect: I genuinely value our school environment and all people around me and treat them accordingly with appropriate actions.**

9. What universal, school-wide tier-1 interventions would you use to address students’ respect needs in elementary schools?

10. What are some tier-2 or small group interventions that you might use to address respect needs in an elementary setting?

**Professional Learning Opportunities**

11. What professional learning opportunities might you and your school team need in order to implement interventions encompassing these needs?

**Ending Question**

12. In closing, we just want to remind you that the purpose of this focus group is to explore school psychologists’ perspectives regarding tiered strategies that may be used to address student well-being needs, as well as professional learning opportunities that may be needed to implement these strategies. With that in mind is there anything that you would like to say that you did not get a chance to say? We have some time now if anyone would like to share.
## APPENDIX E

### Recommended Resources to Support Student’s Well-Being in the Following Character SEL Skills

**Skills: Self-Mastery, Compassion, Resilience, and Respect**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Mastery</th>
<th>Compassion</th>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>Respect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ClassDojo App</td>
<td>Character Strong Curriculum</td>
<td>Bubble Gum Brain Book</td>
<td>“I” Statements Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headspace App</td>
<td>Self-Compassion Website</td>
<td>Zones of Regulation Curriculum</td>
<td>Peace Path Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive Classroom Curriculum</td>
<td>Thinking About You Thinking About Me Book</td>
<td>Strong Kids Curriculum</td>
<td>Personal Space Camp Book Author-Julia Cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zones of Regulation Curriculum</td>
<td>Think Social Book Author-Michelle Garcia Winner</td>
<td>Everyday Strong Website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Check-in Signal mood with thumbs up, thumbs down or in between</td>
<td>Mindful Schools Curriculum</td>
<td>Why Try? Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind Up Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td>Character Strong Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incredible 5 Point Scale Book Author Kari D Buron</td>
<td></td>
<td>Survival Guide for Kids with Challenging Behaviors Book Author-Thomas McIntyre Positive Self Talk Example</td>
<td>The Power of Yet Example</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The above resources are suggestions given by the participants of the focus groups to address elementary student Tier 1 and Tier 2 needs in the following character SEL skills; self-mastery, compassion, resilience and respect. Some of the resources have hyperlinks to curriculum, apps, or examples of a strategies to address one of the character SEL skills. The books do not have hyperlinks but the author is included for easy reference.