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With a growing interest in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in education (Goldberg et al., 2019; Gordon et al., 2016; Todd et al., 2022), schools have been positioned as effective settings for SEL development of students (Nielsen et al., 2015). As the potential of Physical Education (PE) to promote student learning in social and affective domains has long been discussed and proved in the previous literature (Bailey, 2006; Bailey et al., 2009; Casey & Fernandez-Rio, 2019), recent empirical studies in the field are starting to pay attention to SEL experiences of students and teachers in school-based PE programs (Dyson et al., 2019; Dyson et al., 2021a; Dyson et al., 2021b; Hemphill et al., 2021). However, there has been limited explanation on how PE can act as a catalyst to work with classroom settings collaboratively for effective and sustainable SEL development, especially at a rural elementary school.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate perspectives and experiences of students and teachers for SEL in PE and classroom settings at a rural elementary school located in North Carolina. Three research questions guided this study: 1) What SEL pedagogies do teachers implement in PE and classrooms at a rural elementary school? 2) What experiences do students have about SEL in PE and classrooms at a rural elementary school? 3) What contributing factors do teachers and students perceive important for SEL experiences in PE and classrooms at a rural elementary school?

Previous literature on social and affective domains of learning in elementary PE, current SEL frameworks, a whole school approach to SEL, and perspectives of students and teachers in rural education have worked as conceptual backgrounds for this study. Socio-ecological theory, symbolic interactionism, and social constructivism were adopted as theoretical frameworks.

Adopting a case study design (Merriam, 1995), this research was conducted at Marigold elementary school, a Title I school located in a rural area of North Carolina. Using purposive sampling methods (Patton, 2003), 13 teachers and 31 elementary school students with diverse backgrounds participated in this study. Five types of qualitative data were collected in this study: 1) Class observations, 2) Individual interviews, 3) Student focus groups, 4) Photovoice, and 5) Researcher's reflexive journals. Inductive qualitative data analysis with constant comparisons was implemented in this study (Miles et al., 2014). Trustworthiness of this study was enhanced by triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and clarification of researcher positionality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles et al., 2014).

This study provided in-depth information on how PE can be positioned as one of the significant strands of a whole-school approach to SEL. Exploring SEL pedagogies and experiences in PE and classroom settings helped to identify collaborative pedagogies that can be used across different subject settings to enhance students' SEL development at a rural elementary school more sustainably.

EXPLORING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION
AND CLASSROOM SETTINGS AT A RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, my fiancé, and the participants in this study.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes a problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, and an overview of each chapter.

Problem Statement

Recent years witnessed a growing interest in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) within the American education systems (Goldberg et al., 2019; Gordon et al., 2016; Todd et al., 2022). As the importance of schools as an effective setting to enhance SEL development has been recognized (Nielsen et al., 2015), a number of school-based SEL programs have been developed and conducted with different focuses and approaches (Jagers et al., 2019; Luiselli et al., 2005). As PE has long been proved to promote student learning in social and affective domains in previous literature (Bailey, 2006; Bailey et al., 2009; Casey & Fernandez-Rio, 2019), recent studies in the field of study started to pay attention to SEL experiences of students and teachers in school-based PE programs (Dyson et al., 2019; Dyson et al., 2021a; Hemphill et al., 2021).

However, despite the increased academic attention on SEL in PE, there still remain unanswered questions regarding how students and teachers perceive and experience SEL in different school-based PE programs, which is often referred as the *black box* in school research (Dyson et al., 2019; Dyson et al., 2021d). Furthermore, according to the socio-ecological theory by Bronfenbrenner (1987) and the SEL framework by Jones and Bouffard (2012), SEL implementation in PE can be highly influenced by multi-layered environments at the school even outside of PE class itself. Owing to this, given that elementary students spend most of their time in classroom settings, the focus of this study is on SEL experiences in both PE and classroom settings.

Additionally, considering that SEL experiences can be affected by the geographic, historic, and socio-cultural contexts where students and teachers are situated (Jagers et al., 2018), this study is specifically focused on rural school contexts. As the limited previous research on rural education indicates, the voices of students and teachers in rural school settings have long been marginalized not only in American education systems but also in academics (Petrin et al., 2014; Schafft, 2016). Even though rural schools have been reported to face unique and challenging circumstances in and outside of the schools, for example, insufficient infrastructure and human resources (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Bridgeforth et al., 2021; Tuters, 2015), PE programs in rural schools have barely received attention to this point. In this regard, there is an urgent need to explore how students and teachers view and experience SEL in PE and classroom settings at a rural elementary school.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate perspectives and experiences of students and teachers for Social and Emotional Learning implementation in Physical Education and classroom settings at a rural elementary school located in North Carolina.

Research Questions

Three research questions were established as follows:

- 1) What SEL pedagogies do teachers implement in Physical Education and classrooms at a rural elementary school?
- 2) What SEL experiences do students have in Physical Education and classrooms at a rural elementary school?
- 3) What contributing factors do teachers and students perceive important for SEL experiences in Physical Education and classrooms at a rural elementary school?

Significance of the Study

Grounded in the socio-ecological theory by Bronfenbrenner (1987), this study explored the surrounding contextual environments around PE, especially classroom settings, to better understand SEL experiences in PE. Along with the increased awareness that SEL practices should be embedded in daily teaching practices even outside of specific subjects (Goldberg et al., 2019), this study can provide useful information on how PE can be positioned as one of the significant strands of a whole school approach to SEL. Furthermore, exploring pedagogies and experiences for SEL in PE and classroom settings can help researchers and practitioners to identify collaborative strategies to support students' SEL development more sustainably.

Another scholarly significance of this study can be attributed to discovering marginalized voices in rural school settings (Petrin et al., 2014; Schafft, 2016). Based on social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1986), this study adopted a bottom-up approach to generate knowledge from the real-time experiences of students and teachers regarding SEL at a rural school. Especially, considering that limited amount of previous research has investigated students' perspectives in SEL (Dyson, 2006; Howley et al., 2022), in-depth qualitative evidence from elementary school students and teachers will possibly allow professionals to tailor the existing SEL pedagogies to their diverse needs.

An Overview of Chapters

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter provides important conceptual backgrounds needed to better understand this dissertation study. Based on reviewing the previous literature in both PE and general education contexts, this chapter presents rationales regarding social and affective domains of learning in elementary PE, current SEL frameworks, a whole school approach to SEL, and perspectives of

students and teachers in rural education. Furthermore, this chapter explores the socio-ecological theory, symbolic interactionism, and social constructivism as theoretical frameworks and explains how these frameworks guided this study.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter presents qualitative research methods used in this dissertation study. This chapter explains the study design, the school context, and participants. Especially, in terms of the school context, this chapter describes how the school has supported SEL across the whole school over the past few years. Further, this chapter provides in-depth information on how five different types of qualitative data were collected and analyzed through inductive qualitative analysis. While introducing five ways to establish trustworthiness, the researcher clarified her research positionality through being critically reflexive on her prior experiences and perspectives.

Chapter IV: Teachers' SEL Pedagogies in PE and Classrooms

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' experiences of implementing SEL pedagogies in PE and classroom settings at a rural elementary school. With 13 teachers at the school, four qualitative data sources were collected, which include in-depth interviews, class observations, photovoice, and the researcher's reflexive journals. Through inductive analysis with constant comparisons (Miles et al., 2014), four themes were generated from the teacher data: *Learning how to support personal and cultural differences; Promoting an inclusive learning environment; Building a whole school community with care; Shared understandings with school-wide interactions*. The overall findings in this study provides implications on how PE can work in collaboration with classroom settings to better support students' SEL development at a rural elementary school.

Chapter V: Students' SEL Experiences in PE and Classrooms

The purpose of this study was to investigate students' experiences of SEL in PE and classroom settings at a rural elementary school. With 31 elementary students at the school, five qualitative data sources were collected, which include in-depth interviews, student focus group, class observations, photovoice, and the researcher's reflexive journals. Using inductive analysis with constant comparisons (Miles et al., 2014), four themes were generated from the student data: *Building teamwork through cooperative activities; Being aware of emotions and space; Learning strategies to manage emotions; Taking responsible actions with integrity.* These findings overall suggest implications on how SEL skills can be introduced in PE and classrooms in a more developmentally appropriate way for students at a rural elementary school.

Chapter VI: Perceived Contributors for SEL in PE and Classrooms

The purpose of this study was to determine contributing factors for SEL experiences that are perceived important by students and teachers at a rural elementary school. With 13 teachers and 31 elementary students at the school, four qualitative data sources were collected, which include in-depth interviews, student focus group, class observations, and the researcher's reflexive journals. Using inductive qualitative analysis with constant comparisons (Miles et al., 2014), four themes were generated from the teacher and student data: *School culture of celebrating everyday success; Long-term relationships and trust between teachers and students; Humanizing individual students and teachers at school; On-going support and assistance for SEL pedagogies.* These findings overall provide useful implications on how teachers' SEL implementation and students' SEL development can be better supported by humanistic and celebrating school culture.

Chapter VII: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the findings for each research question. Based on the findings, this chapter also presents theoretical and practical implications as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to provide conceptual backgrounds and relevant empirical evidence regarding 1) Social and affective domains of learning in elementary Physical Education (PE), 2) Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks in PE, 3) A whole school approach to SEL, 4) Perspectives of students and teachers in rural education, and 5) Theoretical frameworks (*Social constructivism; Socio-ecological theory; Symbolic Interactionism*) which guided my theoretical and methodological approach in this study.

Social and Affective Domains of Learning in Elementary Physical Education

A wide range of positive student outcomes across different domains of learning have been claimed in PE historically (Bailey, 2006; Bailey et al., 2009; Teraoka et al., 2020). Among different learning outcomes, social and affective domains of learning have long been of the essence in this field of study (Dyson, 2001; Hellison, 1987; Webster et al., 2013). However, despite the continuous interest, the subjective nature inherent in affective qualities made it hard to define the boundaries between social and affective domains of learning (Casey & Fernandez-Rio, 2019; Pope, 2005). Broadly speaking, the affective domain in PE has been studied focused on students' psychological well-being, which encompasses emotion, attitude, enjoyment, anxiety, stress level, and self-esteem (Bailey et al., 2009, Teraoka & Kirk, 2022). Even though there are some aspects overlapped with the affective domain of learning, the social domain in PE has been generally understood as promoting positive social behaviors associated with cooperation, personal and social responsibility, and pro-social skills (Bailey et al., 2009; Dyson et al., 2022; Martinek & Hemphill, 2020).

The social and affective domains of learning have been emphasized especially in elementary PE contexts. Previous studies maintained that elementary PE programs need to

pursue positive, motivational, and joyful learning experiences where students can find the intrinsic values in their PE class (Stuhr et al., 2012; Wright, 2004). Stuhr et al. (2012) especially provided empirical evidence on how having positive emotionality in PE class can ultimately promote student learning in an elementary PE program. Furthermore, based on the increased awareness of these two learning domains in PE, a growing body of empirical research have adopted various models-based practices, for example, Cooperative Learning (CL), Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR), to enhance social and affective development of students in PE at an elementary school level (Dyson et al., 2021c; Richards et al., 2019; Richards & Shiver, 2020). Building on the accumulated evidence on student learning in social and affective domains, the researcher claim that student's SEL development is highly important at an elementary school phase and that PE can be an effective setting for SEL implementation in elementary school settings (Dyson et al., 2021a; Gordon et al., 2016).

Social and Emotional Learning Frameworks in Physical Education

Along with the increased investment in students' social and emotional well-being, a considerable amount of school-based programs has prioritized social and emotional development of students as the crucial agenda imposed on schools (Jagers et al., 2019; Oberle et al., 2016). Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has been generally defined as “the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills required to succeed in schooling, the workplace, relationships, and citizenship” (Jones et al., 2017, p. 12). As one of the most rigorous umbrella concepts in school-based pedagogies, SEL has been reported to generate a wide range of positive student learning outcomes, for example, increased prosocial behaviors, higher level of academic performance, and improved physical and mental well-being (Brackett et al., 2012; Durlak et al., 2011; Ee & Cheng, 2013; Goldberg et al., 2019).

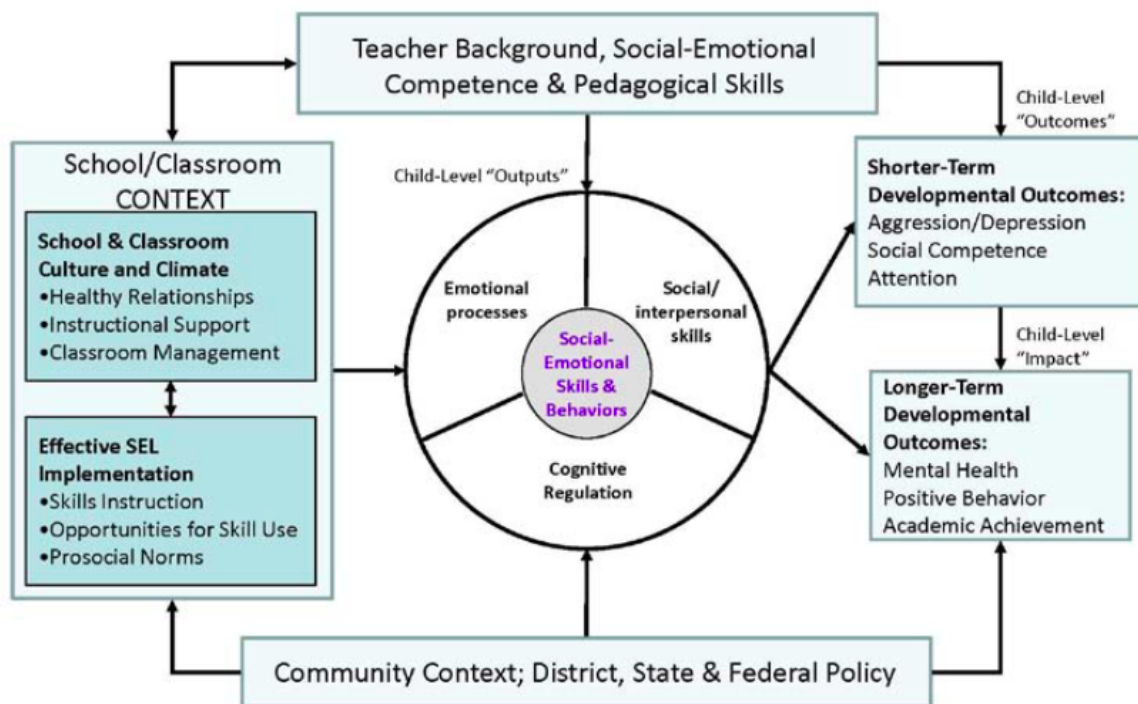
Among different approaches to define what constitutes SEL (Dyson et al., 2021d), one of the most widely recognized frameworks both in PE and general education is the one suggested by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (Lawson et al., 2019; Caselman & Self, 2008; Wright & Richards, 2021). The CASEL's SEL framework introduces five SEL core competencies, which include 1) Self-awareness, 2) Social-awareness, 3) Self-management, 4) Relationship skills, and 5) Responsible decision-making. Table 1 shows how each of these five SEL competencies is defined in the CASEL's SEL framework with specific examples (CASEL, 2020, p.2)

Table 1. Five Core Competencies in the CASEL’s SEL Framework

Competency	Definition	Examples
Self-awareness	The abilities to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.	Identifying one’s emotions; Having a growth mindset
Social Awareness	The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.	Taking others’ perspectives; Demonstrating empathy and compassion
Self-management	The abilities to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.	Managing one’s emotions; Using planning and organizational skills
Relationship Skills	The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.	Communicating effectively; Developing positive relationships
Responsible Decision-making	The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.	Identifying solutions for personal and social problems

However, there have also been other SEL frameworks more grounded in specific theories, for example, a socio-ecological theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Focused more on the interactions between individuals and the multi-layered environments surrounding SEL implementation, Jones and Bouffard (2012) suggested another SEL framework which is more “developmental and contextual” (p. 4). Figure 1 shows the SEL framework based on the socio-ecological theory (Jones & Bouffard, 2012, p.5). This SEL framework has also been adopted in the previous literature on school-based SEL pedagogies in PE settings (Dyson et al., 2021a; Dyson et al., 2021b).

Figure 1. A SEL Framework Based on Socio-ecological Theory



The five SEL core competencies by the CASEL (2020) and the contextual SEL framework by Jones and Bouffard (2012) guided this study as the theoretical frameworks for SEL. More specifically, the CASEL SEL framework helped to associate relevant SEL competencies with the experiences of students and teachers. The SEL framework by Jones and

Bouffard (2012) not only guided the researcher's understanding that SEL in the classroom should be investigated as well to better understand SEL in PE but also helped to identify any contributing factors for SEL implementation from the viewpoints of students and teachers.

A Whole-school Approach to Social and Emotional Learning

A whole-school approach is grounded in the idea that different stakeholders in and outside of school should make concerted endeavors for students' well-being across the physical, social, and emotional domains (Weare, 2000; World Health Organization & United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). This whole-school approach to student well-being indicates that promoting social and emotional development of students across school is one of the essential aspects of supporting their mental well-being (Weare, 2000). Historically, schools have been argued as effective settings to develop social and emotional skills as well as academic skills through socializing with different types of people for their learning (Goldberg et al., 2019). Along with the increased awareness of school for SEL development, there has also been a growing need for integrating SEL elements into a whole school community to make SEL "meaningful, sustained, and embedded in the day-to-day interactions of students, educators, and school staff" (Jones & Bouffard, 2012, p. 3).

Previous research on school-based SEL programs or interventions have maintained that SEL can be implemented more successfully and effectively when SEL components are incorporated into a whole school climate moving beyond specific classroom settings (Bear et al., 2017; Oberle et al., 2016; Stoiber, 2011). In other words, the existing literature on the whole-school SEL highlights the importance of having teachers across different subjects all on board to pursue a consistent goal for SEL development of students. More specifically, a whole-school approach to SEL has three essential elements to "integrate skill development into daily

interactions and practices using collaborative efforts that include all staff, teachers, families and children”: 1) Curriculum, teaching, and learning, 2) School ethos and environment, 3) Family and community partnership (Goldberg et al., 2019, p. 756). These three elements of a whole-school approach to SEL once again advocate that SEL is not just about learning knowledge and skills in one subject setting but more about providing consistent learning experiences conducive to SEL across a whole school on daily basis (Oberle et al., 2016; Stoiber, 2011).

Even though a whole-school approach has been adopted and developed to promote social and emotional competencies of students in general education contexts (Luiselli et al., 2005; Nielsen et al., 2015), the concept of a whole-school approach in the field of PE has been understood more as a whole-school approach to promoting physical activity, which is often called *Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP)* (McMullen et al., 2015; Webster, 2021). Clearly, in the view of CSPAP, a whole school is defined as a context where “all of a school’s components and resources operate in a coordinated and dynamic manner to provide access, encouragement, and programs that enable all students to engage in vigorous- or moderate-intensity physical activity 60 minutes or more each day” (Institute of Medicine, 2013, p. 30). Although Webster (2021) recently maintained that a whole-school approach to physical activity might potentially provide learning opportunities for SEL, it is still evident that the overarching goal of CSPAP is not on developing SEL skills of students but on increasing student participation in physical activity.

In this regard, it is important to clarify that the term *whole-school approach* in this study has been used to refer to a whole-school approach to SEL, not to a whole-school approach to physical activity. Acknowledging that physical activity can work as a vehicle to students’ social and emotional development at the same time (Bailey et al., 2009; Laker, 2001), this study is

focused on how PE and classroom settings can make collaborative efforts for more successful and sustainable SEL experiences for students across a whole school.

Perspectives of Students and Teachers in Rural Education

Rural, suburban, and urban education all have been broadly described in the previous literature with a lack of clear definitions (Bridgeforth et al., 2021; Diamond et al., 2020; Milner, 2012). Among these, rural education has received insufficient attention in the curricular and academic discourse compared to urban education (Aud et al., 2013; Petrin et al., 2014; Schafft, 2016). Rural communities in the United States have been reported to face various socio-economic circumstances which can directly or indirectly challenge their educational efforts, for example, deficient infrastructure, continuous outmigration of populations, and higher rate of teacher turnovers (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Bridgeforth et al., 2021; Tuters, 2015). Adding on to the unique situations that American rural community have encountered, a limited number of previous studies have also argued that rural perspectives are not just attributed to their geographical characteristics but also generated from the collective cultures in rural areas, for instance, strong physical and emotional attachment to their local community (Burnell, 2003; Sherman & Sage, 2011; Petrin et al., 2014). These arguments imply that experiences in rural schools are likely to differ from the ones in urban and suburban schools. In this regard, Bridgeforth et al. (2021) specifically highlighted the need of exploring the lived experiences in rural community moving beyond a deficit-focused approach in rural educational research.

However, despite the unique socio-cultural contexts where rural schools are situated, perspectives of students and teachers in rural schools have been barely investigated not just in the field of PE but also in general education (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Schafft, 2016; Tuters, 2015). Additionally, most of the recent school-based PE programs in rural areas were more

focused on determining factors associated with health, physical activity, and nutrition rather than exploring their educational experiences in depth (Belansky et al., 2016; King & Ling, 2015). Even though Davis and Buchanan (2020) examined the impact of implementing yoga on mindfulness and SEL behaviors of rural elementary students, this study relied on the survey data without in-depth qualitative evidence on the experiences of teachers and students in rural education. Limited qualitative evidence on the voices of students and teachers can advocate the need of this study, which aims to examine how students and teachers perceive and experience SEL in PE and classroom settings at a rural elementary school, especially when SEL has been supported across the school over the years. To better illustrate their first-person viewpoints in detail, this study investigated what has happened in the school context as well as what contextual factors have contributed to their SEL experiences.

Theoretical Frameworks

Three theoretical frameworks were adopted to guide my theoretical and methodological approach to this study: 1) Social Constructivism, 2) Socio-ecological Theory, and 3) Symbolic Interactionism.

Social Constructivism

This study is based on social constructivism not only as a learning theory but also as one of the theoretical frameworks. As a learning theory, social constructivism is based on the idea that children make their own knowledge through social interactions with others (Vygotsky, 1986). According to the view of social constructivism by Vygotsky (1986), providing children social and cultural contexts especially through cooperative activities is highly significant to promote their cognitive development (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Rovegno & Dolly, 2009; Vygotsky, 1986). In this interactive learning process, students' prior experiences and

perspectives can be actively engaged in constructing new knowledge and competencies (Koekoek et al., 2009; Wibowo & Dyson, 2021). Due to its emphasis on interpersonal dimensions of learning, social constructivism has often been used as one of the major guiding learning theories to support different pedagogical models and concepts in PE such as Cooperative Learning, Teaching Game for Understanding, Situated Learning, and SEL (Dyson et al., 2022; Dyson et al., 2016; Kirk & Macdonald, 1998; Stolz & Pill, 2014).

Further, social constructivism guided the researcher's qualitative approach to this school-based study. Education has been recognized as a "social enterprise" where student learning in schools should be related to their authentic lived experiences outside of their classrooms (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003, p.179). Based on the assumption that human phenomena should be understood in its own unique way rather than following the scientific traditions (Patton, 2015), social constructivists advocate that meanings are constructed through social interactions among individuals (Adam, 2006; Tracy, 2019). Therefore, qualitative research grounded in social constructivism generally focuses more on exploring diverse perspectives and discovering different patterns of meanings through inductive reasonings (Glesne, 2016; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Based on social constructivism, this study aimed to investigate complex and subjective experiences and perspectives of students and teachers regarding SEL in PE and classroom settings at a rural elementary school.

Socio-ecological Theory

Socio-ecological theory has been adopted as one of the main guiding theories in different pedagogical concepts, policies, and curricula in the field of study, for instance, Sport-based Youth Development (SBYD) and the Aotearoa New Zealand Health and PE curriculum (Dyson et al., 2021c; Lee & Martinek, 2013). Understanding the settings is considered highly significant

to investigate certain phenomena in depth in the socio-ecological theory (Lee & Stewart, 2013). The major assumption of the socio-ecological theory is that human development occurs from the complex interactions between individuals and the multi-layer environments around them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Reicher, 2010). To be more specific for its application in school settings, the theory advocates that student learning is consistently being influenced by external factors associated with home, classroom, school, and local community as well as the broader societal factors such as policies (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Dyson et al., 2021a). In this regard, Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined four different layers of an external environmental system as follows:

Microsystem: A pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics (p.22).

Mesosystem: Interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (p.25).

Exosystem: One or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person (p.25).

Macrosystem: Consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies (p.26).

In this study, the understandings of both SEL framework and pedagogies are grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socio-ecological theory in that students' SEL development can be attributed to SEL practices in PE as well as the ones outside of PE. In other words, this study is

based on the assumption that students' SEL development in PE can reach its full potential only when their SEL experiences are reinforced by the consistent SEL practices in other educational settings, for example, their classrooms. This claim also indicates that students' successful learning in social and emotional skills in PE settings can possibly contribute to their improved SEL development in classroom contexts, and vice versa. Especially, considering the unique context of elementary schools where students spend most of their time in their classrooms, the importance of investigating the pedagogical interplay between PE and classroom settings for SEL cannot be overstated in this study.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism refers to “a micro-level theoretical framework and perspective in sociology that addresses how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions among individuals” (Carter & Fuller, 2016, p.932). Based on the early American pragmatism (Denzin, 2004), symbolic interactionism is focused on understanding the micro-level interactions to understand the bigger society through signs or symbols, for example, talk, gesture, object, and space (Barker et al., 2017; Carter & Fuller, 2016; Lynch, 2015). Similar to social constructivism, symbolic interactionism puts a high emphasis on examining what understanding the participants have about their worlds, what they consider important, and how they construct meanings (Benzies & Allen, 2001; Pope, 2006; Tracy, 2019). According to symbolic interactionism, the process of making meanings is considered subjective, interpretive, and interactive since it is highly likely to be influenced by the society and cultural contexts where the participants are living (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 2004; Denzin, 2012).

Symbolic interactionism was used as another major guiding theory in this study to describe how the student and teacher populations in a historically marginalized school generate

meanings regarding SEL through consistent interactions with other individuals and the surrounding environments. As symbolic interactionism is focused on discovering specific representations of their personal experiences and subjective meanings (Benzies & Allen, 2001; Denzin, 2004; Denzin, 2012), different types of qualitative data were collected and analyzed in this study to obtain the representational practices which can illustrates SEL experiences of students and teachers in PE and classrooms at a rural elementary school (Pope, 2006).

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter presents in-depth information about how this dissertation was designed and conducted using qualitative methods. This chapter contains detailed explanations regarding clarification of the researcher positionality, research paradigm, design, context and participants, data collection and analysis. Also, the process of establishing trustworthiness is described in detail followed by ethical considerations.

Research Paradigm

This study is guided by interpretivism as a research paradigm (Pope, 2006). As it can be seen from its term, interpretivism is based on an ontological assumption that knowledge is interpretive and subjective rather than an absolute truth (Glesne, 2016; Denzin, 2012; Tracy, 2019). Since knowledge is socially constructed through interactions between individuals and their surrounding environments (Glesne, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016), this paradigm has been actively adopted in previous studies which explored personal experiences and perspectives in specific contexts (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). In this regard, empirical studies grounded in interpretivism require a long-term engagement by researchers in the research contexts (Glesne, 2016; Tracy, 2019).

Based on interpretivism as a research paradigm, this study aimed to investigate subjective experiences and perspectives of students and teachers on SEL in PE and classroom settings at a rural elementary school located in North Carolina. As a full-time graduate assistant working at the school for two academic years, the researcher made efforts to spend as much time as possible to understand the participants' native experiences and viewpoints in depth. Furthermore, different qualitative data sources were collected and analyzed to capture their first-person interpretations of the SEL experiences in PE and classrooms at the school (Mackenzie & Knipe,

2006). Acknowledging that making meanings can be highly influenced by the socio-cultural contexts where a person is situated (Denzin, 2004; 2012), the researcher not only focused on the geographical, historical, and socio-cultural contexts which the participants are located in but also critically reflected on her own positionality as the main interpretation tool (Charmaz et al., 2018; Tracy, 2019).

Positionality Statement

I am Seunghyun Baek, a fourth-year Ph.D. Candidate specializing in Pedagogy and Curriculum Studies in the Department of Kinesiology at University of North Carolina at Greensboro. As an Asian woman international student who was originally born and raised in South Korea, I have four years of teaching experiences in elementary school settings in Seoul, South Korea. During the majority of my time as a classroom teacher in South Korea, I taught a diverse array of subjects including PE. As a result, I became more attentive to the holistic development of children. In this regard, I have always emphasized the importance of having PE and school environments conducive to student learning in social and emotional domains. Additionally, as a classroom teacher who have listened to students' words and observed their behaviors in and outside of PE class, having a consistent message over SEL in both PE and classroom settings has been of the immense significance to me. I personally experienced how confusing it can be when students have different expectations in PE and classroom settings, which caused their pushback against teachers' pedagogies in the long run. These prior experiences in the real-time school settings were developed into my academic attention on investigating SEL in PE and classroom settings specifically focused on what SEL pedagogies teachers implement, how students perceive their SEL experiences, and the contributing factors associated with SEL experiences.

Working as a full-time graduate student at the school where this study was conducted, I have engaged in a broad range of teaching, research, and school duties. I taught summer PE programs, implemented a school-wide SEL curriculum called *Second Step*, and worked with the PE teacher and classroom teachers for their teaching and daily duties. Spending a considerable time with teachers and students allowed me to see the unique characteristics of the school that I have never found elsewhere. I could see a strong drive for SEL across the school while I found students struggling with social and emotional well-being at the same time. This is what led me to investigate SEL experiences of students and teachers at the school.

I believe that interacting with students, teachers, staff, and parents even outside of PE settings allowed me to get acquainted and build rapport with most of the participants. Spending plenty of time helped me enter the research setting to have a useful amount of insider experiences where I can better understand the participants' viewpoints. However, as a double-edged sword, I also acknowledged that my view can be biased due to my personal backgrounds and on-going experiences with the participants. As Luttrell (2000) argued, "we listen and make sense of what we hear according to particular theoretical, ontological, personal, and cultural frameworks" and "the worry always exists that the voices and perspectives of those we study will be lost or subsumed to our own views and interests" (p. 499).

As I saw myself as a part of the school community, I found myself in situations where I had to consider whether to identify more as a researcher or a teacher. Even though I was a researcher coming from the local university, also as one of the teachers at the school, I emphasized with the participating students, teachers, and school leaders at the school. I was very careful about any potential harms or negative effects that this research can generate on the teachers, students, and the whole school community even after I leave the school context. To

better address this issue, my personal interpretations of what is happening regarding SEL in the research context were consistently challenged and corroborated by my academic advisor who has different socio-cultural backgrounds. Additionally, I continuously practiced critical reflexivity and clarified my own positionality in the reflexive journals (Berger, 2015; Pillow, 2003; Watt, 2015).

Research Design

This study is based on a case study design (Merriam, 1995). Based on constructivism as an epistemological stance, Merriam defined the qualitative case studies as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit”, which allows more flexibility for researchers to investigate a broader range of cases across multi-levels (Yazan, 2015, p.139). Considering that this study is focused on SEL experiences of students and teachers in PE and classroom settings grounded in social constructivism, Merriam’s approach to a case study is well-aligned with the purpose and theoretical framework of this study. This study was focused on three specific cases: 1) SEL experiences of students and teachers in PE, 2) SEL experiences of students and teachers in classrooms, and 3) Other relevant experiences of students and teachers regarding SEL across the whole school. As researchers are highly encouraged to adopt various data collection methods to obtain a thick description of the cases (Merriam, 1995; Patton, 2015), five different sources of qualitative data were conducted and analyzed through prolonged engagement in this study to provide in-depth information about how the participants perceive and experience SEL in PE and classroom settings at a rural elementary school.

Research Contexts

“Well constructed case studies are holistic and context-sensitive” (Patton, 2015, p.535). Aligned with the case study design, the importance of having detailed pictures of the research context cannot be overemphasized. This study was conducted at Marigold elementary school which operates in partnership with the nearby university and the local county in North Carolina. The Marigold was assigned as one of the lab schools in the University of North Carolina system based on the legislation passed by the North Carolina General Assembly in 2016 (The University of North Carolina System, n.d.). Additionally, the Marigold has been identified as a Title I school where 98% of the students come from low-income families with free or reduced-price meals. Approximately 375 students are enrolled at the schools, 80% of who are ethnic minorities (59% African American, 20% Caucasian, 11% Hispanic, and 10% Multi-Racial).

Through working collaboratively with the university, there has been a strong influx of SEL initiatives across the school since it first opened in 2018. First, seven social and emotional essentials named *CHOICES* (Collaboration; Honesty; Ownership; Integrity; Consequences; Expectations; Solutions) have been used actively by the school leaders, classroom teachers, and subject specialists including the PE teacher. Second, all teachers at the Marigold have been constantly participating both in school-wide and teacher-driven professional development in SEL pedagogies and restorative practices. In the 2021-22 academic year, there have been two school-wide teacher workshops for SEL, one of which was conducted in a duration of two weeks. These school-wide professional development opportunities were organized and managed by the school leaders. Along with the official professional development opportunities, there have been ongoing mini conferences and book studies related to SEL and restorative practices, which were implemented on a smaller scale by individual teachers, school leaders, and other professionals

from the local university. Third, an SEL curriculum called *Second Step* have been implemented across K-5 grade levels in classroom settings since the 2021-2022 academic year. After the one-day intensive professional development for the SEL curriculum, the classroom teachers were encouraged to teach the lesson once a week or split one lesson into multiple days based on the needs of their class. Their implementation of the SEL curriculum was consistently monitored and supported by one of the school leaders who has a terminal degree in school psychology. Fourth, professional counselors and educators with an advanced or terminal degree in education-related fields have been regularly engaged from the local university to better support students' mental health and behavior incidents at the Marigold.

Research Participants

Using purposive sampling methods (Patton, 2003), 13 teachers and 31 elementary school students participated in this study. Upon the IRB approval, the teacher participants were recruited in person after contacting them with email first. Once the important information regarding study participation was shared with them in person, they were asked to review the consent forms thoroughly before deciding their participation. The teacher participants include one PE specialist who has been working at the Marigold for four years, nine classroom teachers recruited from each grade level, and three school leaders who supervise SEL across different grade levels (See Table 2). Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants and any identifiable information to protect their privacy.

Table 2. The Teacher Participants' Background Information

Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Position	Years
Alicia	F	African American	Principal	5 years
Dale	M	African American	Assistant principal	4 years
Zion	M	African American	School counselor	3 years
Steven	M	Caucasian	PE teacher	4 years
Mia	F	African American	Kindergarten classroom teacher	4 years
Emily	F	African American	Kindergarten classroom teacher	2 years
Abigail	F	Caucasian	1 st grade classroom teacher	4 years
Grace	F	Caucasian	2 nd grade classroom teacher	4 years
Zoey	F	Caucasian	3 rd grade classroom teacher	4 years
Maya	F	Multi-racial	4 th grade classroom teacher	3 years
Claire	F	Asian American	4 th grade classroom teacher	4 years
Elena	F	Caucasian	4 th grade classroom teacher	4 years
Madelyn	F	African American	5 th grade classroom teacher	5 years

Considering the developmental level of elementary school students, student participants were recruited only from 3rd to 5th grade who can provide in-depth information about their own experiences and perspectives verbally. Based on the on-going discussions with the classroom teachers and school leaders, study information letters, consent forms, and assent forms were shared with all of 3rd to 5th students enrolled at the Marigold. Legal guardians of the students were asked to review the consent forms thoroughly before they decide their children's participation. The student participants were also told important information about their

participation before the data collection process started. In total, 31 students with diverse backgrounds participated in this study (See Table 3).

Table 3. The Student Participants' Background Information

	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	12	38.7%
	Male	19	62.3%
Race/ Ethnicity	African American	21	67.7%
	Caucasian	1	3.2%
	Hispanic	7	22.6%
	Multi-racial	2	6.5%
Grade	5 th	6	19.4%
	4 th	9	29.0%
	3 rd	16	51.6%

Data Collection

Class Observations

Observation allows researchers to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research participants and contexts through locating themselves in the native environments (Takyi, 2015; Tracy, 2019). Through observing multifaceted interactions from the participants' viewpoints, researchers not only discover crucial information that may not be obtained in the self-reported data but also decrease the biases engaged in the data analysis (Glesne, 2016; Takyi, 2015).

In this study, 46 classroom observations were conducted with systematic field notes in both PE and classroom settings (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). The class observations aimed to obtain native information on different aspects of SEL implementation, for instance, overall class

atmosphere, and interpersonal interactions between teachers and students (Candela et al., 2004). Class observations entailed a systematic note-taking process called *field notes* (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The field notes consisted of observational notes, interpretive notes, and methodological notes, and reflections on the learning environment (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). The observational notes were focused on what the researcher directly saw and heard in the research contexts while the interpretive notes were more about the researcher's subjective interpretation of the direct observations (Emerson et al., 2011; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Tjora, 2006). The methodological notes were to address any notable information which can guide the future data collection and analysis (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). All field notes were revisited, revised, and reorganized after each of the class observations was completed (Emerson et al., 2011).

Individual interviews

Interview is an effective tool to elicit lived experiences and subjective perspectives from participants in depth (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Tracy, 2019). Semi-structured interviews enable researchers to collect data iteratively and systematically with a pre-arranged interview protocol as well as improvised follow-up questions to evoke rich descriptions from interviewees flexibly (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

37 individual interviews with interview protocols were conducted with the participating teachers and students. These interviews aimed to elicit their detailed experiences and perspectives about SEL in PE and classroom contexts at the Marigold. Each individual interview was conducted in one of the available classrooms at the Marigold for 30 minutes to one hour with teachers and for 20 to 40 minutes with students. Especially for the student participants, their interview schedules were set up and adjusted based on the on-going discussions with their

classroom teachers to minimize any impacts of this study on their academic learning time. In this regard, there were five students who did not participate in the individual interviews due to their medical or personal reasons.

Interview questions for teachers generally consist of 1) their understanding of SEL pedagogies, 2) their experiences of using SEL pedagogies in their own teaching contexts, 3) their perspectives of SEL development of students outside of their own teaching contexts, and 4) their experiences encapsulated in the photovoice. Interview questions for students were majorly focused on 1) their experiences of learning SEL skills in PE settings, 2) their experiences of SEL skills in classroom settings, 3) their perspectives of classroom and school climate, and 4) their experiences encapsulated in the photovoice. Especially when interviewing student participants, the researcher asked several casual questions, for example, “what is your favorite thing here at school?” to help them feel comfortable with the interview (Kelly, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Additionally, based on responses from the participants, relevant follow-up questions were asked to elicit more details about their perspectives and experiences of SEL experiences (Kelly, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Student Focus Groups

Focus groups have been recognized as useful to investigate participants’ perspectives since it can stimulate fluid interactions among various perspectives of others in the group (Kidd & Parshall, 2000; Morgan, 2019; Smithson, 2000). Focus group can be especially effective for studying socio-culturally underrepresented groups to better understand potential power dynamics around them (Lloyd-Evans, 2006; Liamputtong 2011). In this study, seven focus groups were conducted with the student participants to obtain more in-depth details and different viewpoints coming out of the group interactions (Kidd & Parshall, 2000). During the focus groups, the

researcher worked as a moderator so that the overall conversations were not too dominated by certain students (Smithson, 2000). Each focus group was conducted with two to four students for 20 to 40 minutes at a time. The date and time for conducting focus groups with students were also continuously discussed with their classroom teachers in advance to protect their academic learning time. Consequently, there were also five students who did not participate in the focus group due to their medical or personal reasons. Aligned with the individual interview questions, questions for student focus group were mainly focused on 1) their SEL experiences in PE settings, 2) their SEL experiences in classroom settings, 3) their perspectives of overall PE, classroom, and school climate, and 4) any follow-up questions to elaborate the information obtained in the individual interviews.

Photovoice

Photovoice is one of the effective tools in qualitative research where participants can unfold their experiences and perspectives through taking photos of certain events or phenomena (Tracy, 2019; Walton et al., 2012). In the previous literature, photovoice has been argued to empower underrepresented groups and include their voices in policy-making process through photographic documentation (Aldana et al., 2021; Liebenberg, 2022). It not only allows researchers to understand the research contexts through the “first-person viewpoints” (Walton et al., 2012, p.171) but also works as a powerful visual method to present images and emotions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In this study, a PE teacher, classroom teachers, school leaders, and elementary school students were asked to take pictures which can encapsulate their experiences and perspectives regarding SEL at the Marigold. In total, 82 photos were collected from the participants (20 from teachers; 62 from students). They were also asked to explain how the

photos can be related to their understanding and experiences of SEL in PE and classroom settings at the Marigold.

Reflexive Journals

Reflexivity in qualitative research has been recognized as “involving an ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce more accurate analyses” (Pillow, 2003, p. 178). As one of the possible means to use reflexivity in qualitative research, writing down ideas, notes, and memos when researchers are being engaged in the research contexts has long been emphasized as “the beginning of analysis” in qualitative research (Watt, 2015, p.83). Writing reflective journals, researchers can not only offer opportunities for researchers themselves to keep track of the positionality which may influence the research process, for instance, their own experiences and perspectives, but also allow readers to understand how the researchers come to discover the findings of the research (Berger, 2015; Mason-Bish, 2019; Watt, 2015).

In this study, 24 reflexive journal entries were generated by the researcher. Based on the five dialectical elements of reflexivity in qualitative research suggested by Anderson (1998) (*the researcher’s constructs; the informants’ commonsense constructs; the research data; the researcher’s ideological biases; the structural and historical forces*), the reflexive journals mainly included 1) what the researcher observes, hears, and experiences from the research contexts, 2) how the researcher interprets the experiences and connects the interpretation to the next steps in the research process, and 3) clarification of the personal experiences, perspectives, and biases engaged in the data collection and analysis phases (Mason-Bish, 2019; Meyer & Willis, 2019). Table 4 shows which data collection method will be conducted to answer each of the research questions.

Table 4. Data Collection Methods Conducted for the Research Questions

Data Source	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
Observations	PE	PE	PE
	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom
Interviews	Teachers	Students	Students
			Teachers
Focus Group	N/A	Students	Students
Photovoice	Teachers	Students	N/A
Reflexive Journals	Researcher	Researcher	Researcher

Data Analysis

Inductive data analysis was conducted with constant comparisons (Miles et al., 2014). Inductive data analysis in this study aimed to generate new understandings of SEL in PE and classroom settings based on the specific qualitative evidence from students and teachers at the Marigold (Patton, 2015). Once the data were collected, they were transcribed immediately, organized, and stored in an electronic format (Saldaña, 2013). Then each of the transcribed data was reviewed intensively and repetitively for open coding to discover what the data is about (Tracy, 2019). The open coding process was specifically focused on what the participants were seeing, hearing, saying, and experiencing in the research settings, and what assumptions they may have potentially implied through their words and behaviors (Charmaz, 2003; Elliott & Timulak, 2005; Gibbs, 2012; Tracy, 2019). After the open coding, initial patterns and key ideas were identified from the data broadly about the participants' experiences and perspectives of SEL in PE and classroom settings at the school (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The open coding was then followed by axial coding, which refers to grouping the initial codes based on their

commonalities and differences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Through reassembling the initial patterns and key ideas generated in the open coding phase, the purpose of axial coding was on creating causal explanations on the emerging relationships among these codes through constant comparisons (Kolb, 2012; Richards & Hemphill, 2018; Scott & Howell, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and clarification of researcher positionality were conducted to establish trustworthiness in this study. These strategies were adopted to enhance four elements of trustworthiness suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985): 1) Credibility, 2) Dependability, 3) Confirmability, and 4) Transferability (See Table 5).

Table 5. Strategies Used to Enhance Trustworthiness

	Credibility	Dependability	Confirmability	Transferability
Triangulation	X	X		
Member Checks	X			
Peer Debriefing	X		X	X
Negative Case Analysis		X		X
Clarifying Positionality			X	

Triangulation refers to engaging different data collection methods to overcome the limitations of individual methods (Shenton, 2004). Five different types of qualitative data (Class observations; Individual interviews; Student focus groups; Photovoice; Reflexive journals) were used for triangulation in this study.

Member checks indicate that researchers share the collected and analyzed data with participants to make sure if the interpretation can reflect their viewpoints and experiences

(Candela, 2019; Kornbluh, 2015). The interpretations and relevant data were shared with 11 participants (One PE teacher; Three classroom teachers; One school leader; Six elementary school students) to ask their further thoughts and ideas about the researcher's interpretations and the generated themes.

Rather than asking the participants to merely review the transcripts or the generated interpretations in texts, the researcher delivered brief presentations to them to share the themes in a participant-friendly and interactive way. During and after presenting the themes, there were casual yet focused two-way communications between the researcher and the participants to obtain any elaborations or corrections on the data. This additional information allowed the researcher to better understand the school context and their experiences of SEL. For example, when talking about the ongoing assistance and support for SEL, the participants agreed on that and mentioned that there have been book studies for teachers to develop their knowledge for SEL implementation, which was also added to the method sections. This interactive member checking was possible because the researcher spent a considerable amount of time as a part of school staff even before conducting this study.

Peer debriefing refers to the process where researchers ask knowledgeable colleagues for their reactions and feedback on the data collection and analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Morse, 2015; Tracy, 2019). Overall data collection and analysis process was monitored and discussed regularly with the experienced PE researcher from the local university who has also been working closely with the Marigold. The researcher and another experienced PE researcher both attended the meetings with the school leaders to identify the most suitable way to conduct this study at the school. Based on the continuous communications, the experienced PE researcher

provided theoretical and practical advice on participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis with specific examples of his own.

Negative case analysis enables researchers to “seek out deviant data that do not appear to support the emerging hypothesis” as “devil’s advocate” (Tracy, 2019, p.228). Using negative case analysis, the researcher challenged the emerging themes based on the negative cases and even included these cases to make each theme more descriptive and richer in its details. Including these negative cases helped me to understand the phenomena as a whole (Morse, 2015). Clarification of research positionality can be understood as researchers’ reflection on their own personal histories, experiences, perspectives, and ideas which may have influences on any research process (Charmaz et al., 2018). The positionality was addressed in the methods section of this dissertation as well as in the researcher’s reflexive journals.

Ethical Considerations

This study was planned and implemented based on the continuous discussions with the school leaders. The site approval was obtained by the school principal after providing an overview about this research. With this site approval, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was also obtained from UNCG. Once the IRB was approved, the overall timeline about participant recruitment and data collection were advised by the school leaders.

Consent forms for teachers were explained and obtained in person. Flyers, consent, and assent forms for student participants were shared in person at each of third, fourth, and fifth grade classrooms. Since all necessary information related to the study were provided in the parental consent forms, legal guardians of the student participants were asked to review the consent form thoroughly before deciding their children’s participation in this study. Assent forms were reviewed once again with the student participants using child-friendly languages.

Respecting the student participants as individuals, the researcher did not ask them to participate in the data collection process when they did not feel comfortable.

Pseudonyms were assigned to all the identifiable information to protect their privacy. Any types of collected, transcribed, and analyzed data were securely stored in the UNCG BOX drives electronically. Any access to the data was strictly monitored by the researcher.

CHAPTER IV: EXPLORING TEACHERS' SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

PEDAGOGIES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND CLASSROOMS AT A RURAL

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Introduction

There has been a growing interest in school-based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) implementations in different subjects including Physical Education (PE) (Taylor et al., 2017; Wright & Richards, 2021). SEL has been proposed as one of the most essential aspects to determine students' success, especially during the elementary school stage, with a broad range of positive student outcomes (Brackett et al., 2012; Denham et al., 2014; Goldberg et al., 2019). However, despite the increased attention, numerous aspects about how SEL can be implemented in real-time school settings remain unanswered yet (Dyson et al., 2021d; Humphrey, 2013). Furthermore, even though recent studies have started to provide empirical evidence on school-based SEL programs in PE settings (Hemphill et al., 2021; Howley et al., 2021; Rivera-Pérez et al., 2021), few studies have focused on how PE and other subjects at a school can work in collaboration with one another to enhance students' SEL development.

As John Dewey (1963) noted, educational experiences should be organized in continuity. This study is based on the idea that the full potential of SEL in PE can be reached only when PE and other educational settings within a school have common pedagogical messages over SEL development of students. This may be especially true in elementary school settings where students mostly spend more of their school day in classroom settings than in PE class. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives and experiences of teachers on SEL pedagogies in both PE and classrooms at a rural elementary school. The guiding research

question was ‘What SEL pedagogies do teachers implement in PE and classroom at a rural elementary school?’

Theoretical framework

Schools today have been expected to provide more than academic learning experiences to better support students, especially the ones in socio-economically and emotionally challenging situations (Kirk, 2020; National Research Council, 2012). In this regard, despite the claim that “making SEL the primary learning domain for school PE programs is problematic” (Lund & van der Mars, 2022, p. 5), the importance of cultivating socially and emotionally competent students in school-based PE programs cannot be overemphasized. In this study, PE is viewed as an avenue where students learn how to cooperate with others in a respectful way, maintain safe and healthy behaviors based on personal and social responsibility, and develop a wide range of skills needed for their lives outside of the gym (Dyson et al., 2021a, Martinek & Hellison, 2016; Richards & Shiver, 2020). This argument can be further advocated by the accumulated empirical evidence on the social and affective domains of learning in different school-based PE programs (Dyson et al., 2021a, Dyson et al., 2021c, Hemphill et al., 2021, Howley et al., 2022).

SEL has been generally defined as “the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills required to succeed in schooling, the workplace, relationships, and citizenship” (Jones et al., 2017, p. 12). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) introduced five essential competencies in their SEL framework, which include *self-awareness*, *social awareness*, *self-management*, *relationship skills*, and *responsible decision-making* (CASEL, 2020). The CASEL’s SEL has been widely used as a major theoretical framework in recent scholarly works not only in PE but

also in general education settings (Elias, 2019; Wright & Richards, 2021). The CASEL's SEL framework also guided the understanding of what constitutes SEL in this study.

However, a more contextual and developmental framework of SEL by Jones and Bouffard (2012) was also adopted in this study to understand SEL implementation in PE from a broader perspective. This SEL theoretical framework is grounded in the socio-ecological theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979), which maintains that human development occurs from the complex interplay between individuals and the multi-level environments around them (Reicher, 2010). As Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified four different environmental layers which can affect pedagogical practices and outcomes (*Microsystem; Mesosystem; Exosystem; Macrosystem*), this theory advocates that students' SEL development is influenced by external factors associated with their home, classroom, school, and local community as well as the broader societal factors such as policies (Dyson et al., 2021a). This contextual and developmental SEL framework can be useful to obtain detailed information about SEL implementations in different school contexts, often called the *black box* (Dyson et al., 2019; Dyson et al., 2021d). This framework was also used in the school-based research by Dyson et al. (2021a) which investigated students' perspectives of Cooperative Learning (CL) for SEL implementations in the primary PE program in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Based on the socio-ecological SEL framework (Jones & Bouffard, 2012), this study assumes that SEL in PE is not just about what is happening within the gym but also about what is happening outside of the gym. Thus, the focus of this study was on what pedagogical connections SEL in PE has with SEL outside of PE, especially in classroom settings. This argument is based on the researcher's prior observations and experiences in the real-time school settings that PE does not sit alone within a school. Especially in elementary school settings in the

United States, usually one or two PE teachers are situated with a much higher number of classroom teachers at a school. It is also well known that the overall school schedule has been designed to have students spend more time in classroom settings than in PE class in elementary school settings.

There has been a tremendous amount of school-based empirical studies on what should be taught in PE class, how PE class should be taught, and what student learning are generated from the PE class. How to develop student learning in social and affective domains in school-based PE programs was one of the main agendas in the previous literature to identify evidence-based practices for quality PE class (Rivera-Pérez et al., 2021; Teraoka et al., 2020). More specifically focused on SEL, there has been a growing body of empirical research on how the existing or innovative pedagogies in the field can promote students' SEL development, for example, using models-based practice in different school settings (Dyson et al., 2021a; Dyson et al., 2021c; Hemphill et al., 2021; Howley et al., 2021). These studies have corroborated that PE can be an effective learning site where different SEL outcomes can be produced (Ciotto & Gagnon, 2018; Gordon et al., 2016; Wright & Richards, 2021). However, this previous school-based research has a limitation in that their data were mainly generated from PE teachers only.

In other words, more in-depth empirical evidence is needed on the contexts where the PE teacher and their PE programs are situated, which might work as a practical barrier in applying theories into practices. Given that teachers' SEL practices are highly influenced by the surrounding environments (Collie et al., 2012; Schonert-Reichl, 2017), this issue can be attributed to the limited evidence on perspectives of different stakeholders who work with PE teachers in the real-time school settings. This brings physical educators' attention to the importance of exploring what SEL pedagogies are being implemented in the classroom settings,

which will ultimately have impacts on SEL experiences of students and teachers in PE settings. Including perspectives of other stakeholders, most notably, classroom teachers, in this study will possibly provide information on how PE can be positioned as an effective and collaborative setting for SEL implementation within the school. Furthermore, engaging different perspectives on the SEL pedagogies in both settings will help to explore what specific aspects of their home environment, local community, and cultural contexts may be related to the teachers' understandings and experiences of SEL implementation in PE and classroom settings. This is especially important in a rural school setting where the majority of students are historically and socio-culturally under-resourced (Biddle & Azzano, 2016; Cicchinelli & Beesley, 2017).

In general education, previous research has also argued that school-based SEL implementation can be more successful when it is supported by a whole school, not just by one specific subject (Bear et al., 2017; Stoiber, 2011). In this regard, a whole-school approach to SEL has been introduced based on the idea of a *health-promoting school*, where different stakeholders in and outside of school make concerted endeavors for student well-being across physical, social, and emotional domains (Weare, 2000; World Health Organization & United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). As the essential aspect of promoting students' well-being (Weare, 2000), enhancing students' SEL through whole-school efforts has gained momentum to make school-based SEL implementations more "meaningful, sustained, and embedded in the day-to-day interactions of students, educators, and school staff" (Jones & Bouffard, 2012, p. 3). This approach is grounded in the idea that schools provide effective learning environments where students can socialize with different peers and adults to learn various academic and life skills (Goldberg et al., 2019).

However, even though a whole-school approach has been adopted to develop SEL in general education contexts (Luiselli et al., 2005; Nielsen et al., 2015), a whole-school approach in PE setting has been more widely recognized in relation to *Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program* (CSPAP) (Castelli et al., 2017), where “all of a school’s components and resources operate in a coordinated and dynamic manner to provide access, encouragement, and programs that enable all students to engage in vigorous- or moderate-intensity physical activity 60 minutes or more each day” (Institute of Medicine, 2013, p.30). Given that the overarching goal of CSPAP is promoting students’ physical activity participation, a whole-school approach in this study is used to indicate school-wide pedagogical efforts aiming for students’ SEL development across different contexts. In this sense, this study is based on the claim that PE experiences can work as a vehicle for promoting SEL of students within a whole-school approach.

Methods

Design and Context

This study is grounded in a case study design, which is defined as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (Yazan, 2015, p.139). This study superficially investigated three cases: 1) SEL pedagogies in PE settings, 2) SEL pedagogies in classroom settings, and 3) Other relevant pedagogies related to SEL in PE and classroom settings. Given that researchers need to adopt various data collection methods to obtain detailed information about the cases (Merriam, 1995; Patton, 2015), four types of qualitative data were collected and analyzed to provide a deeper understanding of these three cases.

This research was conducted at Marigold elementary school (Pseudonym), a rural school located in North Carolina, the United States. As a Title I school (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), 80% of the students enrolled at the Marigold are ethnic minorities (59% African American; 20% Caucasian; 11% Hispanic; 10% Multi-Racial) while 98% receive free and reduced meals coming from low-income families. The Marigold was assigned as one of the lab schools in the nearby university systems based on the legislation passed by the North Carolina General Assembly in 2016 (The University of North Carolina System, n.d.). Operating in partnership with the nearby university, professional counselors, and educators with an advanced or terminal degree in education-related fields have been working closely with the school leaders and teachers to address students' mental health issues and behavior incidents at the Marigold. The teachers at the Marigold have been continuously involved in professional developments for SEL pedagogies. There conducted two school-wide professional development for SEL in the 2021-22 academic year, one of which lasted for two weeks. Along with the school-wide professional development opportunities, individual teachers, school leaders, and professionals from the nearby university also organized and participated in ongoing mini conferences and book studies to better support SEL and restorative practices. Additionally, an SEL curriculum called *Second Step* has been implemented to promote SEL in K-5 classroom settings throughout the 2021-22 academic year. Furthermore, seven social and emotional essentials called *CHOICES* (Collaboration; Honesty; Ownership; Integrity; Consequences; Expectations; Solutions) have been emphasized across the school since the Marigold first opened in 2018.

Participants

Using purposive sampling methods (Patton, 2003), 13 educators (One PE teacher; Nine classroom teachers; Three school leaders) participated in this study. The PE teacher is an early-

career PE specialist who has been working at the school for four years. The PE teacher is categorized as CAPE (Creative Art and PE) teachers with the dance and music specialists at the Marigold. The classroom teachers were recruited from each grade level. Three school leaders (Principal; Assistant principal; School counselor) who supervise SEL across different grade levels were recruited to provide a whole-school perspective regarding SEL pedagogies at the Marigold. The detailed background information of the participants can be found in Table 2. Pseudonyms are used to protect their privacy.

Data Collection

Four types of qualitative data sources were collected in this study (Class observations; In-depth interviews; Photovoice; Reflexive journals). Observation is an effective tool for researchers to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research participants and contexts by locating themselves in the real-time settings, which may not be fully obtained in the self-reported data (Candela et al., 2004; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Takyi, 2015). In this study, class observations were conducted with field notes in PE and classroom settings 46 times in the 2021-22 academic year. The class observations were mainly focused on what pedagogical practices teachers use related to SEL and how they interact with their students.

In-depth interviews were used to obtain detailed information on the participants' lived experiences and subjective perspectives through their own words (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Tracy, 2019). Using semi-structured interviews with a pre-arranged interview protocol allows researchers to conduct an organized and iterative data collection with relevant follow-up questions or probes (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In this study, 13 semi-structured interviews were implemented regarding the educators' perspectives and experiences of SEL implementation in PE and classroom settings at a rural elementary school (Rubin & Rubin,

2012). The interview questions were not only focused on their individual experiences with students but also their perspectives of SEL pedagogies at a whole school level. An overview of the interview questions can be found in the Appendix C.

Photovoice is one of the effective qualitative research tools where participants, especially underrepresented groups, can illustrate their experiences and perspectives by taking photos of certain events or phenomena (Tracy, 2019; Walton et al., 2012). It can not only help researchers to understand the research contexts through the first-person viewpoints (Liebenberg, 2018; Walton et al., 2012) but also works as a powerful visual method to present images and emotions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In this study, 20 photos were collected from the educators that illuminated their experiences and perspectives regarding SEL pedagogies at the Marigold (Walton et al., 2012). The participants were asked to take one to three photos that can possibly encapsulate their perspectives and experiences related to SEL in PE and classroom settings. They were also asked in the interviews to explain how the photos can be related to their understanding and experiences of SEL pedagogies in PE and classroom settings.

Writing reflective journals enables researchers to record any ideas, notes, and memos related to their own experiences and perspectives, which may influence the research process (Berger, 2015; Watt, 2015). Given that the researcher has been working at the Marigold as a full-time graduate assistant over two academic years, she wrote 24 reflexive journal entries mainly about her own experiences in the rural school context, how she interpreted the experiences at the school, how she discovered the findings, and any potential biases in the research process (Anderson, 1998).

Data Analysis

Inductive qualitative data analysis with constant comparisons was implemented in this study (Miles et al., 2014). Once the data were collected, they were transcribed, organized, and reviewed multiple times with analytic memos by the researcher (Saldaña, 2013). These analytic memos included the researcher's immediate interpretations or remaining questions about the data (Saldaña, 2013). While these memos and questions were continuously monitored by another experienced qualitative PE researcher in peer debriefing (Morse, 2015; Tracy, 2019), the researcher also recorded how her initial interpretations have been changed or corroborated after the continuous discussions in her reflexive journals (Charmaz et al., 2018). Being critically reflexive on her own perspectives and clarifying her positionality was a part of establishing trustworthiness in this study (Charmaz et al., 2018; Luttrell, 2000; Watt, 2015). Using open coding, the reviewed data were clustered and assigned with meaning units to discover initial patterns and key ideas (Elliott & Timulak, 2005; Tracy, 2019). As a second-cycle coding, axial coding was followed to reassemble the data based on their commonalities and differences (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In the axial coding process, the initial codes generated in the open coding process were consistently compared with one another to create more logical connections among them (Kolb, 2012; Richards & Hemphill, 2018; Scott & Howell, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Both open and axial coding process were also consistently advised by the experienced PE researcher who has also been working closely with the participants at the Marigold (Morse, 2015; Tracy, 2019).

Along with peer debriefing and clarification of the researcher positionality (Charmaz et al., 2018; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Morse, 2015), the trustworthiness of this study was further enhanced by triangulation, member checks, and negative case analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Miles et al., 2014). The data triangulation process helped improve the trustworthiness of the findings by checking and interrogating the four different data sources (Observations; In-depth interviews; Photovoice; Reflexive journals) (Shenton, 2004). For member checks, the generated themes and relevant data were shared with one PE teacher, three classroom teachers, and one school leader to ask their thoughts for elaboration. In this process, the generated themes and relevant data were shared through brief presentations in a participant-friendly way, which provoked two-way interactions between the researcher and the participants on the shared data. Lastly, the negative cases challenged the emerging themes and were even included in the findings to add in-depth details to the data (Tracy, 2019).

Findings

Four themes were generated from the data analysis: 1) Learning how to support personal and cultural differences, 2) Promoting an inclusive learning environment, 3) Building a whole school community with care, and 4) Shared understandings with school-wide interactions.

Learning How to Support Personal and Cultural Differences

One of the pedagogies that was prioritized in both PE and classroom settings was learning how to respect differences among students. In classroom settings, Grace (2nd) commented that a circle time on the carpet is one of the most important everyday routines where students can learn about what other people think and say (See Figure 2).

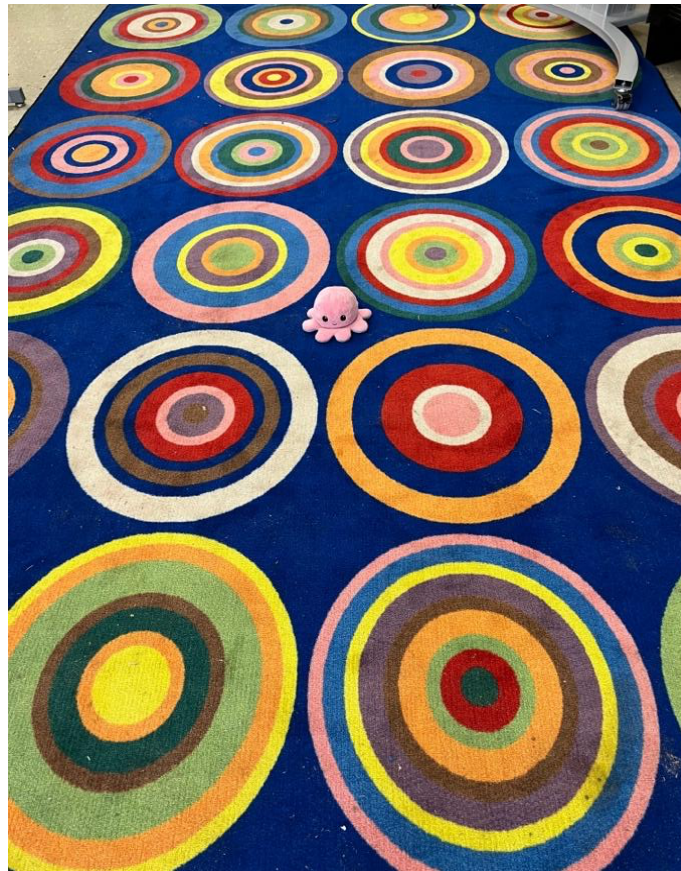
Figure 2. Photovoice from Grace



My kids love circle time. It's how we get our day started. And it's routine. It's procedure. But it's also kind of that together time where they can really see everybody and really focus on what everybody says (Grace, 2nd).

Adding on to her point, Zoey (3rd) also identified a morning circle as an effective setting where her whole class can learn about different feelings and thoughts from their peers: "That happens a lot in the circle and just cultivate that understanding of each other like, oh, we are different, and it's okay". Her photo of a carpet and a talking piece illustrates that her students learn how to show their own feelings and how to read other people's emotions in a developmentally appropriate way (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. Photovoice from Zoey



I'm gonna take a picture of the rug with our talking piece....[Turning the talking piece inside out] He turned sad....Sometimes we actually use it like, how are you starting your day feeling?...This shows emotion (Zoey, 3rd).

Further, Maya (4th) shared an example that the circle time worked as an open space where students can also share their cultural differences with others: "One of my students celebrates Kwanzaa. I had her around Christmas time talking to us about what Kwanzaa meant....She really enjoyed being able to teach the class about her culture and things that her cultural practices".

Focused more on the collaborative efforts for SEL between PE and classroom settings, the classroom teachers agreed that their students can further develop how to positively support the differences in PE settings: "Having other people play with them that aren't as athletic or

haven't played as long. Just how can you be more empathetic, show more kindness toward them" (Maya, 4th); "Being able to listen to each other and understand that everybody does not have to agree, but we still need to work together" (Madelyn, 5th). The classroom teachers' account on understanding and respecting differences in physical activity experiences and motor skill levels was also echoed by Steven (PE): "While they're doing their team activities,...instead of being a downer...why don't we try to build that person up?...Next round, I want to see what happens when this group of three motivates each other....The team is there to support them"; "Steven emphasized 'Make sure that you are your partner look after each other when you are playing' in his instructions" (Observation, 4th grade PE). Moreover, one of the photos from Steven (PE) showed that learning about differences in PE started from the moment when students enter the gym especially with choosing their own ways for greetings (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. Photovoice from Steven



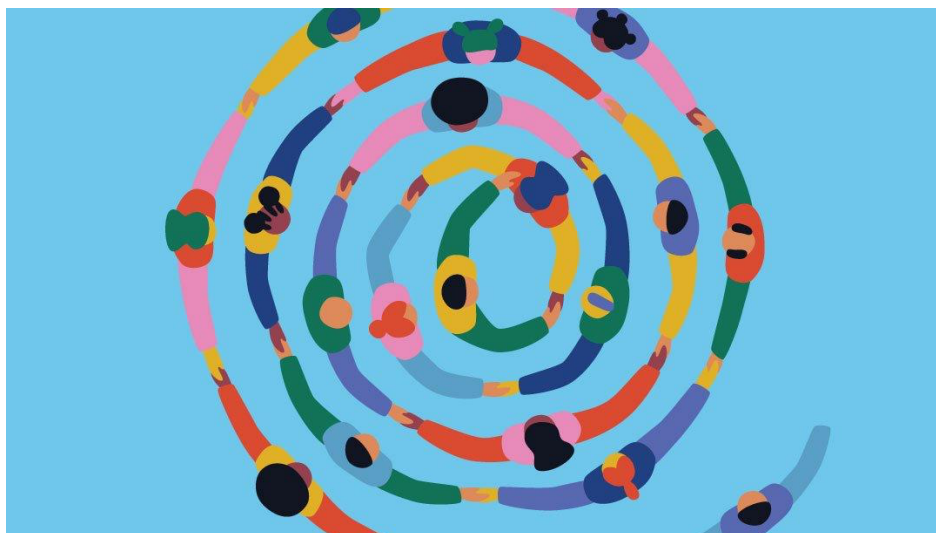
This pedagogical practice was also encouraged and observed by Alicia (Principal):
“When you enter a classroom, how would you like to be greeted?... There are several different ways that I’ve noticed that kids transition into physical education”.

The PE teacher, classroom teachers, and school leaders all claimed that learning how to support personal and cultural differences was one of the most emphasized aspects of SEL implementation at the school. However, the finding also indicates that, even though they had the consistent pedagogical goal over SEL, different activities, for example, morning circles and different ways of greetings, were recognized as useful and effective to achieve the goal in PE and classroom settings.

Promoting an Inclusive Learning Environment

Building on understanding and respecting differences among individuals, the teachers commonly interpreted SEL not just as social skills but as an important avenue to promoting inclusion in their classrooms or school community. Zion (Counselor) shared his view that SEL is not just about learning relationship skills but more about promoting equity and inclusion ultimately (See Figure 5).

Figure 5. Photovoice from Zion



Social Emotional Learning just really kind of goes beyond that whole ‘How are you feeling today?’ (Zion, Counselor)

His message about making every student feel included was also supported by Claire (4th): “Whatever materials you have, you have to have enough for every student, so no one can be left out”. However, even though teachers were overall aware of the importance of promoting inclusion, Elena (4th) also commented that learning about inclusion is not an easy thing for elementary school students to learn especially when they find themselves physically able and competent: “If somebody does something... disruptive or frustrating for them...if they are physically able...it was not an automatic empathy kind of thing. They had to learn how to accept everybody”.

In this regard, the classroom teachers expected their students to learn more about inclusion through various physical activities, where students can see differences in physical skills among themselves more evidently: “Listen[ing] to everybody’s ideas for solutions would be important...They’re not giving anybody else the chance to speak...Because somebody’s just kind of dominating” (Grace, 2nd); “Whoever is put on your team, no matter what their skill level is, and whatever activity you’re playing...Maybe you can teach them, like, be that positive influence to get them going on football” (Zoey, 3rd). Moving beyond promoting inclusion in his own teaching contexts, Steven (PE)’s perspective of inclusive SEL was built on his understandings of the local community from which the students come:

I try to let these kids see that...success can happen in all forms and in all areas... When I bring up the culturally relevant bring up things that are close to them, I see a kind of a spark...That’s my goal is to make every kid feel that they have a chance to do whatever they put their mind to.

His account was also echoed by Alicia (Principal) who explained the socio-economic conditions where the students are situated: “As a Title I school...the opportunities available for people in that socio-economic range, it’s a big deal”.

The PE teacher, classroom teachers, and school leaders shared a common understanding that SEL pedagogies at the school should be focused on promoting an inclusive learning environment where every single student can feel engaged and valued. The findings indicate that the participants’ emphasis on inclusion in their SEL pedagogies is likely attributed to their understanding of the home and community environments where their students are living.

Building a Whole School Community with Genuine Care

The teachers at the Marigold advocated the importance of building a whole school community with genuine care for their students. Not only did they look after what was happening in their own teaching contexts, but also were they attentive to what was happening outside: “But when you’re actually here, you can see that there are difficulties that students face every single day, that may be a little more than other students from other schools” (Abigail, 1st); “I pay attention to what they wear. I pay attention to what they read. I visit classrooms” (Steven, PE). The teachers made efforts to connect with their students and get to know them better individually even outside of their classrooms or gym: “School leaders, teachers, and staff are greeting and welcoming the students every morning at the front door. They check in with kids about how they start their day” (Reflexive journal).

One of the reasons why the teachers did not limit attention to their own settings was attributed to their understanding that SEL is about learning life skills that the students can bring to their lives even outside school: “Team building is important in life, not just in sports. So, I try to incorporate life skills into my lessons as much as possible” (Steven, PE); “I like to make it

relatable to home....Your parents have expectations you need to do the same thing at home....Absolutely life skills” (Mia, K). Adding on to the teachers’ account that they care about what is going on outside of their teaching contexts, one of the photos from Claire (4th) also showed how it is presented to students visibly (See Figure 6).

Figure 6. Photovoice from Claire



I think to be successful in life, you have to have life skills. And caring is central (Claire, 4th, Interview).

When it comes to PE, Steven (PE) shared his experiences of showing his care for students outside of PE class as a part of the whole school community:

Going to a classroom...they expected me to be in the gym....Why are you helping me with math?...I’ve become part of that community....Because I try to make it exciting. But also, it’s just showing that I’m more than a PE teacher (Interview).

Interacting with students and emotionally supporting them continuously even outside of his class appeared to help improve students' behaviors in PE settings, which further strengthened his view about SEL pedagogies grounded in care: "These fifth graders look at me as more than just some guy spitting rules out....They know that I care about them, and they know that I have their best interests in mind".

The PE teacher and classroom teachers advocated that caring is one of the most important aspects of SEL pedagogies at the Marigold. Their care was not only limited to their teaching contexts but was extended to their student's home environments and local communities from which they are coming. This theme also revealed that the teachers at Marigold expect their students to bring SEL skills that they learned at school to outside school as life skills.

Shared Understandings for SEL with School-wide Interactions

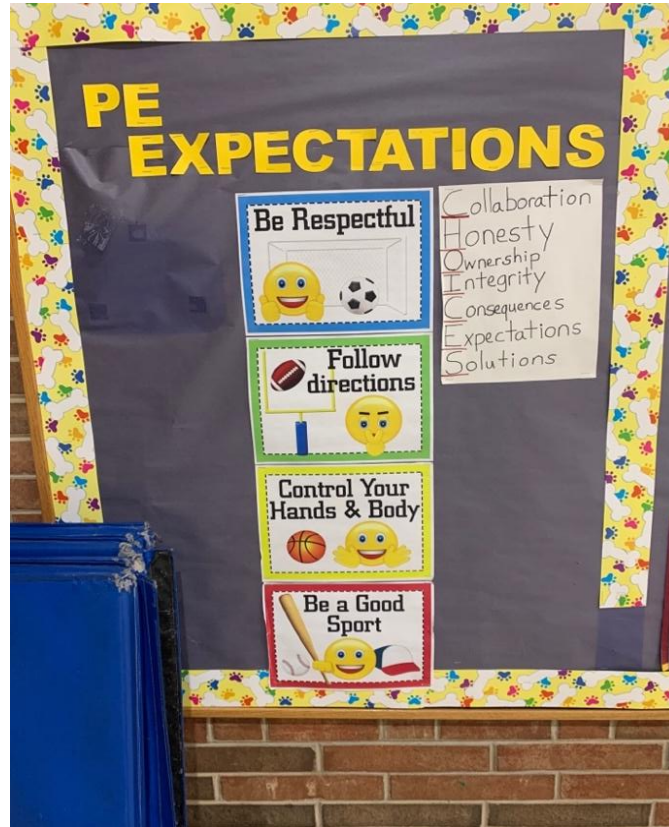
The teachers reported that there have been continuous and active communications between PE and classroom settings on students' SEL behaviors on a daily basis: "I communicate daily....A lot of times when I tell them that behavior, it's not new to that teacher. That teacher already experienced that day" (Steven, PE). Consistent and frequent interactions between two settings helped both PE and classroom teachers to be more proactive towards potential behavioral incidents: "One of my students....anytime she didn't get her way, she would take off run....Just knowing kind of the different behaviors [that] you already see, that way things can be de-escalated before they happen" (Emily, K).

Building on the importance of on-going discussions on SEL between these two settings, the teachers further highlighted having collaborative efforts for SEL across the whole school in the long run: "I think having everybody on the same page is super important...Be more proactive

with that group instead of reacting when situations arise” (Madelyn, 5th); “I’ve also checked in and touched base with other CAPE [Creative Arts and PE] teachers...just because you know, we’re all in it together, we really are. And that’s the only way this works” (Claire, 4th). This claim was also supported by Zion (Counselor) who strongly emphasized the significance of having every teacher embody SEL pedagogies on a daily basis: “Everyone has to be on board, everyone. I don’t want people to buy in, I want people to be. And there’s a difference....They have to really embrace restorative practices, Second Step, CHOICES, and live it”.

The teachers overall prioritized sharing common languages and goals over SEL so that the SEL experiences across the school can be in continuity with one another: “They’re [students are] hearing the same thing over and over. And so they think, Oh, Ms. Smith [herself] thinks it’s important....Oh, Mr. Keith [Music teacher] values this too” (Grace, 2nd); “They’ve heard this verbiage before. So, as they move up...we can focus on like, the deeper topics” (Maya, 4th). It was also observed that teachers use the common languages mostly from CHOICES in both PE settings: “Steven explained “*Integrity* is like you do the right thing even when nobody is watching”” (Reflexive journal) (See Figure 7); “She asked the students if she can share the experiences where one student made mistake and he immediately said ‘Sorry, my bad’ to his friend. She said that the *ownership* was powerful” (Observation, 4th-grade morning circle).

Figure 7. Photovoice from Steven



The participants reported that continuous, frequent, and active Interactions between classroom teachers and the PE teacher have been perceived to support students' SEL development effectively and sustainably. Furthermore, their accounts were extended to having a whole-school buy-in and shared languages towards SEL pedagogies for the long-term success in students' SEL development at the Marigold.

Discussion

This study examined how the PE teacher, classroom teachers, and school leaders perceived and experienced SEL pedagogies in PE and in classroom settings at a rural elementary school. This study suggested that teachers at the Marigold shared four SEL pedagogies (*Learning how to support personal and cultural differences; Promoting an inclusive learning environment;*

Building a whole school community with care; Shared understandings with school-wide interactions).

This study was conducted in a rural school setting, which have received less attention compared to urban schools in previous school-based empirical research (Cicchinelli & Beesley, 2017). Given that there are a growing number of students with special needs in American rural schools, for example, students in poverty and diversity (Cicchinelli & Beesley, 2017; Johnson et al. 2014), more research needs to be conducted to investigate teaching and learning experiences of teachers and students in rural school settings. In this sense, the first and the second finding indicated that teachers at the Marigold considered the cultural diversity and socio-economic conditions of their students when they were implementing SEL pedagogies in PE and classroom settings. These findings infer that having safe, inclusive, and culturally relevant learning experiences should be prioritized in SEL practices for diverse student populations, especially for those who have been socio-culturally underrepresented (Jagers et al., 2019; Nieto, 2009). According to socio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), this can ultimately support the cultural contexts where students are living outside school (*macrosystem*). Moreover, these findings can be supported by *Transformative SEL*, which is recently suggested as a justice-oriented SEL approach by the CASEL (Jagers et al., 2019).

Furthermore, especially the second theme, *Building a whole school community with care* showed that PE and classroom teachers paid attention to who their students are and what they experience even outside of their own teaching contexts. As the previous literature maintained that people in rural areas are likely to have a stronger attachment to the local community compared to “more anonymous and impersonal environments of large urban areas” (Petrin et al., 2014), teachers’ awareness and pedagogical actions towards build a caring whole school

community can be attributed to this unique aspect of the rural community. In this regard, Petrin et al. (2014) also argued that the rural school environments can be more inclusive for all types of students since they need more active engagement from everyone to operate as a small size school.

This study also drew attention to how SEL pedagogies can be implemented across a whole school moving beyond PE class. As previous studies claimed, school-based SEL programs can be implemented more successfully and effectively when they have school-wide collaborative efforts, not just in one specific subject setting (Goldberg et al., 2019; Oberle et al., 2016). Especially, in this field of this study, there have been scholarly efforts to examine how social and emotional qualities learned in school-based PE or physical activity programs can be transferred and sustained beyond the program contexts (Gordon & Doyle, 2015; Santos et al., 2020). However, numerous aspects still remain unanswered regarding pedagogical practices or perspectives of different stakeholders outside the gymnasium, which may have an impact on the sustainable SEL. In this regard, the third and the fourth themes corroborated that the PE teacher, classroom teachers, and school leaders all acknowledged the importance of developing more nuanced and collaborative SEL pedagogical practices across the whole school to support SEL development of students more successfully and sustainably. From a socio-ecological perspective, this can better serve the individual students, school, home environments, and local community across the *microsystem*, *mesosystem*, and *exosystem* levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Furthermore, the findings overall suggest that PE can significantly contribute to a whole-school SEL implementation in elementary school settings. The findings in the study not only highlighted the potential of PE as an effective setting for SEL implementation but also the importance of having active interactions between PE and classroom settings to bolster students'

SEL development. The findings in this study can possibly add to a growing body of continuous professional development for pre-service and in-service PE teachers to better implement SEL pedagogies as a part of a whole school approach. This account can be further advocated by Jones et al. (2019) who emphasized the importance of consistent teacher training to promote quality school-based SEL programs. Based on the identified SEL pedagogies in this study, future research should systematically develop a whole-school SEL program and specifically identify what aspects of SEL implementation in PE can promote students' SEL outcomes in specific.

The overall findings of this study advocate that students' SEL are influenced by SEL pedagogies in PE as well as the ones beyond PE, for example, classroom settings. Based on these findings, it is recommended that PE teachers and researchers move beyond the gym to see what is happening outside of our field of study, which can be directly related to students' SEL development in PE settings. Interdisciplinary collaborative efforts to determine SEL pedagogies and their outcomes across different subjects will help students to develop SEL skills more successfully, consistently, and sustainably across the whole school community.

CHAPTER V: EXPLORING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND CLASSROOMS AT A RURAL
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has been one of the most rising concepts in educational practices and policies not just in Physical Education but also in general education settings (Jagers et al., 2019; Todd et al., 2022; Wright & Richards, 2021). A large number of previous studies have been conducted to determine positive student learning outcomes that school-based SEL programs or interventions can produce, for example, students' higher academic performance and improved physical, social, and mental well-being (Brackett et al., 2012; Ee & Cheng, 2013; Goldberg et al., 2019). As social and affective domains of learning have long been investigated by school-based researchers with various pedagogical models and strategies (Bailey et al., 2009; Casey & Fernandez-Rio, 2019; Teraoka & Kirk, 2022), a growing body of recent empirical evidence has started to explore how school-based PE programs can contribute to students' SEL outcomes (Dyson et al., 2021a; Dyson et al., 2021c; Howley et al., 2021). Especially, bringing attention to the *black box* in the SEL implementation, these previous studies have emphasized the importance of collecting in-depth qualitative evidence on how SEL pedagogies can be implemented and what SEL outcomes can be generated accordingly in PE settings (Dyson et al., 2021d; Howley et al., 2022; Humphrey, 2013).

However, even though academic attention on SEL in PE has increased in recent years (Dyson et al., 2019; Hemphill et al., 2021; Wright & Richards, 2021), its implementation in real-time school settings still needs more empirical evidence (Dyson et al., 2021a). The existing

previous literature on school-based SEL programs in PE has limitations in that it does not provide a broader picture of how students experience SEL outside of PE, which will ultimately have influences on students' SEL behaviors in PE settings. Considering that classrooms are the setting where students spend most of their time especially in elementary schools, it is worthwhile to examine how students experience SEL in not only PE class but also in their classrooms. This will also provide students' viewpoints on how SEL experiences in PE can support their SEL outside of PE within a school.

With this in mind, the purpose of this research was to explore students' experiences of Social and Emotional Learning in Physical Education and classrooms at a rural elementary school. The guiding research question was "What SEL experiences do students have in Physical Education and classroom settings at a rural elementary school?"

Theoretical Framework

As a response to increasing mental health issues and behavioral incidents of students, there has been a growing attention on SEL in the American education systems (Elias & Weissberg, 2000; Payton, 2000; Weare, 2010). This led to an increasing amount of school-based SEL interventions with various focuses, for example, school climate and bullying (Divecha & Brackett, 2020; McCormick et al., 2015; Nickerson et al., 2019). Even though different definitions and frameworks have been suggested to explain the concept of SEL (Garcia, 2014), the SEL framework by the Collaborative of Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been actively adopted by the researchers and practitioners in the field of study (Wright & Richards, 2021). According to the CASEL, SEL is defined as "the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show

empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (CASEL, 2020, p.1). Based on this definition, five essential SEL competencies were also introduced by the CASEL, which include *self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making* (CASEL, 2020, p.2). The CASEL’s five SEL competencies guided the researcher’s viewpoint of what specific skills students would need for their SEL development.

However, even though the existing definition and framework of SEL by the CASEL have been actively used in previous SEL studies (Alexander & Vermette, 2019; Ross et al., 2017; Wright & Richards, 2021), their definition and framework have also been criticized due to a lack of cultural diversity in their approach to understanding social and emotional development of students (Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Higheagle-Strong & McMMain, 2020). Recognizing the need to incorporate equity in implementing SEL, an alternative term *Transformative SEL* (TSEL) was suggested as a more justice-oriented concept by the CASEL (Jagers et al., 2018; Williams & Jagers, 2022). However, even though the theoretical attempt to integrate equity into the existing SEL framework is noteworthy, having a justice-oriented approach to SEL theoretically does not necessarily guarantee that SEL is being implemented to engage socio-culturally marginalized student populations in school (Baek et al., 2022; Ovens, 2016; Tinning, 2002). This concern brings our attention to a lack of empirical evidence on TSEL in real-time school settings (Baek et al., 2022). How can SEL be taught and learned for students whose voices have been historically marginalized in the American curricular discourse?

Rural schools have received insufficient attention not only in the American educational system but also in previous school-based literature (Aud et al., 2013; Petrin et al., 2014; Schafft, 2016). Rural schools in the United States have been reported to suffer from various socio-

cultural challenges, for instance, insufficient infrastructure, decreasing populations, and limited opportunities for education (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Meyers et al., 2015; Tuters, 2015).

However, despite their unique needs and circumstances, the lived experiences of different stakeholders in rural schools have not received enough attention in the previous school-based studies in general (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Schafft, 2016; Tuters, 2015), especially in the studies focused on school-based SEL programs. Not to mention that the majority of students and teachers in rural education have been marginalized historically, the previous literature also suggested that social and emotional environments in rural schools can be different from the ones in urban schools (Petrin et al., 2014). Thus, engaging diverse experiences and perspectives of students and teachers in rural schools regarding SEL can potentially contribute to making SEL more transformative and justice-oriented (Baek et al., 2022).

Even though the potential of PE for students' SEL development should be acknowledged, the previous studies still have limitations in that they have only focused on what happened in PE. However, according to the socio-ecological theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979), human development occurs from constant interplay between students and different environmental layers around them (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Tudge et al., 2009). This theory can advocate that students' SEL experiences in PE are highly likely to be influenced by their SEL experiences outside of PE class as well as what is happening within PE class (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Especially, considering the elementary school settings where students spend most of their time in classrooms, this infers the importance of exploring students' SEL experiences both in PE and classroom settings, which will have influence on each other. Expanding our view of SEL from PE to outside of PE will possibly provide useful information on how PE can work

collaboratively with other subject settings to better support students' SEL development in elementary school contexts.

Under the purpose of investigating elementary school students' SEL experiences in PE and classroom settings, this study adopted symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework. Symbolic interactionism refers to “a micro-level theoretical framework and perspective” which “addresses how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions among individuals” (Carter & Fuller, 2016, p.932). In other words, symbolic interactionism is based on the bottom-up approach, which focuses on understanding the micro-level interactions to understand the bigger society through signs or symbols, for example, talk, gesture, object, and space (Barker et al., 2017; Carter & Fuller, 2016; Lynch, 2015). In symbolic interactionism-based research, it is of the essence to examine what viewpoints and experiences participants have about their worlds, what they consider important, and how they construct meanings (Benzies & Allen, 2001; Tracy, 2019).

Grounded in symbolic interactionism, one of the main agendas in this study was to empower the student populations whose voice have been historically underrepresented in previous curricular and academic discourse (Au et al., 2016). More specifically, this study is centered on understanding the personal interpretations and subjective meanings of elementary school students in a historically marginalized area through symbols, objects, and places around them (Liebenberg, 2018). Given that students have often been regarded as passive subjects who merely learn what is given by teachers (Dyson, 2006), lived experiences and perspectives of elementary school students in rural areas have limited academic attention not only in PE but also in general education to this point. To better understand how students at a rural elementary school perceive their SEL experience, photovoice was adopted as one of the qualitative tools in this

study to obtain specific signs or symbols embedded in their lived experiences and the surrounding environments (Lorusso et al., 2020; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Parker et al., 2020; Walton et al., 2012). As an effective instrument to shed light on marginalized voices in the previous community-based research (Gant et al., 2009; Liebenberg, 2018; Wang et al., 2000; Wang & Burris, 1997), photovoice has been acknowledged to present the first-person viewpoint of participants in qualitative research (Adams et al., 2014; Tracy, 2019; Walton et al., 2012) including the students' perspectives of SEL in the school-based PE programs (Howley et al., 2021; Howley et al., 2022).

Methods

Design and Context

Based on a case study design (Merriam, 1995), this study was mainly focused on providing “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (Yazan, 2015, p.139). In other words, this study aimed to generate detailed and multi-faceted descriptions of the following cases: 1) How elementary students perceive and experience SEL in PE, 2) How elementary students perceive and experience SEL in classrooms, and 3) Other relevant incidents or events within a school which may have impacts on their SEL experiences in PE and classroom settings. Since a holistic understanding is highly significant in a case study, researchers are encouraged to adopt various data collection methods for a prolonged period of time to obtain detailed information about the cases (Merriam, 1995; Patton, 2015). Therefore, five different types of qualitative data were collected and analyzed to provide more in-depth illustrations of the three cases in this study.

This study was conducted at Marigold elementary school located in a rural area of North Carolina. The Marigold has been determined as a Title I school since more than 40% of the students at the school are from low-income families along with the lowest academic achievements (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). More specifically, 80% of the enrolled students at Marigold are ethnic minorities (59% African American, 20% Caucasian, 11% Hispanic, and 10% Multi-Racial) while 98% of the total students come from low-income families who receive free or reduce-priced meals.

Assigned as a lab school based on the legislation by the North Carolina General Assembly in 2016 (The University of North Carolina System, n.d.), the Marigold has been working in partnership with one of the nearby universities in North Carolina. Since the school opened in 2018, there have been consistent drives for SEL across the whole school. First of all, seven social and emotional qualities called *CHOICES* (Collaboration; Honesty; Ownership; Integrity; Consequences; Expectations; Solutions) have been developed and used by the school leaders, classroom teachers, and subject specialists including the PE teacher. Along with this, teachers at the Marigold have been constantly participating both in school-driven and teacher-driven professional development opportunities to learn more about SEL pedagogies and restorative practices. Based on the school-wide professional development, an SEL curriculum called *Second Step* has been implemented across K-5 classroom settings since the 2021-2022 academic year. The classroom teachers have been encouraged to teach the SEL lesson from the curriculum once a week regularly or tailor the lesson format to the needs and developmental levels of their students. To better support students' mental health and behavior incidents at the school, professional counselors and educators with advanced degrees have regularly visited the

Marigold from the nearby university to provide counseling sessions for students with special needs.

Participants

Upon the IRB approval, the participant recruitment process was consistently discussed with the school leaders, teachers, and an experienced school-based qualitative researcher. Considering the developmental level of elementary school students and potential complexity of the data collection methods, student participants were recruited only from 3rd to 5th grade at the Marigold. 31 elementary students with diverse demographic backgrounds participated in this study in total. The detailed background information of the students can be found in Table 3.

Data Collection

Five different types of qualitative data were collected in this study: 1) Individual interviews, 2) Focus group, 3) Photovoice, 4) Class observations and 5) Researcher's reflexive journals. Semi-structured individual interviews with an interview guide were conducted with the participating students to obtain detailed information about their SEL experiences in PE and classroom contexts. Each individual interview was conducted for 20 to 40 minutes in one of the available classrooms at the Marigold. The interview schedules were discussed and set up with their classroom teachers in advance to minimize any negative impacts of their research participation on their academic learning.

Focus groups were conducted with the student participants to obtain more in-depth details and diverse responses generated from the group interactions. Each focus group was conducted with two to four students for 20 to 40 minutes at a time. Considering student focus groups were implemented after the individual interviews, the questions in the focus group were centered on acquiring any elaboration and clarification on their responses in the individual interviews. The

detailed schedules for focus groups were also discussed and confirmed with their classroom teachers in advance to protect their academic learning time at most.

Photovoice was conducted with the students right after each of the individual interviews. The students were asked to take pictures of something that can show their SEL experiences in PE and classrooms at the Marigold. Even though they were accompanied by the researcher for safety, they were not advised what to take pictures of. Given that human subjects should not be included in the photo, they were intervened only when they were about to take pictures of any human. Right after the photovoice, short follow-up interviews were conducted to ask explanations on how their photos can illustrate their perspectives and experiences of SEL in PE and classroom at the Marigold.

Class observations were implemented with systematic field notes in both PE and classroom settings to obtain native information on different aspects of their real-time SEL experiences (Candela et al., 2004). The overall class observations were focused on what they learn for SEL, how they learn SEL, and how they interact with their teachers and classmates during the process. These systemic field notes generally included observational notes, interpretive notes, and methodological notes (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). The observational notes aimed to collect information on what the researchers saw and heard in the research contexts while the interpretive notes were generated more from the researcher's subjective interpretations of the phenomena (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Tjora, 2006). The methodological notes were focused on any useful information which can potentially help the future data collection and analysis process (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).

Reflexive journals were created by the researcher to keep track of any ideas, notes, and memos throughout the research process. These reflexive journals addressed her own experiences

and perspectives as a school-based qualitative researcher, which may have influences on her methodological, theoretical, and interpretive approach to the phenomena in this study (Berger, 2015; Watt, 2015). Critically being reflexive on her own positionality associated with socio-cultural backgrounds, the researcher clarified any potential biases in the overall process of this study (Anderson, 1998; Watt, 2015).

Data Analysis

Inductive data analysis was conducted with constant comparisons to generate new understandings of SEL in PE and classroom settings from students' perspectives at the Marigold (Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015). Once the collected data were transcribed, organized, and stored in an electronic format (Saldaña, 2013), they were reviewed multiple times with memos for open coding (Tracy, 2019). The open coding process in this study aimed to broadly identify initial codes related to the students' overall experiences and perspectives of SEL in PE and classroom settings at the school (Charmaz, 2003; Elliott & Timulak, 2005; Gibbs, 2012; Tracy, 2019). After the initial codes were created from open coding, axial coding was focused on regrouping and reassembling them based on their commonalities and differences between one another (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In the process of axial coding, causal explanations were generated regarding the relationships among these regrouped codes (Kolb, 2012; Richards & Hemphill, 2018; Scott & Howell, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and clarification of researcher positionality were implemented to establish trustworthiness in this study. For triangulation, five qualitative data sources (Individual interviews; Focus groups; Photovoice; Classroom observations; Reflexive journals) were consistently used to challenge and corroborate the emerging codes and themes during the data analysis. For member checks, the themes and

relevant data were shared with six student participants in simple languages to ask their further thoughts and ideas about the researcher's interpretations and the generated themes (Kornbluh, 2015). When it comes to peer debriefing, overall data collection and analysis process was monitored and discussed with the experienced PE researcher who has also been working closely with the school over four years (Morse, 2015; Tracy, 2019). Using negative case analysis, the main researcher challenged the emerging themes based on the negative cases and even included these cases to make each theme more descriptive and richer in its details (Tracy, 2019). Lastly, the research positionality was clarified through researchers' reflection on their own personal histories, experiences, perspectives, and ideas, which may have influences on any research process (Charmaz et al., 2018). This reflexive process was also supported and interrogated by the experienced PE researcher who has different socio-cultural backgrounds.

Findings

The following themes were generated as thematic findings to describe students' experiences of SEL in PE and classroom settings: 1) Building teamwork through cooperative activities, 2) Being aware of themselves and others, 3) Learning strategies to manage emotions, and 4) Taking responsible actions with integrity.

Building Teamwork through Cooperative Activities

Students at the Marigold overall reported that they experienced different types of cooperative activities where they could build teamwork both in classroom and PE settings. Different cooperative activities in classroom settings were shared by the students and observed by the researcher: "We got to build like a water slide like with toilet paper roll....And then they got to try to work together to make it" (Cornell, 4th, Focus Group); "One time, we were building like a tower and me, London, and Quinn" (Luna, 3rd, Focus Group); "Every group has different

planets to work on. The worksheet has sections about how the planet gets its name, things about the planet, fun facts about the planet. The students were asked to collaborate with their group members” (Observations, 3rd Science). Based on these cooperative activities, in his photovoice, Kelvin (5th) illustrated how these experiences helped him and his classmates to positively depend on one another as a whole class community (See Figure 8):

Figure 8. Photovoice from Kelvin



Well, we all stay in a pack. And if one of us fall behind, like someone else in the line would go and like see the person, if they like turn their head around, and then one by one they would be looking for each other. They all come back to a place where they all have each other again (Kelvin, 5th, Interview).

When it comes to PE settings, students shared more diverse and specific examples of playing cooperative activities with their peers: “Today, we were doing a group where we have to

throw the ball to a different group member, just to see if they can catch a ball with a hula hoop. And it was all about teamwork” (Damien, 5th, Interview); “There’s like one game that’s called across the swamp....There’s like stuff you can jump on. And then the person in the back gets the log to the front so they can walk on that one” (Malachi, 3rd, Interview). Further, the students’ accounts implied that the structure of these cooperative activities allowed them to take a group responsibility for their progress: “And if you touch the floor, but not on the pad, then you gotta go back to the cone....All of them have to go back” (Blair, 3rd, Interview). During the process of working together in groups, the student participants reported that they came to realize the importance of teamwork to finish the given tasks in PE: “We are put in teams. We have to use teamwork [and] collaboration” (Jenna, 3rd, Interview); “We have to work as a team to get the game done and stuff” (Cornell, 4th, Interview). Due to their increased awareness and experiences of building teamwork through cooperative activities in PE, they started to view the school gym as an effective space where they can build teamwork with their classmates: “The gym is a place where you can build teamwork” (Darnell, 4th, Interview). This account was also corroborated by Jaylen’s photovoice (See Figure 9).

Figure 9. Photovoice from Jaylen



That's where we play with each other, have fun talk to each other, build a relationship, build sportsmanship...because me and my friends are on the team. We have to have [a] great understanding [of] each other, and like we have [to have] a really good teamwork (Jaylen, 4th, Interview).

The students at the Marigold were given consistent opportunities to build teamwork through cooperative activities both in PE and classroom settings. The different qualitative data sources showed that the students established a sense of teamwork as a classroom community. However, even though cooperative structures were also observed in the classroom settings, the students shared more specific and detailed information about the cooperative structures, interactive dynamics, and group responsibility elements in PE than in classrooms. Furthermore,

their photovoice showed that they perceived PE class as one of the important settings that they can collaborate with their classmates and develop teamwork.

Being Aware of Emotion and Space

The students at the Marigold illustrated that they learned how to read the feelings of their teachers and classmates through facial expressions and nonverbal language. In classroom settings, Blair (3rd) shared that she could feel her classroom teacher's emotions, which motivated her to manage her behaviors in classroom settings: "She gets to get frustrated when people need to listen to important stuff...She folds her lips like this. And she starts to breathe out and in. That's how I know she's frustrated because somebody's doing something wrong" (Interview). Paul (3rd) also added to her point with a specific example where he realized that one of his classmates was feeling sad in PE class: "You could probably maybe look at their eyes. Because sometimes their eyes are like watery, and say we are doing fun sport, and they're probably going to be sitting down because they're sad" (Interview). Learning about different emotions based on nonverbal expressions was also observed in the classroom settings, especially through the Second Step lessons: "Ms. Lane showed a video and asked 'How is Meteor feeling? Look at his face'. Then students answered 'sad' and 'shocked'" (Observation, 1st Second Step); "Moving on to the next example, Ms. Young mentioned 'Looking into eyes, which lets other people know that you are fully engaged in the conversations'" (Observations, 4th Second Step).

Being more aware of different emotions allowed the students to show empathy for other people in PE class: "I never like seeing people sad. Because it makes me sad. When the upset, sometimes I just want to go and say, 'Hey, it's okay. It doesn't depend on winning'" (Jada, 4th, Interview). Furthermore, having empathy helped them to regulate their own behaviors even in competitive situations: "Say it is one to zero, and the game still going on? So don't be like 'na-

na-na-na-boo-boo'. Don't be like that. You have to be like, 'Good job, y'all. Great game'" (Paul, 3rd, Focus group).

Further, being able to read various emotions from others led to their increased awareness of personal space. The students illustrated their experiences of respecting physical space for others in both PE and classroom settings: "Keep your hands to yourself. You might have like this best friend that you like, go hug. But they might not want to hug, so you must ask them before" (Jada, 4th, Focus Group); "Also respect people's bubbles" (Rosa, 4th, Focus Group); "Physical and mental [space]" (Ray, 4th, Focus Group). Especially when it comes to PE settings, the students described how he learned about the importance of having physical personal space through sitting on the dots which were spread out across the gym: "When we just get there and we do warmup, we have to stand on it, color dot. So, that's going to be your personal space" (Tim, 3rd, Focus Group); "Like today, we were doing activities, and people were getting injured, because they were not spaced out" (Malachi, 3rd, Focus Group). As they mentioned, by sitting on the colored dots, the students also perceived personal space as an important aspect of maintaining safety in PE class. This account was also corroborated by the data from PE observations: "Once students came into the gym after greetings with Mr. Smith, each of them chose one colored dot and sat on it. After he checked everyone was sitting on the dots, he started his class" (Observation, 4th grade PE). Understanding the importance of personal space has also been represented by one of the photos taken by Paul (3rd), which shows a poster of the solar system (See Figure 10).

Figure 10. Photovoice from Paul



I took this one because that one is me and my friends all spaced out. And we have lots of room. And we're spending time together (Paul, 3rd, Interview).

The students at the Marigold described that they learned how to read various emotions from other people and respect their personal space both physically and mentally. Being more awareness of emotions and space in PE and classroom settings allowed them to show empathy for other people and learn how to spend time together with having enough personal space from one another.

Learning Strategies to Manage Emotions

The students at the Marigold shared different strategies to calm themselves down when they need to handle negative emotions in PE and classroom settings. The most common strategies that they adopted was to find a specific place where they can stay away from others and have time alone. In PE settings, they mentioned a specific space that their PE teacher created for them to calm down: “Mr. Smith [PE teacher] made a spot where we if we feel angry that we can just go over there and calm ourselves down” (Damien, 5th, Interview). In this space within the gym, there were different types of resources that the student could use to take some time off: “When we get really mad, we’ll go pedal as fast as we can on the bike. And that is where all the papers, fidgets, pop beads and squishy. And people will go over there when they [are] really mad” (Cornell, 4th, Interview). This space also presented positive quotes to help students manage their emotions: “There’s like a wall that has a bunch of positive quotes. And if you’re mad or sad, you can either sit in the corner or read the positive quotes” (Ray, 4th, Focus Group). You can find supplementary materials in Appendix A.

When it comes to classroom settings, students also mentioned the need of separating themselves from other people and spend some time alone: “I sometimes tell my friends that can I go over here real quick to calm myself down” (Blair, 3rd, Interview). Even though it was not physically inside their classrooms, the students shared other places within the school where they can emotionally relax during the day (See Figure 11 and 12):

Figure 11. Photovoice from Terry



I took a picture of the swings, because when I swung on them, they helped me calm down (Terry, 4th, Interview).

Figure 12. Photovoice from Darnell



Keeping yourself calm down...If you're real mad, just read a book, and when you read that book, it takes the focus off (Darnell, 4th, Interview).

Another strategy shared by the students to relax themselves was taking a deep breath and counting to certain numbers when they were having difficult conflicts with others emotionally. In PE setting, the students commented that taking a deep breath helped them to put their minds together and keep participating in the class activities: “Sometimes we have arguments and disagreements, and then we’ll walk away and take a deep breath, and then we will be ready to join back in the game” (Jaylen, 4th, Interview); “I say ‘just take deep breaths, and we’ll find another way. And it doesn’t always depend on winning y’all. At least you tried your best’” (Jada, 4th, Interview). The students also reported that they actively used the same strategy when they were feeling anger or frustration in classroom settings: “Sometimes I can’t keep myself calm. But I would say just take deep breath. Deep breath” (Malachi, 3rd, Interview).

Additionally, the students at the Marigold described that they sometimes asked their friends and teachers for help when the emotions were too overwhelming: “I just tried to calm down. And if I’m near some of my friends... I just go to them and ... tell my friends ‘help me’...like, ‘Calm me down. Because I’m now losing that much’ (Jaylen, 4th, Interview); “She [Her classroom teacher] says [said], ‘Blair, how do you feel?’ And I said, ‘I feel very angry. I’m trying to calm down, so I won’t be angry anymore’” (Blair, 3rd, Interview). When they could not manage their emotions in PE and classroom settings, the students illustrated that they also got additional assistance from teachers even outside of those two settings. Luna explained her photo to show how she managed her sadness through reading quotes with Zion, the school counselor (See Figure 13):

Figure 13. Photovoice from Luna



It reminds me of, when I was like, sad, I went to Dr. Warren [Counselor], and we used to like read a board (Luna, 3rd, Interview).

This finding revealed that students were not only aware of their emotions but also found more suitable way for themselves to calm their emotions down. The experiences of spending time alone, taking a deep breath, and asking for help were reported by the students commonly both in PE and classroom settings. Also, different places within the school were shared by the students as effective places to relieve their negative emotions. Furthermore, the students acknowledged the presence of support for their SEL development, which came from their PE teacher, classroom teachers, and other teachers even outside of PE and classroom settings.

Taking Responsible Actions with Integrity

The students at the Marigold overall claimed that they tried to think about the impacts of their words and behaviors before taking actions, which was also consistently emphasized by teachers in and outside of PE settings: “My teacher tells me it sometimes, and then Ms. Miller [Principal] tells us it sometimes. So, we won’t do [something that we] end up regret[ing] (Damien, 5th, Interview)”; “This is what my teacher said. If you say something ugly, you cannot put it back” (Brayton, 3rd, Interview). It was also supported by class observations: “At the end, she gave the whole class a question to personally think about. How do my actions affect our class? The students responded, ‘We are making other people cannot learn’ and ‘It is not being respectful to others’” (Observation, 5th grade Social Studies). Furthermore, the students also acknowledged that sometimes their words and behaviors might be triggered not by their genuine intent but more by impulsiveness when they are feeling extreme anger: “Sometimes they are too angry, and...they say stuff like, I hate this class. So, just think about it. Maybe they just think about it the whole day, and they would be glad that they didn’t say” (Jada, 4th, Interview).

Being aware that they can deeply regret the consequences of their impetuous words and behaviors allowed them to reshape how they express their feelings to others in a more responsible way: “When somebody was bullying my brother, I got very angry. And then I tried to calm myself down....And I said, ‘it’s not nice to bully other kids. Like, that’s not cool’” (Cornell, 4th, Interview). Taking more responsible actions were also reported in PE settings where students need to manage their emotions in case of winning or losing: “I learned to get along with people because I used to get mad every single time I lost. But now PE teacher used to show me that you can be nice to other people even when you lose” (Jaylen, 4th, Interview). Further, they even learned how to correct their mistakes and make things right by empathy and

apology: “We got out of PE. I saw him, [and] I kind of felt bad. I went to him, and I’m like, ‘I’m sorry....And I know how it feels.... It’s all right, bro. We’re still in this together’” (Brayton, 3rd, Interview).

Additionally, interviews from the students also showed that their efforts to take responsible actions were accompanied by their sense of integrity. The students were able to explain what integrity is with their own words: “Integrity means like, if nobody is watching, do the right thing” (Darnell, 4th, Focus Group). They also discussed their views about making right choices based on integrity: “If I don’t get a reward, I’m still okay with that. Making good choices is the right thing” (Paul, 3rd, Focus Group); “No grimaces around, and be good, and do good stuff....In PE, Mr. Smith, he really doesn’t leave [the gym]. But it’s still important” (Chris, 5th, Interview). In this sense, they also shared an example about how much integrity has been emphasized to make a responsible choice in their PE class: “When somebody is cheating, the PE teacher, Mr. Smith, he doesn’t know, he asked to use integrity, be honest and not cheating” (Terry, 4th, Focus Group).

The students at the Marigold overall understood what integrity is and why integrity is important, which was consistently highlighted by the teachers across the school. Their elevated awareness of integrity helped them to make responsible decisions and take actions accordingly even when their PE and classroom teachers were not physically present with them.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to investigate how students experienced SEL in PE and classroom settings at a rural elementary school in North Carolina. This chapter was specifically focused on elementary school students’ perspectives of their SEL experiences in PE and classroom settings with five different types of qualitative data (Individual interviews; Focus

group; Photovoice; Class observations; Researcher's reflexive journals). Four findings were generated from the data analysis to provide detailed pictures of the SEL experiences in PE and classroom settings at the Marigold: 1) Building teamwork through cooperative activities, 2) Being aware of emotions and space, 3) Learning strategies to manage emotions, and 4) Taking responsible actions with integrity.

One of the significant aspects of this study is that it shed a light on the experiences and perspectives of elementary school students regarding SEL at a rural elementary school. Grounded in social constructivism (Pope, 2006; Vygotsky, 1986), elementary school students were viewed as independent individuals in this study who can have unique perspectives and create meanings about their own learning experiences (Dyson et al., 2006, Howley et al., 2022). Exploring what elementary school students experienced and perceived SEL in the real-time school settings, this study provided useful information about what pedagogies PE and classroom teachers can use to better support SEL development at an elementary level. Furthermore, given that rural education has received limited attention in the previous school-based studies in general (Biddle & Azzano, 2016; Cicchinelli & Beesley, 2017), this study engaged the perspectives of historically and socio-culturally underrepresented students. This will possibly allow researchers and practitioners in the field of study to tailor the current SEL pedagogies to their diverse and special needs (Baek et al., 2022; Jagers et al., 2018; Jagers et al., 2019).

Additionally, this study showed how SEL competencies in the CASEL's framework can be understood in relation to elementary school students' lived experiences of SEL in PE and classroom settings. The first theme, *building teamwork through cooperative activities* indicates that providing various activities using cooperative structures in PE and classrooms is important to promote elementary school student's *relationship skills* from the CASEL's SEL framework

(Dyson et al., 2021a; Dyson et al., 2021b, Dyson et al., 2021c; CASEL, 2020). The second theme, *being aware of emotion and space* advocates that learning about emotional and spatial awareness can be developmentally appropriate for SEL development of elementary school students (Stevens-Smith, 2004; Pangrazi & Beighle, 2019), which can be connected to the concepts of *self-awareness* and *social awareness* (CASEL, 2020). The third theme, *learning strategies to manage emotions* infers that having different strategies in hand for emotional management can be effective for elementary school students so that they can choose the one that best suits their needs in PE and classroom contexts. This theme is also well-aligned with *self-management* from the CASEL's SEL framework (CASEL, 2020). The last theme, *taking responsible actions with integrity* illustrates that elementary school students were able to understand different social and emotional qualities cognitively and make right decisions based on their understandings, which can be related to the concept of *responsible decision-making* (CASEL, 2020).

Based on symbolic interactionism, this study aimed to understand students' experiences and perspectives through signs or symbols, for example, talk, gesture, object, and space (Barker et al., 2017; Carter & Fuller, 2016; Lynch, 2015). It was also guided by socio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which puts a high emphasis on understanding human development from the multi-level interactions between individuals and their surrounding environments (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Reicher, 2010; Tudge et al., 2009). In this regard, photovoice was conducted as one of the data collection methods in this study to investigate how elementary school students view their SEL experience at the Marigold through tangible signs and symbols that they can capture from the school. The photos taken by the students included the school gym, library, playground as well as different types of posters and learning resources within the school

building. Their photovoice revealed that there can exist different environmental factors coming from outside of PE and classroom settings, which will ultimately have influences on students' overall SEL experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This specifically infers that how to design and organize physical spaces or environments can be one of the important agendas that the teachers and school leaders pay attention to with pedagogical intentions especially at the elementary stage (Sardinha et al., 2017). However, even though there have been efforts by practitioners to address how to effectively design a gym as a successful teaching space for PE (Graham, 2018; Boucher, 2018), the issue of physical space has not yet received much attention in the previous empirical research in the field of study. In this sense, future research should further investigate the influences of the physical environments on students' SEL in school-based PE programs.

Lastly, the findings in this study overall highlight the importance of having consistent pedagogies over SEL across PE and classroom settings, and even across the whole school (Goldberg et al., 2019; Jones & Bouffard, 2012). The students' SEL experiences in PE and classroom settings had overall commonalities between one another, which helped the students to better understand when, how to practice SEL skills, and why those skills are important. Also, the students reported that there were other pedagogical support coming outside of those two settings to enhance their SEL behaviors in PE and classroom settings. This calls attention to the importance of having a whole-school approach to SEL, where students' SEL experience in one setting can be continuously reinforced in other settings within the school (Bear et al., 2017; Oberle et al., 2016; Stoiber, 2011). In this regard, the findings in this study also imply that PE can work as one of the most effective settings for SEL development at elementary level (Dyson et al., 2019; Dyson et al., 2021a; Dyson et al., 2021b; Dyson et al., 2021c) with significant impacts on students' SEL in classroom settings. Thus, being positioned as one of the essential

strands of a whole school approach to SEL, more future research should explore how the existing pedagogies in PE can be adopted and developed to support students' SEL development not only in PE class but also in other subject settings.

CHAPTER VI: EXPLORING CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND
CLASSROOM SETTINGS AT A RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Introduction

A growing number of educational practices and policies have focused on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) not just in Physical Education (PE) but also in general education settings (Jagers et al., 2019; Oberle et al., 2016; Wright & Richards, 2021). Along with the increased attention on SEL, a wide range of student learning outcomes have been reported through school-based SEL programs or interventions, for example, increased academic achievement and prosocial behaviors (Brackett et al., 2012; Ee & Cheng, 2013; Goldberg et al., 2019). As PE has been argued to be an effective setting to promote student learning in social and affective domains (Bailey et al., 2009; Casey & Fernandez-Rio, 2019; Teraoka et al., 2020), a growing body of recent empirical evidence has started to focus on how school-based PE programs can contribute to students' SEL outcomes using different pedagogical models and strategies (Dyson et al., 2021c; Howley et al., 2021; Howley et al., 2022). Especially, drawing attention to limited amount of qualitative data regarding the program implementation, these previous empirical studies aimed to provide detailed information on how SEL pedagogies are implemented in various school-based PE programs and what SEL outcomes can be obtained through these pedagogies (Dyson et al., 2021a; Dyson et al., 2021b; Hemphill et al., 2021).

However, despite the increased attention on SEL implementation on PE settings, the current literature on the school-based SEL programs in PE still has a limitation. Given that human development should be understood based on the multi-layered interactions between

individuals and various environmental factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Reicher, 2010), it is hard to claim that student's SEL development in PE are only attributed to what is happening in PE class. Rather, according to social constructivism of learning (Vygotsky, 1986), students are likely to learn knowledge and skills for SEL through combining their prior SEL experiences even outside of PE and what they experience related to SEL in PE class (Koekoek et al., 2009). Thus, in the real-time school settings, it is highly important to investigate SEL experiences of students and teachers outside of PE settings in order to better understand SEL experiences of students and teachers in PE settings. Especially, at elementary school stage where students spend most of their time in classroom settings, the importance of examining SEL in both PE and classroom settings cannot be overemphasized to obtain in-depth information on school-based SEL implementations. With this in mind, the purpose of this research was to investigate the contributing factors for SEL implementation in PE and classroom settings from perspectives of students and teachers at a rural elementary school. The main research question was "What contributing factors do teachers and students perceive important for SEL experiences in PE and classroom at a rural elementary school?"

Theoretical Framework

There has been a growing body of evidence on various SEL programs or interventions in the U.S. school settings (Denham, 2006; Todd et al., 2022). Along with the increased attention on school-based SEL programs, there have also been different definitions and frameworks to better define what SEL is and what constitutes SEL (Dyson et al., 2021d; Garcia, 2016). Among various definitions and frameworks, SEL has been generally defined as "the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills required to succeed in schooling, the workplace, relationships, and citizenship" (Jones et al.,

2017, p. 12). Additionally, the Collaborative of Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) introduced a SEL framework targeting five core competencies which encompass *self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making* (CASEL, 2020, p.1). The CASEL's framework and its five SEL competencies have been actively adopted by the recent scholarly work not only in PE but also in general education contexts (Jagers et al., 2018; Jagers et al., 2019; Wright & Richards, 2021).

However, despite the increased investment, the current SEL framework has received criticism at the same time in that it does not fully consider cultural diversity in their approach to social and emotional development of students (Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Higheagle-Strong & McMain, 2020). Upon this criticism, the CASEL introduced the term *Transformative SEL* to integrate cultural diversity and educational equity in its approach to SEL (Jagers et al., 2018; Jagers et al., 2019). However, given that Transformative SEL is a relatively new concept in the field of study, how this equity-oriented approach to SEL would look like in the real-time school settings has not been fully answered yet (Baek et al., 2022). Furthermore, considering that this SEL approach acknowledges the importance of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds that students bring to the school (Jagers et al., 2018; Jagers et al., 2019), it is evident that learning and teaching experiences for this equity-oriented SEL may not look the same across different school settings. In this sense, this calls attention to the need of obtaining in-depth qualitative evidence on SEL experiences of students and teachers in a specific school context as a case study (Dyson et al., 2021a, Dyson et al., 2021b, Howley et al., 2021; Howley et al., 2022).

Among different school settings in the United States (US), rural schools have long been underrepresented not only in the educational policies but also in previous school-based literature (Aud et al., 2013; Petrin et al., 2014; Schafft, 2016). Rural schools in the US have been reported

to suffer from various socio-cultural issues, for instance, insufficient infrastructure, decreasing populations of younger generations, and limited opportunities for education (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Tuters, 2015). However, even though these needs and circumstances of the rural communities in the US have long been identified, there have been very limited empirical studies focused on the educational experiences of students and teachers in rural schools (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Schafft, 2016; Tuters, 2015). Especially in PE settings, the limited number of existing studies in rural schools majorly have focused on determining factors related to physical activity with quantitative evidence (Hortz & Petosa, 2006; Matthews-Ewald et al., 2013) rather than providing a detailed picture of the lived experiences in rural PE programs. Again, for SEL implementation to be truly justice-oriented, more in-depth empirical evidence is needed on how SEL is being implemented and experienced by students and teachers in rural PE programs who are situated in historically underserved areas.

In the previous school-based literature, PE has been positioned as an effective setting for social and emotional development of students through different models-based practice and innovative pedagogies, for instance, Cooperative Learning, Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility, Meaningful Physical Education, and Restorative Practice (Dyson et al., 2022; Hemphill et al., 2021; Howley et al., 2022; Martinek & Hemphill, 2021). Along with the positive learning outcomes reported from SEL programs and interventions in schools (Brackett et al., 2012; Ee & Cheng, 2013; Gordon et al., 2016), implementing SEL pedagogies in PE settings has also been maintained to enhance student development across different domains of learning moving beyond the psychomotor domain (Dyson et al., 2019; Dyson et al., 2021a, Howley et al., 2021).

However, even though the importance of PE should be acknowledged as an important setting for SEL, often in reality, SEL in PE does not happen without students' prior experiences and the surrounding environments outside of PE. According to social constructivism of learning (Vygotsky, 1986), students generate their own knowledge and skills about SEL through constant interactions with others rather than merely receiving the given knowledge (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Rovegno & Dolly, 2009). When SEL development in PE is understood based on social constructivism, it is reasonable to claim that students may naturally engage their prior and relevant experiences outside of PE in the learning process (Koekoek et al., 2009). This argument can be also advocated by a socio-ecological theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979), who emphasized the importance of recognizing the influences of different environmental factors on human development (Reicher, 2010). Grounded in the socio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), SEL in the surrounding environments around PE, most notably, the one in classroom settings needs to be investigated as well to obtain a full view of SEL development in PE. This can be more important in elementary school settings where students spend most of their school day in classroom settings outside of PE class. This will possibly provide useful information on how PE can be positioned as a collaborative setting in elementary contexts to work with other subjects for students' SEL development. In this regard, this study aimed to identify any contributing factors for SEL implementation through exploring SEL experiences of students and teachers in PE and classroom settings at a rural elementary school.

This study was also guided by symbolic interactionism, which is defined as “a micro-level theoretical framework and perspective in sociology that addresses how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions among individuals” (Carter & Fuller, 2016, p.932).

Given that symbolic interactionism is focused on exploring individual understandings of certain phenomena through signs or symbols (Barker et al., 2017; Carter & Fuller, 2016; Lynch, 2015), this study aimed to investigate what factors students and teachers consider important for SEL implementations in PE and classroom settings through their talk, gesture, and object (Benzies & Allen, 2001; Tracy, 2019). In other words, listening to voices of students and teachers was more important than anything to understand what meanings they discover from SEL experiences in PE and classroom settings at a rural elementary school (Benzies & Allen, 2001; Carter & Fuller, 2016). Given that perspectives and experiences of students and teachers in rural school settings have not received enough academic attention so far (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Schafft, 2016; Tuters, 2015), exploring their underrepresented voices will possibly allow researchers and practitioners in the field of study to identify their specific needs for school-based SEL implementation in a rural community in the US.

Methods

Design and Context

Adopting a case study design (Merriam, 1995), this study was focused on generating “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (Yazan, 2015, p.139). The researcher adopted four different types of data collection methods for an extended period of time (Merriam, 1995; Patton, 2015) to illustrate three cases: 1) SEL experiences of students and teachers in PE, 2) SEL experiences of students and teachers in classrooms, and 3) SEL experiences of students and teachers across the whole school.

This study was implemented at Marigold elementary school. The Marigold has been identified as a Title I school located in a rural area of North Carolina (U.S. Department of

Education, 2018). The school leaders at the Marigold reported that 80% of the total students are ethnic minorities (59% African American; 20% Caucasian; 11% Hispanic; 10% Multi-Racial) and that 98% of the enrolled students come from low-income families with free or reduce-priced meals. Another unique feature of the Marigold is that it has been working very closely with a nearby university across different areas of study since the school first opened in 2018. The Marigold was determined as one of the lab schools to operate in partnership with the nearby university in North Carolina when the legislation was passed by the North Carolina General Assembly in 2016 (The University of North Carolina System, n.d.). Professional counselors from the psychology clinic of the nearby university have been regularly engaged to address students' mental health and behavior incidents at the Marigold. Additionally, professionals and researchers from health and PE at the nearby university have been working with the PE teacher at the Marigold to provide pedagogical assistance for SEL for about four academic years.

When it comes to other SEL initiatives at the Marigold, seven social and emotional essentials called *CHOICES* (Collaboration; Honesty; Ownership; Integrity; Consequences; Expectations; Solutions) have been widely used across the whole school, majorly in classrooms and CAPE (Creative Art and PE) settings. Along with this, all teachers at the Marigold were provided opportunities to participate in continuous professional development for SEL and restorative practices throughout the academic years. The school leaders confirmed that these professional opportunities were driven at a whole school level as well as by individual teachers. Based on the continuous professional development for SEL, an SEL curriculum called *Second Step* has been implemented in K-5 grade classrooms since the 2021-2022 academic year. The implementation of this SEL curriculum has been monitored and advised by the school leaders who have terminal degrees in education fields.

Participants

Using purposive sampling methods (Patton, 2003), 13 teachers and 31 elementary school students participated in this study. The teacher participants include one PE specialist, nine classroom teachers, and three school leaders. The PE teacher has been working at the Marigold for four years. The classroom teachers with different teaching years at the Marigold were recruited from kindergarten to 5th grade. The school leaders were the principal, assistant principal, and school counselor who supervise SEL across different grade levels at the Marigold. The background information of the teacher participants can be found in Table 2. The student participants were recruited only from 3rd to 5th grade considering that they were asked to provide in-depth information about their own experiences and perspectives verbally. In total, 31 students participated in this study. The background information of the student participants can be found in Table 3. Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants and any identifiable information to protect their privacy.

Data Collection

Four different types of qualitative data were collected in this study to obtain detailed information about the contributing factors for SEL implementation in PE and classroom settings: 1) Individual interviews, 2) Student focus group, 3) Class observations, and 4) Researcher's reflexive journals. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the participating students and teachers to acquire in-depth information based on their self-reported data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Tracy, 2019). Individual interview for students were conducted for 20 to 40 minutes at a time based on the interview schedules advised by their classroom teachers. The purpose of this procedure was to prevent any negative impacts of their research participation on their academic learning in classrooms. Individual interview for teachers were conducted for 40

mins to one hour at a time during their available times. Individual interviews for both students and teachers were guided by the interview protocols, which were followed by probes based on the participants' responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interview protocols were focused on their general understanding of SEL, their SEL experiences in PE and classroom settings, and their perception of the overall school climate regarding SEL beyond those two specific settings.

Student focus groups were conducted with students to obtain more diverse responses generated from the group interactions (Colucci, 2007; Kidd & Parshall, 2000; Tracy, 2019). Each focus group was conducted with two to four students for 20 to 40 minutes at a time. The detailed schedules for the focus groups were also advised by their classroom teachers in advance to minimize the potential negative impacts of their research participation and protect their academic learning time in classrooms. When conducting the focus groups, the researcher worked as a moderator so that their conversations could not be dominated by certain students. The student focus groups were overall focused on obtaining further elaboration or clarification on their responses in the individual interview phase (Colucci, 2007; Kidd & Parshall, 2000).

Class observations were conducted in both PE and classroom settings with systematic field notes to gather relevant information on SEL implementation in more native environments (Candela et al., 2004; Tracy, 2019). The systemic field notes consisted of observational notes, interpretive notes, and methodological notes (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). For the observational notes, the researcher recorded what she directly saw and heard in the classes (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). The interpretive notes were more focused on addressing her own interpretations based on the observational notes (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Tjora, 2006). The methodological

notes included any methodological issues that the researcher would like to address in the future data collection and analysis process (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).

Reflexive journals were created by the researcher to keep track of any ideas, notes, and memos throughout the research process. These accumulated notes and memos helped her to address her personal experiences and subjective perspectives as a school-based qualitative researcher, which may have influences on her methodological, theoretical, and interpretive approach to the phenomena (Berger, 2015; Watt, 2015). Critically being reflexive on her own positionality associated with socio-cultural backgrounds, the researcher clarified any potential biases through writing reflexive journals in the overall process of this study (Anderson, 1998; Watt, 2015).

Data Analysis

Inductive data analysis was conducted with constant comparison to generate “new concepts, explanations, results, and/or theories from the specific data of a qualitative study” (Patton, 2015, p.541). Once the data were collected, they were transcribed immediately, organized, and stored in an electronic format. Then each of the data was reviewed intensively and repetitively for open coding to identify what the data is about (Tracy, 2019). The open coding process was specifically focused on what the participants were seeing, hearing, saying, and experiencing in the research settings, and what assumptions they may have potentially implied through their words and behaviors (Charmaz, 2003; Gibbs, 2012). After open coding, initial patterns and key ideas were identified from the data broadly about the participants’ experiences of SEL and the relevant contributing factors in PE and classroom settings at the school (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Open coding was then followed by axial coding, which refers to grouping the initial codes based on their commonalities and differences (Marshall &

Rossman, 2016). Through reassembling the initial patterns and key ideas generated in the open coding phase, the axial coding process also aimed to generate causal explanations on the emerging relationships between these codes through constant comparisons (Kolb, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Tracy, 2019).

Triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and clarification of researcher positionality were implemented to establish trustworthiness in this study. Four different types of qualitative data (Individual interview; Student focus group; Class observation; Researcher's reflexive journal) were used for triangulation to investigate the phenomena from multiple methodological perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Shenton, 2004). For member check, the findings were shared with 11 participants (One PE teacher; Four classroom teachers; One school leader, Six students) to ensure that the themes can represent their perspectives and experiences regarding SEL at the Marigold (Kornbluh, 2015). For peer debriefing, the overall process of data collection and analysis was monitored by an experienced school-based qualitative researcher who has been working closely with the Marigold for about four years (Morse, 2015; Tracy, 2019). For negative case analysis, the emerging codes and themes were challenged by the negative cases as a devil's advocate (Tracy, 2019). This helped the main researcher to gain a broader picture of the cases and include more details in presenting the data (Morse, 2015). Clarifying positionality of the researcher was especially focused on addressing her own experiences and perspectives that may have influences on any research process (Charmaz et al., 2018). This was consistently discussed and interrogated by the experienced qualitative researcher who has different socio-cultural backgrounds with her.

Findings

Four themes were generated from the data analysis: 1) School culture of celebrating everyday success, 2) Long-term relationships and trust between students and teachers, 3) Humanizing individual students and teachers at school, and 4) Ongoing support and assistance for SEL.

School Culture of Celebrating Everyday Success

One of the important contributing factors perceived by teachers and students were an overall school culture of celebrating everyday success at the Marigold. Cornell (4th) shared how the PE teacher celebrated and encouraged students' responsible decisions in the PE class: "And then the people that make good choices, he [PE teacher] will be like 'this class did good today'. And then he'll be like 'I'm very proud of you being good today'" (Focus Group). His account was also corroborated by Alicia (Principal) who observed how PE teacher reinforced SEL behaviors in PE class based on the class expectations: "Steven did a great job about kind of pausing the activity, and talking about just being a good sport, and be[ing] respectful of others, and not being demeaning towards other" (Interview). Also, different ways of strengthening students' SEL behaviors in classroom settings were shared by students and teachers at the Marigold. For example, Blair (3rd) mentioned that her classroom teacher motivated her SEL behaviors by giving Dojo points as reward: "When I make good choices, Ms. Katz [her classroom teacher] like sometimes gives us dojos [class points]" (Focus Group). When it comes to emotional reward from teachers, Brayton (3rd) described how his classroom teacher showed her celebration for his work, which made him encouraged to make responsible decisions: "If I show my work, and if I get it correct, she like this dancing [showing dance movements himself] and say 'Yay, go Brayton' (Focus Group).

The students' accounts on various ways of celebrating success on daily basis were also supported by the interviews with teachers as well as the researcher's observations in and outside of PE and classroom settings. From a classroom teacher's perspective, Grace (2nd) also elaborated her effort to create a supportive atmosphere where students could celebrate one another especially when learning about collaboration: "Especially in the beginning of the year [it] was learning how to collaborate...talk about the importance of listening to one each other's ideas....In small groups, a lot [of times] we celebrate each other and try to encourage each other" (Interview). Building on Grace's point, Steven (PE) specifically shared how important it is for students at the Marigold to have successful moments and receive positive feedback even on small accomplishments (Interview):

For a kid to feel like they've personally accomplished something is very important.

Especially in this demographic, in this school, a lot of these kids come here not feeling very confident. They don't get told, You're doing a great job....So, you know, them being able to hear that daily [that]...they are completing the task and they're doing it at their pace.

Furthermore, there has been a whole school culture focused on recognizing and celebrating students' academic, social, and emotional achievement on daily basis, for example, through the school announcement everyday: "At the end of each day, there is a whole-school announcement to celebrate one of the students from every classroom. When the name is called, the whole class celebrate it with giving a big hand to that person" (1st, Class observation). Along the same line, even though it was not necessarily in PE and classroom settings, it was also observed that students' SEL behaviors were consistently encouraged by teachers and staff outside of these two settings: "When Ayden tried to open the door, Ms. Hart [School staff]

stopped him right away to explain why he should stay inside. Once his parents came at the door, she told them how well Ayden listened to her directions” (Reflexive notes).

The students and teachers at the Marigold overall indicated that having a whole school culture of celebrating daily accomplishments promoted students’ learning and teachers’ pedagogical practices for SEL development. Various ways of encouraging students’ SEL behaviors on a daily basis were observed not only within PE and classroom settings but also outside of those two educational settings at the Marigold.

Long-term Relationship and Trust Between Students and Teachers

Another factor that contributed SEL experiences of students and teachers at the Marigold was identified as their long-term relationship and trust towards one another. Interviews and focus groups with students provided specific examples of how they got to trust their teachers and establish strong relationships with them. Brayton (3rd) shared his experience with his classroom teacher:

She always says, I don’t care if you hate me...I still love you. And I still want to educate you. That is what made my heart just rip apart and also get back up because [of] how strong that was (Focus Group).

Adding on to his account, students also illustrated how much they trust their PE teacher: “He cheers us. Like, he tells us you can do anything if you put your mind to it” (Damien, 5th, Interview); “Whenever we get hurt, I feel he can do something” (Quinn, 3rd, Focus Group). Their shared experiences were also corroborated by Steven (PE) who emphasized the importance of building relationships and trust in and outside of his PE class: “These kids, they see me everywhere....Because it’s important to let your face be shown. And I want to be that goes back

to relationship building. Like the more they see me, the more they're able to trust me” (Interview).

Indeed, building long-term relationship and trust between teachers and students increased students' motivation towards their SEL behaviors. Jada (4th) mentioned how the strong relationship with teachers encouraged her to show respect to other people, especially the teachers at the Marigold:

I just want to treat them with respect, even though I really get mad sometimes. But I think that they do all this for us. They don't have to, you know, give us fun activity. They can just let us do work all day. But they do care about us. So, I was willing to give them respect back (Focus Group).

Along the same line, Kiara (3rd) also recognized the importance of having consistent efforts and support from the teachers at the Marigold: “I like that all the teachers make efforts, and one of them say this school is better because you are in it” (Focus Group).

The importance of sustained relationships and trust between teachers and students for their SEL behaviors was also supported by the examples where the students did not feel heard when their teachers were not present at the school. When talking about the relationships between teachers and students, Morgan (4th) mentioned: “And a lot of kids they do not want substitutes because every time they come, they do not understand my feelings” (Focus Group). Furthermore, through the interviews, some of the students shared their experience of seeing teachers leave the school assuming that it was because of the behavior incidents from students: “For me, I had this third-grade teacher... She usually really gets upset not like at everybody, like [when] students do bad...So, she finally had enough. She's gone....And she said, 'Next year I will be moving to Greensboro'” (Naomi, 4th, Focus Group). The significance of maintaining student-teacher

relationships for an extended period of time was also highlighted by Steven (PE)'s experiences with the students:

I am a testament to how important relationships are. This is my fifth year...one of the only special CAPE [Creative Art and PE] teachers that are still here from the original partnership agreement. And I find that I don't have many issues that other CAPE teachers and classroom teachers have that just got here this year, last year. I don't have those issues...on the fact that I've built relationships with these kids (Interview).

The students and teachers at the Marigold advocated that having strong relationships and trust between one another have contributed to their SEL experiences in PE and classroom contexts. Especially, their emphasis on the long-term continuity of student-teacher relationships was identified from various examples of maintaining them as well as losing them in PE and classroom settings.

Humanizing Individual Students and Teachers at School

The teachers at the Marigold indicated their humanistic approach towards their students as one of the main contributing factors to SEL experiences at the Marigold. Their humanistic approach was grounded in the idea that students are independent individuals with diverse needs and backgrounds rather than passive subjects merely absorbing knowledge or skills: "It's [SEL is] learning that considers the whole kid and not just the academic. It's more of like, considering their background, and their feelings, their emotions at the time" (Madelyn, 5th, Interview); "Learning things about them personally, what are their likes and dislikes? What are their triggers?" (Alicia, Principal, Interview).

Considering students as individual humans helped the teachers to make their teaching and classroom management more student-centered: "If they need a quiet place to work, they

move....I think that they feel an element of control... They make their choice. They do their work, and then they come back to their seat a lot of the time” (Emily, K, Interview). Further, having a humanistic approach for individual students was not just about exploring their diverse needs and backgrounds but also about taking into account how SEL can contribute to different aspects of their wellness in and outside the school: “Because for them,...a lot of things [are] going on in the wellness field...just to humanize them and get them to understand what is okay and what’s not expected” (Mia, K, Interview).

Having a humanistic approach to their students led them to humanize teachers as individuals as well. Alicia (Principal) mentioned their overall success of cultivating a humanistic view towards teachers at Marigold: “Some success we’ve had with that is that it does allow students to recognize that adults in school buildings are human beings also, that they have feelings, and they have frustrations” (Interview). Corroborating Alicia’s account, Claire (4th) shared her own experience where she revealed her vulnerability to her students and showed that it is okay even for teachers to have trial and error: “I think that children need to know that teachers are human....Just like your parents have feelings, your teacher does too....And letting them see me be vulnerable.... And it just kind of takes down those walls and barriers” (Interview). Being honest about themselves and sharing who they are as humans also happened in PE settings: “It’s like being able to let the kids see that I’m human. Like, I’m a human male that plays sports and watches LeBron James...That’s the seven-year-old me that comes out. And for kids to see that and hear that” (Steven, PE, Interview).

Regarding teachers as individual humans also helped students with their SEL behaviors, for example, being aware of other people’s emotions and showing care for them: “You know, these kids put [asked] me one time, Are you okay, Mr. Smith? You look upset, right? I had a

tough day, but I'm okay. Thank you for asking. For kids to read me like that" (Steven, PE, Interview). The message over respecting each individual but still having a strong bond as a whole school community was also supported by students' SEL experiences at the Marigold: "Our teachers always say, we are a big family because you don't have to like everyone, but you always have to respect them" (Jada, 4th, Interview).

The teachers at the Marigold maintained that humanizing individual students helped them not only consider students' diverse perspectives in their teaching but also position SEL as an important aspect of the overall wellness of students even outside of the school. Further, humanizing individual teachers allowed the teachers at the Marigold to share their vulnerability and emotions with their students, which encouraged students' SEL behaviors at the school.

Ongoing Support and Assistance for SEL Pedagogies

The teachers at the Marigold overall emphasized the importance of pedagogical support and assistance that they have received so far for SEL implementation. More focused on the professional development for restorative practice, Madelyn (5th) commented: "Restorative practice is the one that I did the two-day training in Winston Salem. And then we've had a couple here at school, like the refreshers" (Interview). She further elaborated how these professional development opportunities of learning restorative circles helped her pedagogical approach to students' behavior incidents at the Marigold:

Even the different types of circles that we practiced, they were beneficial because I could use them in like our morning meetings and things like that....Because the whole idea of the circle and listening to each other,...like myself as ways to correct students, like when something's happened, instead of talking at them, listening and talking to them (Madelyn, 5th, Interview).

Her account on ongoing support and assistance for SEL was also advocated by other teachers: “[Showing a card with questions] We have these questions we asked. This is [These are] restorative questions to respond to challenging behaviors, and restorative questions to help those harmed by those actions” (Abigail, 1st, Interview). Steven (PE) also shared a specific example of how he uses restorative questions in his PE class based on the professional development:

When I see a negative interaction...I try to have conferences with students. I try to have whole class conversations...or we all sit down and talk about what happened and how we can fix it and right if there was any harm done, how can we fix the harm and asking restorative questions (Interview).

When it comes to the SEL curriculum, the classroom teachers shared that the Second Step helped them to teach different SEL skills based on specific examples at the elementary level: “But I do think [the] Second Step has helped with that...understanding what that looks like, and then trying to show it to them and others, and then trying to teach them how to respond in those situations” (Grace, 2nd, Interview); “Two kids were sharing paint and one kid was really neat. And one kid was messy. And so instead of saying...you’re messy, how can they reword that to where they both get the area that they need?” (Maya, 4th, Interview). Moving forward, Alicia (Principal) reiterated the need for ongoing pedagogical support and assistance for teachers to better implement the SEL pedagogies including the SEL curriculum, Second Step:

I think that any type of in person professional learning opportunities, because even with [the] Second Step, our teachers are having to navigate that on their own. So, Dr. Warren [Counselor] does a great job of kind of outlining and providing the resource, but I just

think some ongoing in person professional learning, so that, that teachers feel reassured (Interview).

In terms of additional support and assistance that they would like to expect in the future, the teachers described that more human resources to support the SEL development of students at the Marigold would be helpful: “Having more people in place who can come in and support them. I think it would flourish, but we need more people” (Abigail, 1st, Interview). Along the same line, Dale (Assistant Principal) called attention to having more human resources coming from their partnership with the nearby university: “I think a greater presence from the university will be helpful. Any kind of presence we can have, whether you’re thinking having the school, so the kids...are building relationships with students, and probably [university] students that look like them” (Interview). As an international Korean woman graduate student coming from the nearby university, I observed my presence at the Marigold can potentially help the SEL development of students, especially their cultural awareness:

I view myself as an avenue to developing cultural competence of students at the Marigold. At first, I have been asked so many random questions and greetings, like Are you Chinese? Or Konichiwa [Japanese greetings]. Even though I was not comfortable with it, but about after two years of building relationships with students, they now really understand who I am and where I came from. And they want to learn more about my cultural backgrounds (Reflexive journal).

Another contributing factor for SEL implementations in PE and classroom settings was identified as ongoing pedagogical assistance and support for the SEL development of students. Majorly coming from teachers’ perspectives, the PE teacher, classroom teachers, and school

leaders all highlighted that having professional developments about restorative practices and SEL pedagogies has helped the teachers' pedagogical practices and students' SEL development.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the contributing factors that students and teachers perceive for SEL implementation in PE class and classroom settings at a rural elementary school. With 11 teachers and 33 elementary school students, four different types of qualitative data were collected (Individual interviews; Student focus group; Class observations; Researcher's reflexive journals). Four themes were generated for findings based on the data analysis: 1) School culture of celebrating everyday success, 2) Long-term relationships and trust between students and teachers, 3) Humanizing individual students and teachers at school, and 4) Ongoing assistance and support for SEL pedagogies.

The first theme is *school culture of celebrating everyday success*. Different ways of recognizing and celebrating students' accomplishments on a daily basis were observed and reported at the whole school level including PE and classroom settings. Considering the socio-cultural backgrounds that the students come from, the teachers acknowledged the necessity of honoring their daily achievements not just in academic performance but also in SEL development. Based on the existing empirical research focused on using positive behavior strategies to promote students' SEL development, this finding infers that PE and classroom teachers need to avoid a punitive approach and adopt various behavioral strategies to positively reinforce the SEL behaviors of students (Bear et al., 2017; Lynch et al., 2020).

Additionally, another noticeable aspect of this finding is that the driving force for celebrating everyday success was from the whole school climate as well as from the individual teachers. School climate has been reported in the previous literature to guide not only teachers'

teaching practices in individual contexts but also overall norms and values across the school (Collie et al., 2012; Nickerson et al., 2019). Supportive school climate and culture have also been included in the SEL framework by Jones and Bouffard (2012) as one of the contributing factors for effective SEL implementation. In this sense, this finding indicates that having consistent pedagogical messages across the whole school should be prioritized for school-based SEL implementation, which requires buy-in and active engagement from PE teachers, classroom teachers, and even staff at the school (Collie et al., 2012; Dyson et al., 2021e; Jones et al., 2018; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

The second theme is *long-term relationship and trust between students and teachers*. This finding is well supported by the previous literature focused on positive influences of student-teacher relationships on students' academic, personal, and social development (Ansari et al., 2020; Heatly & Votruba-Drzal, 2017; McCormick & O'Connor, 2015). As this study showed, establishing relationships and trust between students and teachers can work as an important contributor which can enhance students' motivation towards different SEL behaviors. Especially, the data from students and teachers at the Marigold indicated that maintaining these relationships *in the long term* is the key aspect. In this regard, Ansari et al. (2020) provided quantitative evidence that the extended period for relationship-building between students and teachers has meaningful effects on students' academic performance, social and emotional well-being. Adding on to these previous studies regarding student-teacher relationships, this study provided in-depth qualitative evidence from perspectives of students and teachers that the sustained relationships can contribute to teachers' SEL implementation as well as students' motivations and actions for SEL.

Furthermore, given that this study investigated the SEL experiences of students and teachers at a rural elementary school, the participants' emphasis on the prolonged engagement in student-teacher relationships can be better understood based on the issue of teacher retention in American rural education. A considerable amount of scholarly work has argued that teachers in rural schools are more likely to leave their teaching positions due to various reasons, for instance, geographical isolation, limited support and resources for their teaching practices (Boyd et al., 2011; Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Nguyen, 2020). Even though there have been ongoing discussions on the importance of recruiting and retaining quality teachers to enhance students' academic achievement (Belsito, 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013), there has been no study focused on how the long-term relationships that the retained teachers built can support students' SEL development, especially at a rural elementary school. Thus, based on the findings of this study, more attention is needed on recruiting, and retaining quality PE teachers in rural school settings who can establish positive student-teacher relationships to promote student learning in social and emotional domains.

The third theme is *humanizing individual students and teachers at school*. The findings revealed that SEL implementation of the PE and classroom teachers at the Marigold were grounded in their humanistic approach towards their students. In other words, the teachers took time and effort to learn about individual students and tailor the SEL experiences to their lives even outside of the school. This humanistic approach is not a new concept not only in PE but also in general education. Especially in this field of study, Hellison (1973) highlighted the importance of understanding students as unique individuals and making PE experiences meaningful for each student in one of his earlier books, *Humanistic Physical Education*. Building on his idea, movement in PE has been argued as an effective avenue where students can

grow as whole humans with their learning in different domains (Caldwell, 1972). As the humanistic approach in PE focuses on the social and affective domains of student learning moving beyond the psychomotor domain (Caldwell, 1972; Hellison, 1973), a reasonable connection can be claimed in the rationales between humanistic PE and SEL in PE.

Furthermore, not only did the teachers take a humanistic approach to their students, but they also humanized themselves to their students. Letting the guard down between teachers and students, the teachers shared who they are as individual humans and how they feel at certain moments in PE and classroom contexts. This finding can be better understood with the previous literature on the importance of SEL competencies of teachers. According to these previous studies, one of the most important prerequisites for teachers to implement SEL pedagogies is that they should have their own SEL competencies (Jones et al., 2018; Katz et al., 2020). Having their own social and emotional well-being will allow them to model the SEL skills to their students, establish positive relationships with them, and further create a supportive learning environment for SEL (Jones et al., 2018). The significance of SEL skills of teachers is also well supported by the SEL framework of Jones and Bouffard (2012) which suggested teachers' social emotional competences as one of the environmental influences on students' SEL development. Again, this theme provides another implication on what PE teachers should experience for SEL in their preparation phase. PETE programs and continuous professional development for PE teachers need to provide constant opportunities where they can learn not only how to teach SEL but also how to develop their own SEL competencies.

The last theme is *Ongoing support and assistance for SEL pedagogies*. This finding indicates that professional development opportunities provided to PE and classroom teachers helped them to better implement SEL pedagogies and restorative practices. Further, based on

these experiences, the teacher participants reiterated the importance of having more human resources conducive to students' SEL development at the Marigold. The importance of continuous in-service teacher training for SEL and other related skills has also been documented in the previous literature (Jagers et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2019; Katz et al., 2020). Given that teachers are the one who directly address social and emotional well-being of students at school, more detailed and diverse examples of best SEL practices needs to be shared with pre-service and in-service teachers through teacher preparation programs and continuous professional development opportunities (Jones et al., 2019; Katz et al., 2020; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). This can also be an important agenda for PE teacher education programs so that PE teachers can earn different pedagogical tool kits in their preparation phase (Graham, 2008) to promote SEL development of students with diverse needs and socio-cultural backgrounds (Baek et al., 2022).

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Grounded in socio-constructivism, socio-ecological theory, and symbolic interactionism as theoretical frameworks, the purpose of this study was to investigate perspectives and experiences of elementary students and teachers for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) implementation in Physical Education (PE) and classroom settings at a rural elementary school in North Carolina. This study presented the relevant literature on social and affective domains of learning in elementary PE, existing SEL frameworks, a whole school approach to SEL, and perspectives of students and teachers in rural education. Based on the literature review, three main questions guided this study: 1) What SEL pedagogies do teachers implement in PE and classrooms at a rural elementary school? 2) What SEL experiences do students have in PE and classrooms at a rural elementary school? and 3) What contributing factors do teachers and students perceive important for SEL experiences in PE and classrooms at a rural elementary school? The major findings for each research question and the implications will be discussed one by one.

What SEL Pedagogies do Teachers Implement in PE and Classrooms at a Rural Elementary School?

For the SEL pedagogies that the teachers implemented in both PE and classroom settings, four findings were generated: 1) Learning how to support personal and cultural differences, 2) Promoting an inclusive learning environment, 3) Building a whole school community with care, and 4) Shared understandings with school-wide interactions.

The first theme was *Learning how to support personal and cultural differences*. This finding indicates that PE and classroom teachers at the Marigold both put a high emphasis on understanding different personal and social-cultural backgrounds that their students bring to the

school. This was also connected to the second theme, *Promoting an inclusive learning environment*. Their pedagogical intentions towards having safe, inclusive, and culturally relevant learning experiences were represented through different class activities, for example, morning circles in the classroom settings and different ways of greetings in PE settings. Given that most of the students that they worked with are ethnic minorities coming from low socio-economic backgrounds, this finding indicates that SEL pedagogies in PE and classroom settings should be implemented in a way that diverse student populations, especially for those whose voice have been underrepresented in curricular and academic discourse, can feel heard and valued (Baek et al., 2022; Jagers et al., 2019; Nieto, 2009). Grounded in the socio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), these finding further advocate that the culturally responsive and inclusive SEL pedagogies in PE and classroom settings will go beyond the school to better support the broader socio-cultural contexts where the students are located, for example, their home and community environments.

The third theme was *Building a whole school community with care*. The PE teacher and classroom teachers all cared about the lives of their students even outside of the gym and classrooms. Their pedagogies were not only focused on SEL development in their own teaching contexts but also focused on building a whole school community to help student growth holistically. This is also related to the fourth theme, *Shared understandings with school-wide interactions*. Since they did not view SEL as something that only matters in their own teaching contexts, the PE teacher and classroom teachers at the Marigold communicated with one another frequently and consistently to promote student's SEL development more effectively and sustainably. These two themes can be better discussed with the previous literature on a whole school approach to SEL, which maintained that school-based SEL programs can be implemented

more successfully with school-wide collaborative efforts beyond individual specific subject settings (Goldberg et al., 2019; Oberle et al., 2016).

When it comes to PE research, there have been continuous scholarly efforts to examine how learning outcomes in social and affective domains in school-based PE or physical activity programs can be transferred to outside of the programs and be maintained in the long term (Gordon & Doyle, 2015; Santos et al., 2020). However, this issue of transfer has not been fully examined since there has been limited understanding about pedagogical practices and experiences outside the gymnasium (Gordon & Doyle, 2015), which may affect student learning in the social and affective domains. In this sense, this study calls attention to the importance of developing and implementing more nuanced and collaborative SEL pedagogies as a whole school approach to enhance SEL development of students more effectively and sustainably. The SEL outcomes generated by this whole school approach can possibly better serve and further engage the individual students, school, home environments, and local community across the *microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem* levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The findings in this study overall advocate that PE can be positioned as an effective setting for SEL, which can contribute to a whole-school approach to SEL at a rural elementary school. As Jones et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of consistent teacher trainings to promote quality school-based SEL programs, the experiences and perspectives shared by the PE teacher can provide practical implications for PE teacher education programs and continuous professional development for PE teachers about implementing SEL pedagogies in a more culturally responsive, inclusive, and caring way.

What SEL Experiences do Students Have in PE and Classrooms at a Rural Elementary School?

For experiences that students have about SEL in PE and classrooms settings, four findings were identified: 1) Building teamwork through cooperative activities, 2) Being aware of emotions and space, 3) Learning strategies to manage emotions, and 4) Taking responsible actions with integrity.

Grounded in social constructivism (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Pope, 2006; Vygotsky, 1986), this study viewed elementary school students as independent individuals who can generate meanings about their learning experiences based on their personal backgrounds and unique perspectives (Dyson et al., 2006, Howley et al., 2022). Even though SEL has been considered important in elementary schools more than other school levels (Dyson et al., 2019), the voice of elementary school students has not been investigated enough in the previous school-based SEL literature (Dyson et al., 2021c). In this sense, this study explored what experiences and perspectives elementary school students have regarding SEL at a rural elementary school in North Carolina. Obtaining in-depth qualitative voices on the SEL experiences in PE and classroom settings, this study provided practical implications on useful pedagogies to promote SEL for elementary school students. Furthermore, considering the limited attention on rural education (Biddle & Azzano, 2016; Cicchinelli & Beesley, 2017), the findings of this study can be noteworthy in that it included one of the socio-culturally marginalized voices in the American curricular discourse (Au et al., 2016). Based on the findings in this study, more empirical research should be conducted in diverse school settings, especially the ones that have been underrepresented, to identify diverse needs of the elementary students for SEL experiences (Baek et al., 2022; Jagers et al., 2018; Jagers et al., 2019).

Additionally, based on symbolic interactionism, this study adopted a bottom-up approach to understand how elementary school students create subjective meanings about SEL in order to define what SEL is at an elementary level (Barker et al., 2017; Carter & Fuller, 2016; Lynch, 2015). In a theoretical sense, the findings provided detailed qualitative evidence on how the existing SEL framework can be potentially revisited or specified to better reflect elementary school students' perspectives and experiences of SEL in PE and classroom contexts. The first theme, *building teamwork through cooperative activities* indicates that *relationship skills* in the CASEL's SEL framework can be achieved through incorporating cooperative structures and teamwork elements into different activities in PE and classrooms (Dyson et al., 2021a; Dyson et al., 2021b, Dyson et al., 2021c; CASEL, 2020). The second theme, *being aware of emotion and space* elaborates on the concepts of *self-awareness* and *social awareness* in the CASEL's SEL framework (CASEL, 2020). In PE settings, spatial awareness was one of the most important concepts for elementary school students to learn (Stevens-Smith, 2004; Pangrazi & Beighle, 2019), which again supports the connection between SEL and learning contents in PE. The third theme, *learning strategies to manage emotions* infers that more concrete ways to manage emotions should be provided to elementary school students so that they can create their own toolbox for *self-management* in PE and classroom settings (CASEL, 2020). The fourth theme, *taking responsible actions with integrity* illustrates that cognitive understanding of social and emotional qualities can further promote elementary school students' *responsible decision-making* (CASEL, 2020).

Guided by the socio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), this study is based on the assumption that SEL development occurs from the multi-level interactions between individuals and their surrounding environments (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Reicher, 2010; Tudge et

al., 2009). Using photovoice methods to capture tangible signs or symbols related to SEL within the school (Tracy, 2019; Walton et al., 2012), the photos taken by the students revealed that there can exist different places and environments even outside of PE and classroom settings, which elementary school students find important for their SEL experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For elementary school students at the Marigold, SEL does not only reside in PE and classroom settings even though the influences from those two settings appeared to be significant.

In terms of the physical environments, the students captured different signs and symbols from the wall posters at the school for their photovoice. This infers that how to design and organize physical space in a gym or classroom should be planned with pedagogical intentions at an elementary stage (Sardinha et al., 2017). In PE settings, how to effectively design a gymnasium as a positive learning environment or teaching space for PE was mainly addressed by practitioners (Graham, 2018; Boucher, 2018), rarely by PE researchers. However, the findings in this study overall showed that even a small element in the physical environments can make changes in students' SEL experiences in PE and classroom settings. In this regard, this area of research on learning environments or teaching spaces needs to be further investigated in future research.

Lastly, the findings in this study overall indicated that the students' SEL experiences in PE and classroom settings helped them to understand the consistent messages about when and how they should use the SEL skills. This implies that well-established SEL experiences in PE can possibly enhance the students' SEL development in classroom settings. Additionally, given that students also experienced pedagogical support for SEL coming outside of PE and classroom settings, this highlights the importance of having consistent pedagogies over SEL across the whole school (Goldberg et al., 2019; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Oberle et al., 2016; Stoiber, 2011).

As this study provided qualitative evidence that PE can be positioned as an effective setting for a whole school approach to SEL, more research should be focused on how the existing pedagogies in PE can be implemented in other subject settings to promote students' SEL development. Additionally, considering that this study has focused on students' experiences within the school, future research can investigate students' SEL experiences in their home and community environments to examine if what they learned in PE and classrooms can be transferred outside of these two settings.

What Contributing Factors do Teachers and Students Perceive Important for SEL Experiences in PE and Classrooms at a Rural Elementary School?

For contributing factors that teachers and students perceive important for SEL in PE and classroom settings, four themes were identified: 1) School culture of celebrating everyday success, 2) Long-term relationships and trust between students and teachers, 3) Humanizing individual students and teachers at school, and 4) On-going support and assistance for SEL pedagogies.

The first theme was *school culture of celebrating everyday success*. There has been a whole school culture at the Marigold where students' everyday accomplishments were celebrated by their peers, PE and classroom teachers, school leaders and staff. The teachers' increased awareness of the home and community environments where students are living allowed them to focus more on highlighting their improvements in SEL skills on a daily basis. This finding is consistent with the previous empirical research focused on the effects of positive behavior management strategies to promote students' SEL development (Bear et al., 2017). This finding advocates that positively reinforcing SEL skills of students can be more effective in PE and classroom rather than taking a punitive approach to their behavioral incidents (Dyson et al.,

2022; Hambacher, 2018; Lynch et al., 2020), especially for the students populations who are not used to receiving positive feedback from others.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that celebrating everyday success was not only implemented by individual teachers in PE and classroom settings but also driven by the whole school climate through official school announcements. Given that school climate can affect teaching practices of individual teachers, school norms, and values (Collie et al., 2012; Nickerson et al., 2019), the importance of having a whole-school climate conducive to SEL development cannot be overemphasized. This finding is also consistent with Jones and Bouffard's (2012) SEL framework, which identified *supportive class/school climate* as one of the major factors to determine successful school-based SEL implementation (See Figure 1).

The second theme was *long-term relationships and trust between students and teachers*. The significance of the relationships between students and teachers in the academic, personal, and social growth of students has been consistently advocated by empirical evidence in previous school-based research (Ansari et al., 2020; Heatly & Votruba-Drzal, 2017; McCormick & O'Connor, 2015). Along the same line, this finding also indicates that long-term relationships and trust between teachers and students can possibly increase students' overall motivation and buy-in towards SEL behaviors. As the students and teachers at the Marigold highlighted a prolonged engagement aspect of the relationships, this finding further supports the existing body of literature on the ways in which long-term relationships between students and teachers can promote the academic success as well as the social and emotional growth of students (Ansari et al., 2020). In this regard, this study added in-depth qualitative evidence to the current school-based research that maintaining positive relationships between students and teachers for an

extended period of time can possibly contribute to teachers' SEL implementation as well as students' SEL behaviors.

Furthermore, given that this study investigated the contributing factors for SEL experiences of students and teachers at a rural elementary school, the significance of prolonged engagement in student-teacher relationships can be related to the issue of teacher turnover in rural schools in the United States. According to the existing literature, teachers in rural schools are reported to leave the schools because of different reasons, for example, geographical difficulties, insufficient resources and fundings for their teaching practices (Boyd et al., 2011; Frahm & Cianca, 2021, Nguyen, 2020). Even though the importance of recruiting and retaining quality teachers has been argued in relation to students' academic achievement (Belsito, 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013), to my best knowledge, there has been no study that provided causal explanations between the teacher retention and its influences on student's SEL development at a rural elementary school. Therefore, future research in this field of study should be more focused on how to recruit, train, and maintain quality PE teachers in rural school settings, who can build long-term relationships with their students and further promote their SEL development.

The third theme is *humanizing individual students and teachers at school*. Based on the understanding of the home and community environments where their students are coming from, PE and classroom teachers saw their students as individuals with diverse backgrounds. This humanistic pedagogical approach has long been discussed in the field of PE, most notably in Hellison's (1973) *Humanistic Physical Education*. Hellison (1973) emphasized the importance of tailoring PE experiences to different backgrounds and needs of individual students and making it more meaningful for their lives outside of the gym. Given that the humanistic PE also reiterates the significance of social and emotional development of students beyond physical

development (Caldwell, 1972; Hellison, 1973), it is more plausible that teachers' humanistic approach towards individual students worked as one of the contributing factors for SEL implementation at the Marigold.

Furthermore, the teachers at the Marigold also consistently humanized themselves to their students in PE and classrooms. They shared different feelings, even frustration, with their students and showed them who they are, what they like, and what they don't like as humans, which can be considered as their humanistic SEL competencies. Developing teachers' own SEL competencies has been reported as one of the most essential factors to determine successful school-based SEL implementation in the previous literature (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Jones et al., 2018; Katz et al., 2020). Jones et al. (2018) maintained that it is important for teachers to promote their own social and emotional well-being and competencies since it will help them demonstrate SEL skills to their students, maintain positive student-teacher relationships, and further create learning environments conducive to SEL (Jones et al., 2018). Thus, this finding indicates that PE teachers should be given opportunities to develop their own SEL competencies in their teacher education programs and continuous professional development.

The last theme is *On-going support and assistance for SEL pedagogies*. The teachers at the Marigold indicated continuous professional development for SEL pedagogies as one of the contributing factors for SEL implementation in PE and classroom settings. Building on this account, they also highlighted the need of having more teaching assistance to support students' SEL development at the Marigold. This finding is also consistent with the previous literature on on-going teacher training for effective school-based SEL implementation (Jagers et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2019; Katz et al., 2020). In this regard, future elementary school research should be focused on providing evidence-based SEL practices with details, which PE and classroom

teachers can refer to in their own teaching contexts (Jones et al., 2019; Katz et al., 2020; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). This finding also provides a practical implication for PE teacher education programs that PE teachers should learn various evidence-based examples for SEL implementation to better serve students with diverse needs and socio-cultural backgrounds (Baek et al., 2022).

Final Comments

Along with the increased interest in SEL (Goldberg et al., 2019; Gordon et al., 2016; Todd et al., 2022), schools in general have been posited as an effective setting for student's SEL development (Nielsen et al., 2015). Especially, the importance of SEL development in the elementary school phase has been highlighted in the previous literature since various learning outcomes can be generated from SEL implementations in schools (Dyson et al., 2019). Along with other subjects, PE researchers have contended that PE has the potential to advance SEL development of students based on the numerous empirical evidence related to the social and affective domains of learning (Bailey et al., 2009; Casey & Fernandez-Rio, 2019; Dyson et al., 2021b; Hemphill et al., 2021). However, the existing studies on SEL in school-based PE programs have not fully expanded their views to outside of PE, which will ultimately have influences on students' SEL development. In this sense, this study investigated experiences and perspectives of students and teachers regarding SEL not only in PE but also in classroom settings at a rural elementary school.

Grounded in social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1986), students were viewed as individuals who have unique perspectives and different backgrounds (Koekoek et al., 2009). Based on the socio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1987), in this study, SEL development of students was not just about understanding what is happening in one specific setting but also about exploring

how a variety of learning experiences in different educational settings work as a whole. Therefore, this study was based on the idea that *SEL in PE is not all about what is happening in PE*. This study broadened the view of SEL to classroom settings where students spend most of their time to better understand the *black box* of SEL implementations (Dyson et al., 2021a; Dyson et al., 2021b; Howley et al., 2022; Humphrey, 2013) in elementary PE settings an extended period of time. The findings in this study further revealed that SEL can happen even outside of PE and classrooms for elementary school students even though PE can be *one of the important settings* for their SEL development.

However, positioning PE as *one of the settings* does not necessarily decrease the importance of PE as an avenue to social and emotional domains of learning. Rather, this study provided empirical evidence that PE can be much more open towards cross-curricular or school-wide efforts for SEL development. I conclude that PE practitioners and researchers need to move beyond the gym to see what is happening outside of our field of study to better support students' SEL development in PE settings. We need to seek interdisciplinary collaborative efforts with other fields in education to enhance students' social and emotional well-being more successfully, consistently, and sustainably. As one of the classroom teachers, Claire (4th) argued, "We're all in it together. We really are. And that's the only way this works".

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Strategies for emotional awareness and management



A quiet space to relax with restorative questions





Study Information Letter

The title: Understanding Social and Emotional Learning in Elementary Physical Education within a Whole School Context

Description of study: This study aims to study how social and emotional learning is implemented at different contexts of the [REDACTED] including Physical Education class and how these different contexts can contribute to one another. The intention is to learn more about various perspectives of students, teachers, staff, and educators about students' social and emotional learning at [REDACTED].

Your kid(s) were invited to participate in this study because they are students enrolled at [REDACTED]. If your kid(s) participate in this study, they will be asked to participate in one-on-one interviews in person, no more than two times, about 20-40 minutes each time. They will be asked to participate in group interviews with other students at [REDACTED] in person, which will be no more than two times, about 20-40 minutes each time. Also, they will be asked to take photographs about their experiences about social and emotional learning at [REDACTED]. These photos will not include human, audio records, and video records. Their participation is voluntary.

To learn more: You can contact the principal investigator, Seunghyun Baek (s_baek@uncg.edu, [REDACTED]).

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
Participant's Assent Form

Study Title: Social and Emotional Learning in Elementary Physical Education
My name is Seunghyun Baek.

What is this about?

I would like to talk with you about your experiences and ideas about Social and Emotional Learning at [REDACTED]. This study will focus on your experiences in PE class, but I also would like to listen to your experiences of Social and Emotional Learning in classroom, hallway, and any other spaces in school.

Did my parents say it was ok?

Your parent(s) will have detailed information about this study and will be asked to sign on a form if they are okay for you to participate in this study.

Why are you asking me to participate?

I would like you to take part because you are currently enrolled at the [REDACTED] which is supported by University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

What if I want to stop?

You do not have to say “yes” if you do not want to take part. We will not punish you if you say “no.” Even if you say “yes” now and change your mind after you start doing this study, you can stop, and no one will be mad at you.

What will I have to do?

If you participate in this study, you should be prepared to participate in one-on-one interviews, group interviews, and photo project. One-on-one interviews will be for about 20-40 minutes each, and you will be interviewed one or two time(s). In group interviews, you will be interviewed with other students at the [REDACTED] one or two time, about 20-40 minutes each time. One-on-one interviews, and group interviews will be about your experiences of social and emotional learning at different places of [REDACTED] including PE. In the photo projects, you will take photos which can show your experiences or ideas about Social and Emotional Learning across a school including PE. These photos will not include human, audio records, and video records. If you choose not to participate in the study or decide to leave the study, it will have nothing to do with your grade or your relationship with the teacher.

Will anything bad happen to me?

Nothing bad will happened to you, but you may find some questions difficult or feel nervous. But I will be there to help you with the concerns.

Will anything good happen to me?

Your ideas may help to make better learning experiences not only in PE but also across a whole school.

Do I get anything for being in this study?

You will not be paid for participating in this study.

What if I have questions?

You are free to ask questions at any time.

Signature of Child: _____

Date: _____

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
Participant's Parent/Legal Guardian's Consent Form

Project Title: Understanding Social and Emotional Learning in Elementary Physical Education within a Whole School Context

Principal Investigator: Seunghyun Baek, M.S.

Faculty Advisor: Ben Dyson, Ph.D.

Participant's Full Name (In Print): _____

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

Your child is being asked to take part in a research study. Your child's participation in the study is voluntary. You may choose for your child not to join, or you may withdraw your consent for him/her to be in the study, for any reason. Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. If you choose for your child not to be in the study or you choose for your child to leave the study before it is done, it will not affect your relationship or your child's relationship with the researcher or the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Details about this study are discussed in this consent form. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about your child being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. If you have any questions about this study, you should contact the researchers named in this consent form directly.

What is the study about?

Social and Emotional Learning involves learning skills which can help your child to become a good, social, and responsible person inside and outside of school. There exists a need for approaches to teaching and learning in Physical Education curriculum to better promote both Social and Emotional Learning in Physical Education. This could be especially valuable in elementary education settings where there is a small amount of research focusing on the impacts of whole-school Social and Emotional Learning on physical education contexts. In this study, we will be looking to explore your child's previous, current and future understandings and experiences of Social and Emotional Learning across a whole school including physical education.

Why are you asking my child?

This project is being conducted at the [REDACTED] which is operating in partnership with University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Your child is currently enrolled at the [REDACTED].

What will you ask my child to do if I agree to let him or her be in the study?

Your child will be asked to: (a) be interviewed individually, (b) participate in focus group interviews, and (c) complete two photovoice tasks. These will be conducted as a part of the research process and will not have impacts on your child's grade.

As part of the research, your child would be asked to participate in one-on-one interviews in person which will be conducted no more than two times. Each interview will be conducted for 20-40 minutes. Also, they will be asked to participate in focus group interviews with other students at the [REDACTED] which will be no more than two times. Each focus group will be conducted for 20-40 minutes in person. Both one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews will be about their experiences and understandings of Social and Emotional Learning inside and outside of Physical Education, generally across a whole school. During and outside of class time, they may take photographs about their experiences or ideas of Social and Emotional Learning across a whole school including Physical Education. These photos will not include human subjects, audio records, and video records. If your child chooses not to participate in the study, they will continue to participate in PE class as normal and will not

be asked to participate in the interviews or the photovoice tasks. Choosing not to participate in the study or choosing to leave the study will have no impact on your child's grade or your relationship with the teacher.

Is there any audio/video recording of my child?

There will be interviews which will be recorded with a voice recorder. Because your child's voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, confidentiality for things said on the recording cannot be guaranteed, although the researcher will try to limit access to the voice recording. The researcher will NOT use the voice recording for any public use. All original paper data will be stored in a locked cabinet in a locked KIN Department lab. All electronic data will be stored in the Box cloud service under a protected and secured UNCG account. All the participants' names will be given pseudonyms.

What are the dangers to my child? And What if my child gets injured?

As a potential risk, sometimes the questions we ask your child might seem strange and make them ask questions. Your child might experience anxiety in sharing your values, beliefs and attitudes in interviews or photovoice tasks. Every effort will be made to make your child feel at ease. If anything concerns your child or makes them feel uncomfortable with some of the questions, please let us know and we will be sure to stop or do whatever we can to make them feel better.

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. Your child will not miss class time due to participation in interviews/focus groups. Due to the format of a focus group, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, but we will ask participants not to discuss focus group content outside of the group.

If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact the principal investigator, Seunghyun Baek (email: s_baek@uncg.edu) or the faculty advisor, Dr. Ben Dyson (bpdyson@uncg.edu). If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns, or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study, please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of my child taking part in this research?

This study may be beneficial in assisting researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in further understanding how Social and Emotional Learning can be incorporated into future practice, policy, teacher-education, and continued professional development in PE to enhance teaching and learning across a whole school.

Are there any benefits to my child as a result of participation in this research study?

The study may provide safe and enjoyable opportunities for your child to look back on and express their experiences and perspectives regarding a whole-school Social and Emotional Learning and its impacts on elementary physical education.

Will my child get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything for my kid to be in this study?

There are no costs or payments to you or your child as a result of participation in this study.

How will my child's information be kept confidential?

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Unless required by law, only the study team or representatives from UNCG (for example, for auditing purposes) can look at your records. The original paper data will be stored in a locked cabinet in a locked KIN Department lab. The electronic data will be stored in the online cloud service named Box under a protected and secured UNCG account. All data, contact lists, recruitment records, or other documents that contain the participant's personal information will be stored for five years following the closure of the study and then destroyed.

During and after the research, the researcher will use a pseudonym to protect your child's privacy in any form of documentation and will make every effort to avoid privacy disclosure.

Will my child's de-identified data be used in future studies?

Your child's de-identified data will be kept indefinitely and may be used for future research without your additional consent or your child's additional consent.

What if my child wants to leave the study, or I want him/her to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to allow your child to participate or to withdraw him or her at any time, without penalty. If your child does withdraw, it will not affect you or your child's participation in the class in any way. If you or your child chooses to withdraw, you may request that any data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state. The investigators also have the right to stop your child's participation at any time. This could be because your child has had an unexpected reaction, has failed to follow instructions, or because the entire study has been stopped. Choosing not to allow your child to participate in the study or choosing for your child to leave the study will have no impact on your child's grade or your child's relationship with their teacher.

What about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available, which may relate to your willingness allow your child to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form, you are agreeing that you have read it, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and consent to your child taking part in this study. You also agree to allow for your photographs taken by your child to be used publicly and may be used for teaching, publications, or for presentation at scientific meetings. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are the legal parent or guardian of the child who wishes to participate in this study described to you here by Seunghyun Baek.

Participant's Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature: _____

Assent for Permission to Use Photos Taken by the Participant

I understand that any photographs my child agrees to take and submit may be used for teaching, publications, or for presentation at scientific meetings.

Participant's Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: _____

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
Teachers/staff/Educators' Consent Form

Project Title: Understanding Social and Emotional Learning in Elementary Physical Education within a Whole School Context

Principal Investigator: Seunghyun Baek, M.S.

Faculty Advisor: Ben Dyson, Ph.D.

Participant's Full Name (In Print): _____

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. There may not be any direct benefit to you for being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. If you choose not to be in the study or leave the study before it is done, it will not affect your relationship with the researcher or the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Details about this study are discussed in this consent form. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form. If you have any questions about this study at any time, you should ask the researchers named in this consent form. Their contact information is below.

What is the study about?

This is a research project. Your participation is voluntary. The study is to understand your perspectives and experiences of whole-school Social and Emotional Learning pedagogies and its impacts on elementary Physical Education at the [REDACTED] where you are working.

Why are you asking me?

We ask you because we want to listen to your perspectives and experiences of whole-school Social and Emotional Learning pedagogies and its impacts on elementary Physical Education at the [REDACTED] where you are working. It may help to improve a school-wide SEL implementation and better facilitate your student' learning experiences in the elementary school settings.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

You will be individually interviewed. The interview will be about your perspectives and experiences of whole-school Social and Emotional Learning pedagogies and its impacts on different contexts at the [REDACTED] including Physical Education. Interviews will be conducted no more than two times in total, and each interview will be last about 30 minutes to one hour in person. Interviews will not be implemented in your teaching time.

You will be asked to focus group interviews with other teachers and staff at the [REDACTED]. The interview will be about your perspectives and experiences of whole-school Social and Emotional Learning pedagogies and its impacts on different contexts at the [REDACTED] including Physical Education. Interviews will be conducted no more than two times in total, and each interview will be last about 30 minutes to one hour in person. Interviews will not be implemented in your teaching time.

You will be asked to participate in photovoice. You will take one to three photos which can encapsulate your experiences and perspectives of Social and Emotional Learning across a whole school including Physical Education. These photos will not include human subjects.

If you are teaching, observations will be conducted with observational field notes in your class. Observations will be conducted no more than 15 hours per participants. The observation schedules will be set up in advance based on your teaching schedules. If you are not teaching, no observations will be conducted.

You are encouraged to provide any relevant textual documents which can help understanding of whole-school Social and Emotional Learning pedagogies and its impacts on Physical Education. This will possibly include lesson plans, curricular documents, school letters, and other potential teaching/learning resources. This is voluntary.

Is there any audio/video recording?

The interview will be recorded by an audio recorder. You should know that because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed, although the researcher will try to limit access to the recording as described below.

What are the risks to me?

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact the primary investigator, Seunghyun Baek (email: s_baek@uncg.edu) or the faculty advisor, Dr. Ben Dyson (bpdyson@uncg.edu).

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study, please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

Your feedback may help us understand whole-school SEL pedagogies and its impact on elementary physical education from different perspectives, which will benefit the future research on school-based SEL programs.

Are there any benefits to *me* for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits to participants in this study. However, your feedback may help to improve the quality of the program, which in turn will benefit your students' learning experiences in the school.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study

How will you keep my information confidential?

All information obtained during the interview is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The original paper data will be stored in a locked cabinet in a locked KIN Department lab. The electronic data will be stored in the online cloud service named Box under a protected and secured UNCG account. All data, contact lists, recruitment records, or other documents that contain the participant's personal information will be stored for five years following the closure of the study and then destroyed.

During and after the research, the researcher will use a pseudonym to protect your privacy in any form of documentation and will make every effort to avoid privacy disclosure.

Will my de-identified data be used in future studies?

Your de-identified data will be kept indefinitely and may be used for future research without your additional consent.

What if I want to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state. The investigators also have the right to stop your participation at any time. This could be because you have had an unexpected reaction, or have failed to follow instructions, or because the entire study has been stopped.

What about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form, you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, in this study described to you by Seunghyun Baek.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS

Interview Protocols for Teachers/Staff/Educators

General questions

- Please walk me through your typical workday in schools.
- What skills and/or dispositions do you think your students need to learn in order to be successful in school?
- Why do you think these skills are important?
- What kinds of behavioral incidents have you experienced recently which can disrupt classroom, gymnasium or playground activities?
- What strategies did you use to handle those behavioral incidents?
- How does your classroom climate look like?
- What do you usually do to make your students feel happy and safe in your classroom?
- What additional supports do you think you need to promote positive classroom climate where students can feel safe and happy?

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) questions

- What are your understandings about Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)?
- What specific Social and Emotional Skills do you think are important to teach?
- What are some good examples of the SEL practices that you have tried or experienced in schools?
- How do you teach communication?
- How do you teach building relationships?
- How do you teach empathy?
- How do you teach self- and social awareness?
- What type of tasks or activities do you think would not be effective for students' SEL development at school?
- What are some SEL outcomes that you have observed in your class?
- What is something that students can experience more in PE compared to other educational contexts in terms of SEL?
- What is something that students can experience more in other educational contexts compared to PE in terms of SEL?
- How do you think SEL in PE can contribute to SEL in other educational contexts at your school?
- How do you think SEL in other educational contexts can contribute to SEL in PE at your school?

Interview Protocols for Students (Individual/Focus Group)

General questions

- Tell me about yourself briefly.
- Tell me about your average school day.
- What is your favorite thing in school?
- What is your less favorite thing in school?

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) questions

(PE settings)

- What do you usually do in PE?
- What do you enjoy the most in PE?
- How do you build relationship with others in PE? Any examples?
- Have you ever had troubles with others in PE? Any examples?
- How did you solve the troubles that you had with other people in PE?
- Have you ever felt sad or angry in PE? If yes, how did you handle that?
- Do you think you care about others' feeling in PE? Any examples?
- What is something that you learn in PE but not outside of PE, if any?

(Classroom settings)

- What do you usually do in your classroom?
- What do you enjoy the most in your classroom?
- How do you build relationship with others in your classroom? Any examples?
- Have you ever had troubles with others in your classroom? Any examples?
- How did you solve the troubles that you had with other people in your classroom?
- Have you ever felt sad or angry in classroom? If yes, how did you handle that?
- Do you think you care about others' feeling in your classroom? Any examples?
- What is something that you learn outside of PE but not in PE, if any?
- What is something that your PE and classroom teachers both say is important?

(School Climate)

- What (words) comes to your mind when you think about your school?
- How would you describe your school to other people if they ask about it?
- Is there anything that you want me to know about the school?

(Photovoice)

- Please describe why you took this photo.
- What is it related to your experiences in PE and classrooms?

Guidelines for Observations

Field note observations:

Field observations will be written up using Schatzman and Strauss' (1973) model of writing field notes. This method organizes the material into three categories, *Observational Notes* (O), *Theoretical/Interpretive Notes* (I), and *Methodological Notes* (M). Observational notes are statements or descriptions about what was happening in the classroom.

- 1) Observational notes are statements of observations of events experienced and contact as little interpretation as possible.
- 2) Theoretical or interpretive notes are the researcher's interpretations that emerge from the observation. This is an attempt to draw from one's knowledge or professional understanding of Physical Education. The researcher interprets, infers, and new concepts are developed and linked to existing knowledge.
- 3) Methodological notes contain memos to one's self of changes that could be made to the methods or questions that the observational notes raise. This Methods note may lead to asking the teacher, student, or principal a question that emerges from this data collection. This is also a critical review of the intervention and a critique of the researcher's tactics or bias. These could be reminders about what to look for in the next class or future observations or questions that should be asked during interviews, etc...

Note: Field notes need to be typed and edited asap after the observation (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

- 4) Critical reflexive journal: (After the observation)

In addition to writing field notes, the researcher should write a reflection journal. This journal should be reflexive, that is, taking into account researcher knowledge and bias and the school context. This journal should contain a critical reflection of what has been observed related to the teaching and learning process. It may also include contextual considerations and further interpretations (Marshall & Grossman, 2016).

Observation Field Notes	
Date/Time: Setting: Events/Participants:	
Observational notes	Interpretive notes
Methodological notes	
Critical reflexive journal	