FOWLER, JUDY A. Ph.D. Remembering and Reinforcing Their Why: Exploring Teacher Self-Efficacy within the Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning Pedagogies. (2024) Directed by Dr. Dale Schunk. 160 pp.

This qualitative case study addresses the pressing need to support the academic and social-emotional well-being of K-12 students, particularly given the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Research highlights a significant prevalence of mental, emotional, developmental, and behavioral issues among children and exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (Webster, 2022; Child and Adolescent Health, 2024). Teachers play a crucial role in addressing these challenges but often lack adequate training and support in implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) skills. The study focuses on the impact of a professional learning community (PLC) intervention that integrates SEL-based instructional strategies into teachers' practices. It aims to enhance teacher self-efficacy (TSE) in utilizing SEL strategies and addresses key questions regarding teachers' adaptation of SEL strategies, changes in their self-efficacy, and the perceived impact of PLC experiences. By examining how K-5 teachers engage with SEL strategies within the PLC framework and how their self-efficacy evolves through this process, the study offers valuable insights into developing effective professional learning opportunities to support SEL integration in education.

REMEMBERING AND REINFORCING THEIR WHY: EXPLORING TEACHER

SELF-EFFICACY WITHIN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL

AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING PEDAGOGIES

by

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A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro

2024

Approved by

_____
Dr. Dale Schunk
Committee Chair

DEDICATION

Trust is earned in the smallest of moments. It is earned not through heroic deeds, or even highly visible actions, but through paying attention, listening, and gestures of genuine care and connection.

Brené Brown, 2018

To the teachers who participated and learned *with* me in this project. Thank you for trusting me and the process.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by Judy A. Fowler has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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April 30, 2024
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my wife, Vicky, and our children, Jack and Carly, for your unwavering support throughout my doctoral degree. Your patience and love have been a constant source of strength as I pursued my lifelong dream of achieving my doctorate. This journey demanded great sacrifices from our family, and I am profoundly grateful for your steadfast patience, support, and encouragement. I hope I have modeled the importance of perseverance and dedication to the work we are most passionate about, inspiring us all to leave a positive mark in the world.

I am immensely grateful for the guidance and patience of Dr. Schunk, my advisor and committee chair. His kindness and wisdom have been instrumental in my growth as a scholar. It has been an inspiration to be his student and to learn from his brilliance. As I approached the completion of my dissertation, I often recalled your stories of Dr. Albert Bandura, your own dissertation chair, and his many crossed-out pages on your dissertation draft! (I will be honest; I was praying that I would not have that same experience! Talk about motivation!) As Dr. Bandura shared and you have passed along, "May the efficacy force be with you!" I am proud to say I felt the force creating the stories in my dissertation. It has been incredible to work and learn from you.

To my exceptional dissertation committee: Dr. Ye 'Jane' He, Dr. Ben Dyson, and Dr. Tom Martinek, thank you for your patience, guidance, and the reminders to stay focused and true to the path I set for myself. Your modeling, mentorship, and support have been invaluable throughout this journey.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all my former students from my K-12 teaching experiences that I have taught, learned from, and served. You have been inspirations of well-being and joy, embracing my ideas and allowing me to grow through the creation of new

programs and learning opportunities driven by your excitement, drive, needs, ideas, and voices. I am forever grateful for the opportunity to learn with you. Y'all have the best ideas!

I am deeply thankful to Principal Linda York, who took a chance on me and hired me as the interim physical education teacher at Colfax Elementary School in Guilford County, NC, in 1998. This opportunity allowed me to create and grow a program that became the "discussions at the dinner table." Planting those seeds of advocacy was one of the best lessons a beginning teacher could receive. For that, I am forever grateful and continue to pass along that advice to all educators I work with.

To the amazing, dedicated teachers who were in the trenches with me and my 'co-conspirators' in bringing more movement and joy to our students: thank you. Thank you for the laughs, tears, sharing pride in the accomplishment of our students, and the love for what we do as educators, even amidst the chaos. Your camaraderie and encouragement have been a guiding light against the negativity in the media about the best job in the world—teaching young people to love what they do and to do what they love.

I also want to acknowledge my teacher candidates, whom I have guided and mentored. Thank you for trusting the "method to my madness" and the abundance of ideas I integrated into our classes, much of which was fueled by my doctoral journey to become a better educator. I hope the insights from my research will inspire you to advocate for meaningful teaching and learning experiences and to make a lasting impact on student learning, growth, and the overall learning experience.

I would be remiss if I didn't give a shout out to my grad school sister, Dr. Jennifer Lingle. I am so thankful the universe left the two corner seats open around the table for the first

night of TED 749. So much to say and not enough words to express it all. Now it's time for us to get to work!

Thank you all for being a vital and dynamic part of this incredible journey.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Every individual matters.

Every individual has a role to play.

Every individual makes a difference.

Jane Goodall

According to the Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health (2022), 25.8% of children ranging from 3-17 years old have one or more mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral problem. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety problems, behavior problems, and depression are the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders in children (CDC, 2023). Additionally, in the United States, 34.8 million children (ages 0-17) are exposed to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that has been connected with poor health outcomes, the development of certain diseases, and poor academic performance (Webster, 2022; Child and Adolescent Health, 2024).

The nature of schooling and the length of the school day position teachers as the frontline workers who can support student social, mental, and emotional health. In April 2022, the School Pulse Panel study (IES, 2022) reported that 69% of public schools reported an increase in the percentage of students who sought mental health services from school since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the School Pulse Panel study reported specific actions public schools took to help students cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. The two most frequently reported actions were (1) encouraging existing staff to address student social/emotional/mental well-being (85%), and (2) offering professional development to teachers on helping students with social/emotional/mental well-being (57 %). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed a despairing

need to support student well-being. Considering the growing need for promoting the social, emotional, and mental well-being for students, teachers need to be prepared to support an array of different student issues and problems even with a lack of supportive structures (Jones & Bouffard, 2012) and "insufficient guidance and support provided for the effective implementation of interventions in school settings" (Barry et al., 2017, p. 437).

Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2019-2020 disrupted face-to-face instruction for K-12 students in the United States (Kuhfeld et al., 2020), highlighting the urgent need to address children's academic and social-emotional well-being (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020). While traditional academic approaches dominate teaching methods (Flower et al., 2011), integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) pedagogies can enhance students' skills crucial for success across various life domains (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). Research demonstrates that embedding social-emotional dimensions in education supports students' overall well-being (Durlak et al., 2011). Despite recognizing the benefits of SEL, teachers face challenges due to limited training and knowledge in implementing SEL skills (Bridgeland et al., 2013; Reinke et al., 2011; Walter et al., 2006). Current SEL professional development often lacks continuity and coherence (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Jennings & Frank, 2015), although studies highlight key features that positively impact teacher learning, such as content focus, active learning opportunities, and coherence with other professional activities (Garet et al., 2001). Structural aspects like PD format, duration, and activities also significantly affect teacher learning outcomes (Garet et al., 2001).

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the impact of a professional learning opportunity focusing on SEL-based instructional strategies within a professional learning community (PLC) on teacher self-efficacy (TSE) development. The PLC intervention incorporated three SEL-based instructional strategies into teachers' daily curriculum and other school activities (Kress et al., 2004; Brushnahan & Gatti, 2011). Data collected during the PLC sessions identified experiences contributing to changes in TSE related to using SEL-based instructional strategies. The study offers insights into developing effective professional learning opportunities to enhance and support TSE in utilizing SEL-based instructional strategies, addressing the following research questions:

1. How do K-5 teachers adapt and use SEL-based instructional strategies presented through weekly PLC meetings?

2. How do K-5 teachers' self-efficacy for teaching SEL change through their participation in the SEL-PLC?

3. Which PLC experiences were perceived as contributing to teachers' change of their self-efficacy for using SEL-based instructional strategies?

Theoretical Framework

A principal tenet of the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) is that human behavior or learning transpires inside a framework of triadic reciprocality involving reciprocal interactions among three sets of influences: personal (e.g., cognitions, beliefs, skills, affects), behavioral, and social/environmental factors (Bandura, 1986, 1987; Schunk, 2012). The interaction of the causal influences is central to self-efficacy, one's perceived capacity for learning or performing actions at designated levels (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 2012). Research has confirmed that self-efficacy

has influenced outcomes related to achievement such as choice, effort, persistence, and use of effective learning strategies (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Schunk, 2012). Social cognitive theory postulates that individuals gain information to develop self-efficacy from their mastery or enacted performances, vicarious (e.g., modeled) experiences, forms of social persuasion, and physiological/affective indicators (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 2012; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Teacher (or *instructional*) self-efficacy (TSE) refers to personal beliefs about one's capabilities to support student learning (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2009). TSE should influence the same activities that student self-efficacy affects the choice of activities, effort, persistence, and achievement (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2009). Changes in the educational landscape brings new realities for teachers requiring a continual upgrade of knowledge and skills (Bandura, 1997). The increase of the knowledge of social and emotional learning (SEL) and the skills to teach SEL can affect teachers' beliefs in their abilities to integrate these pedagogical practices to benefit their students within the broad perspective and demands in education (Bandura, 1997).

Positive psychology is the scientific study of human strengths and flourishing. The field of positive psychology values the "subjective experiences of well-being, satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)" (Seligman & Csiskzentmihalyi, 2000). The World Health Organization included the well-being as a new term in 2021: "Well-being is a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions" (WHO, 2021). The construct of well-being is a central topic for positive psychology

that utilizes the theory of well-being, or PERMA, to contribute to human flourishing (Seligman, 2011).

This study was contextualized to investigate the tenets of the triadic reciprocality framework and the changes in TSE as they participate in a professional learning experience grounded in SEL-based instructional strategies. Bandura (1997) posits that people can "exercise influence over what they do" (p. 3). Through the lens of intentional human agency (Bandura, 1997), the participants in this study had to distinguish between their personal efforts as they participated in the SEL-PLC, grounded in the PERMA model, and the effects that implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies assembled in their school and classroom environments.

Definition of Terms

PERMA: PERMA is the theory of well-being (Seligman, 2011) that encompasses five core elements: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment.

Professional development (PD): This is the continuation of the learning process for educators. It is an opportunity to enrich their knowledge and refine their skills, which can lead to better student and teacher outcomes.

Professional learning communities (PLC): This is a small group of teachers organized around subject areas, grade levels, or roles that teachers serve in their school. It is an opportunity for teachers to meet regularly to reflect on their teaching practice, share ideas, and plan for instruction.

Social cognitive theory: Social cognitive theory that encompasses learning from the social environment. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory postulates reciprocal interactions that stem from personal, behavioral, and social/environmental factors.

Social and emotional learning (SEL): Social and emotional learning is the "process through which children and adults develop the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to acquire social and emotional competence" (Elias, 1997, p.2). Social and emotional competence is the "ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to complex demands of growth and development" (Elias, 1997, pg. 2). Elias (1997) expressed that SEL includes self-awareness, control of impulsivity, working cooperatively with others, and caring about oneself and others.

Teacher self-efficacy (TSE): Teacher (instructional) self-efficacy (TSE) refers to personal beliefs about one's capabilities to support student learning (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2009). TSE develops from a combination of mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological/affective (emotional) states.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

I alone cannot change the world, but

I can cast a stone across the waters

to create many ripples.

Mother Teresa

The educational landscape has witnessed a tremendous interest in social and emotional learning that emphasizes holistic approaches to support the academic, social, and emotional development of students. With successful implementation, social and emotional learning (SEL) creates positive learning environments that facilitate positive teacher and student interactions that predict a range of positive outcomes for children (Rodriguez et al., 2020; Durlak et al, 2011; Jennings & Greensburg, 2009; Pianta et al., 2009). There has been a paradigm shift in education that underscores the significance of SEL for student. In recent years, there has been an escalation for the development of state SEL standards or competencies and implementation guidance resources for over one-half of the U.S. states (Dermody & Dusenbury, 2022). As states adopt policies supporting whole child education with a goal of building teacher capacity for SEL (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020), it remains crucial to continuously support all teachers, who play a leading role in integrating SEL practices in educational settings. Webb and Ashton (1986) suggested that teacher "efficacy attitudes are not personal traits, but rather responses to teachers' cultural, social, institutional, and personal environment" (p. 45). As SEL policies and reform efforts continue to grow popularity during a time where there is an increase of the percentage of students seeking mental health resources directly from the schools (IES, 2022), it is warranted to

apply an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Webb & Ashton, 1986) to support teacher self-efficacy for implementing SEL in the classrooms.

In this study, I explore how teacher instructional self-efficacy changed as they navigated the implementation of SEL-based instructional strategies with their fifth grade students (Bandura, 1997). Additionally, I focused on an agentic approach of teachers as they encountered changes of self-efficacy throughout a professional learning experience geared for an ecological perspective of their distinctive context of their teaching spaces. This literature review aims to explore the intricate relationship between TSE and SEL, particularly focusing on how TSE can change through the support of a PLC learning experience focused on the implementation of SEL-focused instructional strategies. Additionally, this review explores the influence of an SEL-based PLC (SEL-PLC) grounded in positive psychology on TSE. This chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness of TSE, SEL pedagogies, and the creation of nurturing educational spaces that support students' social, emotional, and academic well-being.

Theoretical Framework

Self-efficacy is an important facet of the larger theoretical framework of social cognitive theory. This theory hypothesizes that human functioning results from a causal relationship between an individual's personal, behavioral, and environmental circumstances (Bandura, 1986, 1997) which emphasizes that most learning occurs in social environments (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Schunk, 2012; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Social cognitive theory postulates how teacher agency may be supported or restricted by socio-structural influences contextualized in educational settings (Bandura, 1997, 2001). By utilizing social cognitive theory as a guiding framework, I could explore how teachers make causal contributions to their agentic functioning

during their professional learning experiences (Bandura, 2001, 1997). A central mechanism to teacher agency lies the beliefs of teacher or personal efficacy. When teachers believe they can generate desired outcomes through their actions, they have an incentive to act (Bandura, 1997).

The fundamental tenet of Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory is that human behavior operates within the framework of triadic reciprocality that includes three sets of interacting influences or processes: personal, behavioral, and environment (Figure 2.1). Each set of processes reciprocally interact with each other in dynamic ways which influence human functioning (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Schunk et al., 2014; Schunk, 2012). The interaction of the causal influences is central to self-efficacy, one's perceived capacity for learning or performing actions at designated levels (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 2012). Research has confirmed that self-efficacy has influenced outcomes related to achievement such as choice, effort, persistence, and use of effective learning strategies (Schunk, 2018; Schunk, 2012).

Figure 1. The Model of Triadic Reciprocality
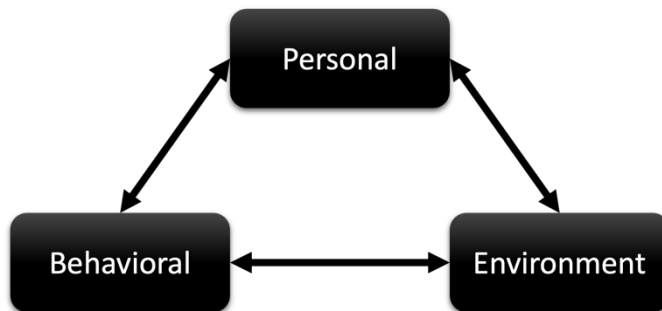
The three sets of interacting processes do not reciprocate equally as determinants of attainment. For example, a teacher who experiences self-doubt (personal) for implementing a new instructional strategy can create a classroom environment that could impair a student's judgment for their own abilities and resulting cognitive development (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Bandura, 1997). The disruption of the classroom environment could become increasingly

stressful for the student who may begin to show negative behavior changes in anticipation of replica of a previous learning experience that was formidable.

Social cognitive theory postulates that individuals gain information to develop self-efficacy from their mastery or enacted performances, vicarious (e.g., modeled) experiences, forms of social persuasion, and physiological/affective indicators (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 2012, 2018). Perceived self-efficacy is defined as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). The concern is not with the skills an individual possesses but the judgments of what to do or not do with those skills. For teachers, self-efficacy can be influenced by a variety of factors. Some examples include:

- mastery (or enacted) performances: personal experiences of successfully implementing new teaching strategies or facilitating a conflict between two students;
- vicarious (or modeled) experiences: personal experiences observing colleagues, instructional leaders, or during professional learning experiences who are successful with their teaching practices,
- social persuasion: receiving feedback and encouragement from administrators, colleagues, and parents, and
- physiological/affective indicators: positive internal feelings as it relates to an experience can contribute to growth of self-efficacy or negative internal feelings as it relates to an experience can contribute to the decline of self-efficacy.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, caring for students requires a great deal of emotional understanding and emotional management (Chang, 2020) for both teachers and students. Historically, "teacher efficacy has proved to be powerfully related to many meaningful

educational outcomes such as teachers' persistence, enthusiasm, commitment, and instructional behavior, as well as student outcomes such as achievement, motivation, and self-efficacy beliefs" (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, p. 783). Historically, determinants of teacher self-efficacy have been connected to attainments of student academic success and commitment to the profession (Bandura, 1997). Considering TSE and social cognitive theory in this quantitative study will illuminate which determinants contributed to the teacher agentic actions in their classrooms.

SEL and SEL-focused Instructional Practices

Social and emotional skills are foundational for children's health growth, development, and lifelong wellness (Durlak, et al., 2011; Dyson et al., 2019). There are many frameworks defining and describing social and emotional learning (SEL), leading to different research questions, different intervention approaches, and different perspectives for assessment (García, 2016). Research and practice advocating the successful integration of SEL is increasingly dominating discourse around education (Jagers et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2017a; Jones et al., 2017b; Oberle et al., 2016). Weissburg et al., 2015 shares that there is "an explosion of interest in social and emotional learning (SEL)" (p. 3).

A common understanding of SEL has been established by The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defined as "an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop 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" (Niemi, 2020). CASEL's (2020) updated SEL competencies as follows: (1) self-awareness: The abilities to understand

one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. (2) self-management: The abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. (3) responsible decision-making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. (4) relationship skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups. (5) social awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

Several meta-analyses affirm the implementation of SEL programs using evidence-based interventions to develop skills and promote positive outcomes and academic growth, behavior, and youth development in general education (Corcoran et al., 2018; Korpershoek et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2017). Weissberg et al. (2015) presented a framework that highlights 1) five interrelated domains of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies that serve as a foundation to navigate life successfully; 2) short- and long-term student attitudinal and behavioral outcomes from evidence-based SEL programming; 3) coordinated strategies that enhance children's SEL development; and 4) district, state, and federal policies that support and foster quality SEL implementations and student outcomes.

Figure 2. Conceptual Model of SEL in Educational Settings
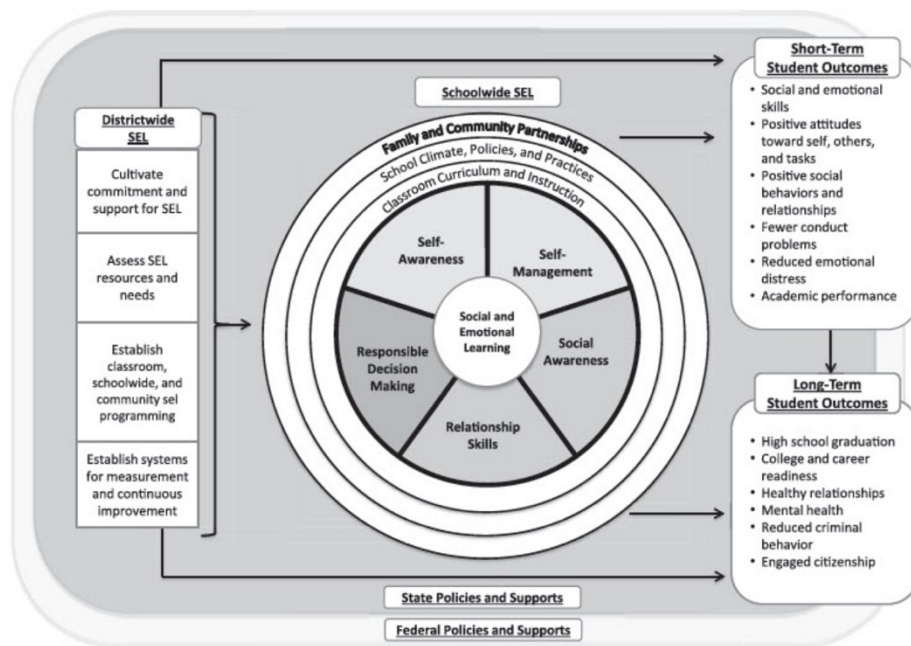
Note. From Social and emotional learning by R. P., Weissburg, J. A., Durlak, J. A., Domitrovich, & T. P., Gullota. In R. P. Weissberg, J. A. Durlak, R. P. Domitrovich, & T. P. Gullota (Eds.), *Handbook of social and emotional learning: Research and practice* (p.7). Guilford Press.

SEL in K-5 Instructional Practices

Researchers from CASEL reviewed evidence based SEL programs that use one or more of the following strategies: (1) free-standing lessons (SEL curricula), (2) general teaching practices, (3) integration of skill instruction and practices that support SEL within the context of an academic curriculum, and (4) guidance to administrators and school leaders on how to facilitate SEL as a schoolwide initiative (Dusenbury et al., 2015). The first approach, free-standing lessons or SEL curricula, share step-by-step instructions and teaching skills for easy implementation that cover all SEL core competencies. Next, the general teaching practices

approach focuses on teaching practices that are appropriate across developmental or grade levels. The integration with academic curriculum approach integrates SEL skills instruction and practices directly into the academic curriculum. Lastly, the whole school initiative approach facilitates organizational structures to be evaluated to embed systemic change for SEL.

There is a lack of research to support the sustainability of SEL (Barry et al., 2017). A key concern is that teachers may perceive SEL programming as "one more thing" to implement that will go away once the next reform effort travels down from the hierarchical structure of the school system's upper administration. The adoption of an evidence-based SEL approaches may be the dosage that a school needs however not all schools are funded or resourced in the same manner. Low-resource schools and programs that require inclusion can face constraints in SEL implementation due to a lack of resources, supportive structures, limited knowledge, and deficits in capacity for SEL (Barry et al, 2017; Silveira-Zalvidar & Curtis, 2019; Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Teacher Self-Efficacy Regarding SEL-focused Instructional Practices

Self-efficacy is a component of social cognitive theory that "operates in concert with other determinants in the theory to govern human thought, motivation, and action" (Bandura, 1997, p. 34). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy refers to an individual's beliefs about their capabilities to successfully carry out an action. Teacher (or *instructional*) self-efficacy (TSE) refers to personal beliefs about one's capabilities to support student learning (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2009). TSE should influence the same activities that student self-efficacy affects: the choice of activities, effort, persistence, and achievement (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2009).

Teachers' self-efficacy is theorized to influence student motivation and achievement (Bandura, 1997) and it has been suggested that instructional practices and strategies that teachers implement may be determined by their self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Teachers who possess high TSE operate on the belief that their difficult students are teachable with effective teaching that enlists school and community supports (Bandura, 1997). In contrast, teachers who possess low TSE believe there is little they can do to support unmotivated students and that effective teaching strategies will be negated by the student's home life (Bandura, 1997). To personify what TSE may look like, we can turn to Gibson and Dembo's (1984) observational study on the relationship between teacher efficacy and observable teacher behaviors. Gibson and Dembo (1984) found that teachers with high TSE were apt to devote more classroom time to academic activities with more time monitoring student learning of the entire class. Teachers with high TSE also would support students learning through asking questions that would lead student to the correct answer. Teachers with low TSE demonstrated a lack of persistence to interact with all students and freely suspend their efforts with students who struggled to answer questions correctly.

TSE involves much more than the ability to deliver academic content knowledge to students. In a critical review conducted by Morris et al., (2017) sources of teacher self-efficacy greatly varied. Bandura (1997) viewed mastery experiences as the "most influential source of efficacy information" (p. 80) due to the authenticity of the evidence being action-oriented. Student on-task classroom behaviors can inform teachers' efficacy beliefs and are likely related to interpretations teachers make about their teaching performance. Gabriele and Joram's (2007) qualitative study of elementary teachers described their teacher self-efficacy was influenced by the evidence of their students; affect, conduct, and comprehension and strategy use. Student

engagement has been found to positively correlate with teaching self-efficacy (Guo et al., 2011; Ross et al., 1994).

Research has revealed that teachers reflect on a variety of sources to determine the general perceptions of their past teaching performances. Morris and Usher's (2011) study of 12 university professors who won university-wide teaching awards at research-intensive institutions shared how they developed their sense of teaching efficacy. Interview data shared that experience was the catalyst for teacher self-efficacy. Research data from this study also shared those professors knew they were successful based on feedback from student evaluations. This demonstrates that social persuasions (student voice) can influence teacher self-efficacy. In Morris, Usher, & Chen's (2017) critical review, they highlight several examples of early career teachers indicated that social evaluations were important and how they were more compelling when the information was relayed by a credible observer who was specific and sincere (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 2006; Schunk, 1984). Morris, Usher, & Chen (2017) shared the call for researchers to examine the variety of ways in which students' feedback is conveyed and assess the effects on teachers' self-efficacy. TSE incorporates a multi-dimensional construct that is an ecological and a situation-specific expectancy that they can help students learn (Bandura, 1997, 1986; Ashton & Webb, 1986).

Teacher Self-Efficacy and SEL

Changes in the educational landscape brings new realities for teachers requiring a continual upgrade of knowledge and skills (Bandura, 1997). The increase of the knowledge of social and emotional learning (SEL) and the skills to teach SEL can affect teachers' beliefs in their abilities to integrate these pedagogical practices to benefit their students within the broad perspective and demands in education (Bandura, 1997). Much of the empirical research of SEL

is primarily focused on the student (Domitrovich et al., 2016) and less is known about the ways SEL interventions influence the teachers experiences at school (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is a branch of psychology that focuses on the scientific study of human strengths and flourishing instead of weaknesses. The field of positive psychology values the "subjective experiences of well-being, satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)" (Seligman & Csiskzentmihalyi, 2000). In educational settings, positive psychology can serve as the foundation to develop scientifically validated objectives and programming to that promote student, parent, and teacher well-being (White, 2016). The World Health Organization included the well-being as a new term in 2021: "Well-being is a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions" (WHO, 2021). The heart of positive psychology and well-being is the impetus for positive education programming that prioritize student well-being that enhances mental health (White, 2016).

Well-being Theory

Positive psychology centers on what makes people happy (Seligman, 2011). Seligman (2011) establishes the theory of well-being to ascertain the goal of human life is to "flourish". In Seligman's earlier work establishing authentic happiness (2002), he attempted to elucidate happiness as the "gold standard" for measuring happiness with life satisfaction (Seligman, 2011). As the shift the well-being theory evolved, Seligman (2011) focused on the construct of well-being with several measurable elements that contribute and do not define well-being. Seligman (2011) establishes that each element of well-being must possess three properties: (1) they must

contribute to well-being, (b) people must pursue the element for its own sake, and (c) the element must be defined and measured exclusively from other elements (p. 16). Seligman (2011) attained the five elements (acronym: PERMA) as the basis for the theory of well-being.

The PERMA model of well-being provides a framework that guides and provides insights on how to live their best lives. PERMA contains five elements that support happiness and well-being: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments. The combination of the PERMA elements promotes flourishing or optimal functioning of individuals, groups, and communities at large (Seligman, 2011). Positive emotion (P) refers to experiencing positive feelings and joy. It cultivates to happiness and positive affect. Engagement (E) connects to the feeling of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) and being fully absorbed into an activity. It provides a sense of purpose. Relationships (R) focuses on the importance of building and maintaining social connections. Meaningful relationships contribute to life satisfaction. Meaning (M) supports finding purpose and significance in life through meaningful experiences. Individuals gain a sense of contributing to something great and significant. Accomplishments (A) is the experience of meeting goals, mastering a skill, or experiencing a sense of achievement.

PERMA and SEL-focused PLC

The PERMA model can serve as a model to focus on the strengths of students and the well-being of teachers. Professional development guided by the PERMA model can enhance strategies for teachers to help their students thrive and flourish. Positive psychology is a branch of psychology that focuses on the scientific study of human strengths and flourishing instead of weaknesses. The field of positive psychology values the "subjective experiences of well-being, satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)" (Seligman & Csiskzentmihalyi, 2000). In educational settings, positive psychology can

serve as the foundation to develop scientifically validated objectives and programming to that promote student, parent, and teacher well-being (White, 2016). The World Health Organization included the well-being as a new term in 2021: "Well-being is a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions" (WHO, 2021). The heart of positive psychology and well-being is the impetus for positive education programming that prioritize student well-being that enhances mental health (White, 2016).

Positive psychology underpins overall well-being that extends to students, teachers, and positive learning environments. Extant literature supports that elements of PERMA has positive impacts and can be considered a viable approach to create environments that nurture and support children's well-being (Turner et al., 2023). Teachers also benefit from feeling positive emotions related to their work in schools (Dreer, 2024). While Dreer (2024) maintained a focus on teachers' job satisfaction and subsequent retention, using PERMA elements through SEL-instructional strategies remain an area that has not been examined. Turner and Thielking's (2019) study found that when teachers consciously used positive psychology and PERMA as a framework for wellbeing, their teaching practices and student learning improved. Teachers reported feeling less stressed, more relaxed, more positive and calmer in the classroom while students became calmer and more engaged with learning (Turner and Thielking, 2019). These findings support the need to delve into the gap of knowledge surrounding positive psychology, the PERMA theory of well-being, and how teachers' wellbeing is central to transformative change in schools. With intentional focus on supporting students with SEL-based instructional strategies, research can benefit to investigate this respective gap in the literature with hopes to

focus on the positive aspects of what students and teachers can do in partnership with each other in nurturing classroom learning environments.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Seeing, rather than mere looking, requires

an enlightened eye: this is as true and as important

in understanding and improving education

as in creating a painting.

Elliott Eisner, 1991

This qualitative case study aimed to explore changes in teacher self-efficacy through professional development experiences centered on SEL-based strategies. Participating teachers engaged in grade-level professional learning communities (PLCs) to explore the SEL-based instructional strategies embedded in their existing daily curriculum (Kress et al., 2004; Brushnahan & Gatti, 2011). The PERMA model undergirds SEL-centered PLC discussions that focused on key components including 1) professional development and training, 2) supplementary lessons/activities, 3) support for implementation, and 4) tools to assess program implementation (Jones et al., 2018). This chapter reviews the methodological framework employed in designing and conducting the dissertation, leveraging qualitative methods. It describes the research paradigm, positionality, design, context, participants, and the intricacies of data collection and analysis. A comprehensive description of the procedures undertaken to establish the trustworthiness of the study is presented, accompanied by a subsequent discussion on ethical considerations.

Research Paradigm

This study was guided by interpretivism as the research paradigm (Eisner, 1991; Pope, 2006). Interpretivist research is based on the ontological assumption that reality is a lived

experience where there is no single reality or point of view but multiple interpretations of a single event (Schwandt, 1998; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016) along with educational *connoisseurship* (Eisner, 1991, pg. 6) that affords one who is highly perceptive of their domain of education to share *criticism*. Criticism, in this form of qualitative inquiry, aims to illuminate a situation so it can be seen and appreciated (Eisner, 1991). "Human knowledge is a constructed form of experience and therefore a reflection of mind as well as nature: Knowledge is made, not simply discovered" (Eisner, 1991, pg. 7). Qualitative research from an emic point of view strives for situational-specific meanings, or *Verstehen,* constructed from the research participants' lived experiences (Schwandt, 1998).

Drawing on interpretivism as a guide, this study investigated the lived, subjective experiences of fifth grade teachers in general academic classrooms who implemented social and emotional (SEL)-based instruction strategies at a rural elementary school in North Carolina. As the facilitator for the SEL-based instructional strategies PLC (SEL-PLC) and researcher, I made as much effort to be an active listener to understand the participants' experiences, points of view, and learning process as I planned and developed the SEL-PLC experiences. Various qualitative sources were collected and analyzed to establish their perspectives and meaning-making process throughout the study. While acknowledging that meaning can be influenced by situational context and causes (Stake, 1990), I constantly and critically reflected on my positionality throughout the study.

Positionality Statement

Berger (2015) encouraged researchers to consider one's reflexivity "viewed as the process of continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher's positionality, as well as active acknowledgment and explicit recognition that may affect the research process and

outcome" (p. 220). As a career educator of 28 years, I have 18 years of elementary physical education teaching experience. I have also served ten additional years as a faculty member and the physical education health teacher education (PEHTE) program coordinator and teacher educator in North Carolina. As an elementary physical education teacher, I earned my National Board Certification in early and middle childhood physical education. I have renewed my National Board Certification twice since my initial certification in 2003. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) articulates the National Board's Five Core Propositions for teaching. Comparable to the Hippocratic Oath in medicine, the Five Core Propositions serve as a beacon that sets forth a vision for accomplished education. This is the core of who I am as an educator, teacher educator, and educational advocate.

Five Core Propositions (National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, 2016):

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.

4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.

5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

The NBPTS Core Proposition #4 has facilitated my growth and development as a reflective practitioner. As a physical educator, I believe all students, regardless of skill ability, can be physically literate and active for a lifetime. As an educator, I believe all learners can set themselves up for success when they learn about the connections between the brain and body, supported by an increased scientific understanding of the relationships between health, physical activity, and learning. Our current educational landscape clearly portrays how assessments serve as measurement tools to establish one's propensity for learning. As a National Board Certified

Teacher, I have always maintained a lens for what makes people thrive in their learning experiences.

From my perspective, education has moved away from the developmental needs of learners in the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional domains. When educators look at their learners from a deficit lens, they cannot personalize learning experiences to shape and support the needs of their learners. Health is foundational for living, loving, learning, and thriving. When physical and mental health are positive, learners will not struggle with events that distract their learning. We need health education as much as physical education to support joy and thriving in the learning experience. We also need all teachers, regardless of content expertise, to be invested in the health education and well-being of their learners.

During this study of the SEL-PLC with general classroom teachers, I was reminded of the difficulties of creating thriving learning spaces with students with other health issues that distract from their learning experiences. This study had tremendous significance to me. As a former elementary physical education teacher, I would collaborate with classroom teachers who wanted to support their students' learning in ways other than what may be reflected on a test score. My previous experiences supporting classroom teachers making pedagogical shifts to support student well-being, including adding movement and cooperative learning strategies, aided in the development of this study.

As a teacher educator, I instruct a course about healthful living pedagogy to pre-service teachers and teacher candidates who will be licensed to instruct K-5 students. This study emulates NBPTS's Core Proposition #2, where I know my subject of health and physical education as it applies to the Whole Child Education Framework (ASCD, 2007). I have developed this course to enlighten and build the self-efficacy of K-5 teacher candidates who will

work with students during the post-COVID-19 era of education. While helping beginning teachers navigate a variety of methods to teach, including asynchronous and synchronous online mediums, I have always seen the importance of developing relationships and SEL in all classrooms. The humanistic approach to a person-first classroom stems from developing strong relationships between teacher and learner that often surpass the importance of how a student performs on an assessment on a particular day. Teachers must equip their students with skills that support their interactions with people in their learning environment now more than ever (Frey et al., 2019) My situational context (Stake, 1990) guided me in the development and execution of this study of an SEL-PLC to support classroom teachers and their students.

Case Study Design

This study implemented a qualitative case study design (Merriam, 1998). Case study research is a specific study of a person, event, organization, or a phenomenon. "A case study is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Merriam (1998) distinguishes case studies from other forms of qualitative research in that they are "intensive descriptions and analyses of a *single unit* or a *bounded system*" (Smith, 1978, as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 19). The featured study focuses on one grade level team of three fifth grade teachers defined as a single case or a "small group" (Miles et al., 2020, p. 25). The unit of analysis in this single case design is defined as the group of fifth grade teachers participating in the PLC centered on SEL-instructional strategies.

Case study design is relevant for educational research as it is a holistic inquiry that investigates unique educational sites within its natural setting (Harling, 2012). Case study aims to conduct an empirically-sound investigation, keeping the unique context intact to gain in-depth knowledge (Shoaib & Mujtaba, 2016). This qualitative case study sought to explore the

perceptions of the participants' experiences in an on-going PLC based on integrating social and emotional learning into their classroom settings. The researcher sought to explore how specific elements of a PLC and how three different SEL-based instructional strategies could be integrated within the general academic curricula. The researcher also sought to understand what elements of a PLC and SEL-based instructional strategies contributed to a change in the participant's self-efficacy.

The researcher's epistemological stance for this study held a social constructivist lens (Vygotsky, 1978). The design of the PLC was intentionally constructed for participants who may have had varied experiences and beliefs regarding social and emotional learning. Each individual participant built their own knowledge through their respective participation in the PLC. The collective group of participants shared their thoughts and experiences throughout the study that built their understanding of SEL-based instructional strategies for a variety of distinctive and sometimes, complex situations. The social interactions within this case study prompts different perspectives through debriefing, reflection, collaboration, shared meaning-making (Hord, 2009).

Miles et al. (2020) sometimes prefer to use "the word *site* because it reminds us that a "case" always occurs in a specified social and physical *setting*" (p. 25). The findings from this study contain distinctive and complex lived situations unique to the setting of Cardinal Elementary School's fifth-grade teacher team. In this study, the researcher considered the participants as the educational connoisseurs of their lived experiences. Throughout the study, participants expressed their criticisms in appreciation and interpretation of their knowledge-building experiences. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How do K-5 teachers adapt and use the SEL-based instructional strategies presented through PLC meetings?

RQ2: How do K-5 teachers' self-efficacy in teaching SEL change through their participation in the SEL-PLC?

RQ3: Which PLC experiences are perceived as contributing to teachers' change in self-efficacy in using SEL-based instructional strategies?

Research Context

This study was conducted at Cardinal Elementary School in a rural community located in the central region of a South Atlantic state. The Town of Cardinal was a former textile mill village with a population of approximately 1,200. Cardinal Elementary has been identified as a Title I public school with 67.5% of its students who are economically disadvantaged. Approximately, 315 students are enrolled at Cardinal Elementary School which as a demographic breakdown of 67% White, 21% Hispanic, 9% Two or More Races, and 3% Black/African American (School Report Card).

Face-To-Face PLC Meetings

The participants in the study partook in the SEL-PLC during their scheduled planning time one day a week to focus on how to utilize and integrate SEL-based instructional strategies into their general academic lessons and classroom spaces. The proposed study was planned for a nine week period. The actual study in its full implementation was completed in eight months.

Table 1. Proposed Schedule for SEL-PLC Meetings

Week	Activities
1	PLC #1
2	Implementation of SEL-based strategy #1
3	PLC #2
4	Implementation of SEL-based strategy #2
5	PLC #3
6	Implementation of SEL-based strategy #3
7	PLC #4
8	Implementation of SEL-based strategy of teacher choice (1, 2, or 3)
9	PLC #5 – Final SEL-PLC

Table 2. Actual Schedule for SEL-PLC Meetings

October 2022				November 2022				December 2022					January 2023		
7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	30	13	20	27
		X												X	

February 2023				March 2023					April 2023				May 2023		
3	10	17	24	3	10	17	24	31	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	27
		X					X						X			

The SEL-PLC encouraged participants to investigate their academic content and create meaningful connections to the SEL skills that their students can use to improve their lives (Becker & Domitrovich, 2011). The format of the PLC time began with participants reflecting on their current classroom practices or debriefing on the implementation of the SEL-based incorporating instructional strategy of focus for the day. The debrief portion of the SEL-PLC allowed a space for participants to engage in critical conversations surrounding their student needs regarding SEL. The participants would have a chance to explore new SEL-based instructional strategies practice. This portion of the SEL-PLC introduced a new SEL-based

instructional strategies by participating a modeled learning experience. For example, PLC #1

introduced the first SEL-based instructional strategy comprised of active learning strategies

physical movements. The PLC facilitator modeled a variety of activities where the participants

were coached and received expert support (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

The participants brainstormed the application of the SEL-based instructional strategies to

contextualize the applications to their specific curriculum objectives. The participants thought

about how their new learning related to their present instructional practices. The face-to-face

dialogue created a safe space for participants to negotiate educational theory and application of

educational practice, desired student outcomes, and reflection of personal strengths and areas of

growth for the implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategies. Table 3 provides the

outline of the SEL-PLC topics for the fifth grade teachers at Cardinal Elementary School. A

detailed outline for each SEL-PLC meeting is supplied in Appendix B. Appendix C provides a

protocol of the SEL-PLC meeting format.

Table 3. Outline of SEL-PLC Topics

Meeting	Topic
Introduction Meeting	• Introduce the focus of the SEL-PLC
SEL-PLC #1	• Introduce Active Learning Strategies for SEL
SEL-PLC #2	• Reflect on Active Learning Strategies for SEL • Introduce Life Skills for SEL
SEL-PLC #3	• Reflect on Life Skills for SEL • Introduce Cooperative Learning for SEL
SEL-PLC #4	• Reflect on Cooperative Learning for SEL • Introduce Teacher's Choice of SEL-based instructional strategy from Active Learning, Life Skills, or Cooperative Learning for SEL

SEL-PLC #5	• Final SEL-PLC Reflection • Reflect on Teacher's Choice of SEL-based instructional strategy

My Role as SEL-PLC Facilitator

I facilitated the face-to-face SEL-PLC from Fall 2022 through Spring 2023. My role was to design and facilitate the SEL-PLC meetings with the participants. I created a resource bank of websites, infographics, and teacher resources that align to the SEL-based instructional strategies. I organized the resource bank to be accessed through the Canvas Free for Teachers Learning Management System and Google Drive. As the SEL-PLC facilitator, I was an active listener. The featured research study was originally slated for nine weeks. I adjusted the meeting schedule multiple times throughout the study to accommodate the needs and requests of the participants. I also supported the participants by being available for communication through email, texts, or phone conversations. During each SEL-PLC meeting, I provided active learning opportunities that created a space for them to conceptualize how their students would engage in their planned activities. I supported the participants through active listening strategies. I gave the participants ideas to generate new ideas and out-of-the-box thinking. I intentionally celebrated the positives and small wins experienced during their daily school lives. This also included their successes with the implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategies.

Contributing Factors to this Study

The SEL-PLC originally was planned to be a school-wide initiative with all grade levels (K-5) participating in the study. The Cardinal Elementary School Leadership Team, school administration, and general classroom teachers voted unanimously to participate in the SEL-PLC and research study. During the summer before the university and school system-approved research study (IRB-FY22-502) launched, all elementary classroom teachers in the state where

the research study took place were mandated by the State Board of Education to participate in a statewide "Science of Reading" early literacy program and literacy professional development. The Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training involves approximately 160 hours of work spread over two years that amasses roughly an extra two hours a week during the academic calendar year (Delms, 2021). The LETRS training includes individual online lessons, group-work conducted at the school guided by instructional leaders, reading materials, and expectations for immediate implementation and practice with students.

Due to the unforeseen expectations of the state-mandated LETRS training, when the adult consent form was shared with all teachers at the school, the teachers in grades K-4 decided not to participate in the study. The fifth grade teachers agreed to continue the research study and join the SEL-PLC while completing their LETRS training responsibilities. This study's original timeline was initially designed to conclude after nine weeks. However, this study occurred over eight months due to the fifth grade teachers' changes in schedule, quarterly benchmark assessments, LETRS training expectations and deadlines, and the teachers' mental health.

Participants

The participants in this case study were selected using purposive sampling methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2003); three fifth grade teachers and one principal from Cardinal Elementary School consented to participate. The names featured throughout this paper are pseudonyms selected by the participants to protect any identifiable information.

Table 4. List of Participants

Participant	Gender	Subject Taught During This Study	Years of Teaching Experience	Levels of Education Taught Throughout Career
Susie	Female	Science, Social Studies	18	Elementary
Cyndi	Female	English Language Arts	15	Elementary, Middle, High
Jackie	Female	Math	8	Elementary
Principal Smith	Female	N/A		

Susie

Susie has solid roots in the Town of Cardinal and initially worked in furniture manufacturing after high school. Transitioning into a role as a stay-at-home parent, she actively supported her children's academic endeavors. An opportunity arose at Cardinal Elementary School, where a teacher assistant position became available. Guided by a close friend who was a teacher at the school, Susie applied and secured the position. Frequently stepping in as a substitute teacher, she discovered a passion for leading classroom instruction. Encouraged by the school principal and her family, Susie pursued formal education in elementary education. Juggling her role as a teacher assistant, she began taking classes at a local community college before transferring to a university program. Susie graduated with a bachelor's degree in elementary education at 36. She has taught at Cardinal Elementary School for 18 years, demonstrating unwavering dedication to the school and her community. During the school year when the study was conducted, Susie achieved recognition as Cardinal Elementary School's Teacher of the Year. Simultaneously, she pursued her initial National Board Certified Teacher

Cyndi

Cyndi possesses a diverse professional background, initially earning a bachelor's degree in music theory and composition. With a decade-long stint as the vocal soloist for the United States Air Force band, she demonstrated her musical prowess on a global stage. Transitioning to education, Cyndi taught at a private school, prompted by her desire for her children's private education. She eventually obtained teaching credentials as she earned a Master of Arts in Teaching and ventured into public school education. After a hiatus prompted by testing pressures and legislative challenges, Cyndi returned to teaching at an inner-city charter school, where she taught music and humanities. Her commitment to making a difference in students' lives was evident in this high school setting. After joining Cardinal Elementary School, Cyndi faced challenges in her first year, particularly concerning the overemphasis on testing, reminiscent of the issues that led to her earlier departure. Cyndi's dedication to educational leadership is underscored by her pursuit of a school administrator's license and ongoing academic endeavors, including an Ed.S. degree in executive administration and supervision, with aspirations for a Ph.D. in educational leadership. She has dedicated 15 years to the education profession.

Jackie

Jackie, a dedicated advocate for children, has forged a career path in education driven by her passion for empowering students to advocate for themselves and others. Her commitment to teaching extends beyond the academic realm, as she believes it provides a platform to express love and support to students who may lack such experiences elsewhere in their lives. During her academic journey at a prominent state university, Jackie pursued a major in elementary education with a specialized focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Her academic background equipped her with the knowledge and skills needed to make a lasting

impact on students' educational experiences. Jackie's initial four-year tenure in her first elementary teaching position was marked by dedication and excellence. Drawing inspiration from her family's farm, she integrated her love for animals into the classroom, fostering an environment where students learned to care for and love other beings through hands-on experiences with a class pet. In her fifth year, Jackie found Cardinal Elementary School, aligning with her desire to be closer to her family and support the family farm. From the moment of her interview with the school's principal, Jackie sensed a heartfelt connection with Cardinal Elementary School, considering it her home away from home. In Jackie's eight years of teaching, she has developed a multifaceted approach to education, combining advocacy, STEM specialization, and a genuine concern for students' well-being, reflects her loyal commitment to creating a positive and nurturing learning environment.

Principal Smith

Principal Smith has a strong connection to the Town of Cardinal, where she has devoted a large portion of her educational career. She first attended Cardinal Elementary School as an eighth-grade student when her family moved to the community, living just five minutes away. Despite struggling academically in middle and high school due to a fixed mindset, she always aspired to be a teacher. It was in her senior year of high school, under the guidance of Ms. Ruth, her favorite teacher, that her passion for teaching was ignited. This led her to pursue higher education at community college, where she discovered her academic potential and developed study skills. Her academic story and experience are her drive for supporting her students through education. She aims to be "Ms. Ruth" for other students. She began her teaching career at Cardinal Elementary as a fourth grade teacher and later grew to roles such as an Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) teacher, lead teacher, and assistant principal. After briefly

leaving to serve as a principal at a different elementary school, she returned to Cardinal

Elementary, where she currently serves as the principal, having earned recognition as the school

system's Principal of the Year in her sixth year in this role.

Data Collection

This study utilized traditional and participatory qualitative research methods. The data

collected included: a) audio recordings and transcripts from the SEL-PLC sessions; b) lesson

plan artifacts; c) researcher journal; and d) audio recordings and transcripts from participant

interviews. Table 5 outlines the alignment of the data collected and research questions.

Table 5. Data Collection by Research Question

Research Questions	PLC Recordings	Lesson Plan Artifacts	Researcher Journal	Participant Interviews
RQ 1: Adapt and use SEL-based strategies	X	X	X	X
RQ 2: Changes in self-efficacy through SEL-PLC	X		X	X
RQ 3: Contributing PLC experiences for self-efficacy	X		X	X

SEL-PLC Recordings

Participants engaged in five SEL-PLC meetings that lasted approximately 10 hours plus

any collaborative planning sessions that occurred during other grade-level planning periods. The

participants selected Fridays for the designated SEL-PLC. The participants typically have 45

minutes a day for planning periods where PLC meetings are scheduled throughout the week. By

selecting Fridays, the participants committed to extending their SEL-PLC time after student

dismissal. The SEL- PLC topics included active learning strategies, using life skills, and

cooperative learning structures.

Lesson Plan Artifacts

Lesson plan artifacts were included as data for this study. Throughout the PLC meetings, all participants shared an assortment of lesson plan artifacts that illustrated their implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategies. The lesson plan artifacts include the planned execution of how the SEL-based instructional strategies were implemented.

Researcher Journal

A researcher journal was maintained to include personal reactions, reflections, and insights into any biases or assumptions throughout the study (Simon, 2011). After each SEL-PLC meeting, the researcher participated in post-meeting journal writing. The same categories were used each time to reflect on the SEL-PLC experiences (e.g., observation statements of events, theoretical/interpretive notes linking to new knowledge, and methodological notes that facilitate researcher reflexivity). The researcher journal protocol is found in Appendix D.

Participant Interviews

After the scheduled SEL-PLC sessions, participants agreed to an additional 30-minute teacher self-efficacy interview. The 30-minute interview aimed to gather understandings into (a) the teachers' use and adaptation of the SEL-based instructional strategies, (b) learning more about the changes in teacher self-efficacy for teaching SEL, (c) identifying PLC experiences that may have influenced the use of the SEL-based instructional strategies and (d) other perceived contributions that influenced teacher self-efficacy for implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies. The interview protocol is found in Appendix E.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

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The featured research is centered on an exploratory approach to unveiling the changes of teacher self-efficacy as they implemented three different pedagogical approaches to support

student SEL. Due to the potential surprises that this type of research could generate, I used

thematic analysis as the "method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning

('themes') within qualitative data" (Clark and Braun, 2015, p. 1). Braun and Clarke's (2006,

2015) thematic analysis method use an iterative process consisting of six steps: (1) becoming

familiar with the data, (2) generating codes, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5)

defining and naming themes, and (6) locating exemplars. Thematic analysis emphasizes "an

organic approach to coding and theme development and the active role of the research in these

processes……embrace the greater flexibility that is offered to the qualitative researcher"

(Holmqvist & Frisén, 2012 as cited in Clark and Braun, 2015).

Becoming Familiar with the Data

This research specifically focused on inductive thematic analysis where the researcher

focused on finding provisional connections to the four sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Inductive thematic analysis supported the exploration of the initial interim topics as they

developed into a flourishing codebook. During this initial stage of becoming familiar with the

data, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. This iterative process included reading and

rereading audio transcripts as the study developed to gain deeper insights into the development

of the SEL-PLC experiences for the participants and understanding how the four sources of self-

efficacy are embodied in the SEL-PLC experience. This process of understanding the emerging

themes as an initial process of data analysis supported the thinking process and creating links of

understanding of the data (Ely et al., 1997). The act of cleaning up and reviewing the audio

transcripts multiple of times served as thematic discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic discourse analysis supported the eventual creation of the themes and supporting

teacher stories that were assembled through a social constructivist lens (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Generating Codes

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggested: "The important analytic work lies in establishing and thinking about linkages, not in the mundane processes of coding" (p. 27). Open coding (Saldana, 2021) allowed for a discovery of the new perspectives of the meaning of the themes and allowed for me to "expand, transform, and reconceptualize data" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 29). The process of generating codes were based on contextualized moments or segments that were socially constructed throughout the SEL-PLC and phrases. This investigation supported the heuristic nature of this study. Miles et al. (2020) emphasize "analysis concurrent with data collection…..to help the fieldworker cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better data" (p. 62). Miles et al. (2020) reiterate the importance of first and second cycle coding as an entry to deep reflection and interpretation of the data's meaning.

Generating Themes

In the process of generating themes, elements of the data were captured "in relation to the research question and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10). The identification of themes transpired from manual coding (Morse, 2008) through physically annotating printed copies of audio transcripts and researcher journal entries with margin notes, underlining, and highlighting with different colors as ideas began to create links. As categories and sub-categories developed, a deeper comparison of the contextual factors and elements for discovery based on the research question forced an additional analysis, comparison, and adjustments to the code book. At this phase, I moved between the rungs of the conceptual ladder of inductive thematic analysis to improve the clusters of themes using condensed language (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Reviewing Themes

At this phase of data analysis, a clean copy of the data was reanalyzed and regrouped to highlight the contextual phases of the SEL-PLC and the socially constructed stories that began to emerge as they connected to the research question. All audio transcripts and annotated researcher journal entries were distributed and parsed by research question on a spreadsheet that flourished into the final code book. The analysis of the data at this phase confirmed the connections from the transcribed data collection and visually separated themes among research question. This was an important step to also show the interconnectedness of the data across all three research questions. Reviewing themes disclosed important connections and reciprocity among a variety of contextualized stories of the teachers' lived experiences through the SEL-PLC.

Defining and Naming Themes

The data analysis shares a socially constructed and exclusive experience of the SEL-PLC participants through a series of stories. Through "defining and refining" (Braun & Clarke, 2006), I identified each theme and conducted a detailed analysis. As the themes were developed, I compared the themes to each other and to the research questions. To ensure that there was not too much overlap between themes, sub-themes were created to detail the substance of each theme. The subthemes afforded me to organize and express the stories to develop the case study. Data saturation was achieved at this stage when I reached the conclusion that no new themes or subthemes could be identified.

Table 6. Defined Themes and Subthemes of the Data Analysis

Research Question	Themes	Subthemes
RQ 1: Adapt and use SEL-based strategies	• Teacher Implementation of SEL-based Instructional Strategies	• Finding Their Flow • Time and Space • Pivotal Realizations

RQ 2: Changes in self-efficacy through SEL-PLC	• Changes in Teacher Self-Efficacy for Teaching SEL	• Positive Gains for Positive Changes • Efficacy-forming Growth Experiences • PERMA-supportive Learning Environments the Win
RQ 3: Contributing PLC experiences for self-efficacy	• Teacher Perceptions of PLC Experiences Contributing to Change in Self-Efficacy	• Amassed Growth • Unsuspected Gains

Locating Exemplars

The final phase of the thematic analysis involved developing and conveying the lived experiences of the participants through the stories shared in chapter four. While conveying the stories in chapter 4, it was crucial to develop an "analytic narrative that goes *beyond* the description of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 23). The data analysis identifies, contextualizes, and how each theme fits into "the broader overall story" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 22) as it relates to each research question.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

While Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process to thematic analysis are presented as an undeviating progression, the steps for data analysis in this study was an iterative process developed over time. Through the iterative and reflective nature of thematic analysis, it was necessary to revisit phases of the process to ensure accuracy in presenting the data to share the stories that answered the respective research questions. Nowell et al. (2017) features how Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for trustworthiness can be implemented at each phase of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Table 7 illustrates how the criteria of

trustworthiness can be implemented to coincide with each phase of Braun and Clarke's (2006)

thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017, p.4).

Table 7. Establishing Trustworthiness During Each Phase of the Thematic Analysis

Phases of Thematic Analysis	Means of Establishing Trustworthiness
Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data	Prolong engagement with data Triangulate different data collection modes Document theoretical and reflective thoughts Document thoughts about potential codes/themes Store raw data in well-organized archives Keep records of all data field notes, transcripts, and reflexive journals
Phase 2: Generating initial codes	Peer debriefing Reflexive journaling Use of a coding framework Audit trail of code generation Documentation of all team meeting and peer debriefings
Phase 3: Searching for themes	Diagramming to make sense of theme connections Keep detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes
Phase 4: Reviewing themes	Themes and subthemes vetted by team members (critical friend) Test for referential adequacy by returning to raw data
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes	Peer debriefing Documentation of team meetings regarding themes Documentation of theme naming
Phase 6: Producing the report	Member checking Peer debriefing Describing process of coding and analysis in sufficient details Thick descriptions of context Description of the audit trail Report on reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study

Credibility

To establish and ensure trustworthiness for this study, the following activities were

performed to "increase the probability that credible findings will be produced" (Lincoln & Guba,

1985, p. 302). The study lasted eight months which permitted me to learn about the school

culture and the lived experiences of the participants. Prolonged engagement allowed for me to develop rapport with the participants and develop trust. The SEL-PLC created a safe space to co-construct meaning through the social context of the learning opportunities and interactions. Triangulation of the data sources converged the multiple data sources that were analyzed at different points of time throughout the eight month SEL-PLC learning experience (Patton, 1999). The information from this process supported the development of the themes extracted in the study. The data were compared throughout the study across the participants with different backgrounds, teaching and life experiences, years of teaching experience, and personal perspectives and points of view. These data were used to construct an understanding of how teachers' self-efficacy for teaching SEL-based instructional strategies changed through the PLC experiences and learning experiences gained through their participation in the SEL-PLC.

Peer debriefing sessions occurred with a critical friend / committee member who would analytically probe for taken for granted biases, perspectives, and assumptions on my part. The debriefing sessions allowed me to express my emotions. The critical friend allowed me to partake in important conversations that ensured that I was making reasonable decisions. Member checking took place as the transcripts were shared with participants to provide an opportunity to "assess intentionality – what it is that the respondent intended by acting in a certain way or providing certain information" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 315). Participants also had the opportunity to correct errors and discuss incorrect interpretations of the data.

Transferability

I provided contextualized data analysis in the form of stories. I used direct quotes from the data sources to ascertain support using thick description to portray the detailed account of the

SEL-PLC experiences. The stories paint a picture of the SEL-PLC with descriptive data for a reader to evaluate the extent of transferability to other school settings to replicate this research.

Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the inquiry audit that was "based metaphorically on the fiscal audit" (p. 317). The process of the rigorous data collection procedures and systems were well-documented throughout the featured study. The critical friend and my dissertation committee served as an outside reviewer to ensure dependability.

Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that "a single audit, properly managed, can be used to determine dependability and confirmability simultaneously" (p. 318). An audit trail was established and contained different forms of raw data, such as audio files and transcription documents from all audio file used in recording. Composing notes, condensing notes, and recording instincts and emotions from the SEL-PLC served as a component of data reduction and analysis. There were different iterations of data reconstruction including the development of themes, relationships, and interpretations were included. The findings represent the synthesis of the data reconstruction. The audit trail also served as documentation of the steps of the research process along with personal notes. A post-PLC research journal / diary was maintained of the research process to investigate and unpack personal biases and maintain researcher reflexivity. Researcher reflexivity enables one to "acknowledge and describe their biases early in the research process to allow readers to understand their positions…within the critical paradigm where individuals reflect on the social, cultural, and historical forces that share their interpretation" (Creswell & Miller, 2000). My researcher positionality and personal beliefs were openly shared throughout the SEL-PLC experience.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Thought flows in terms of stories –

stories about events, stories about people,

and stories about intentions and achievements.

The best teachers are the best storytellers.

Frank Smith, 1990

I analyzed the experiences of classroom teachers who participated in a SEL-based instructional strategies PLC to address the following research questions:

RQ1: How do K-5 teachers adapt and use the SEL-based instructional strategies presented through PLC meetings?

RQ2: How do K-5 teachers' self-efficacy in teaching SEL change through their participation in the SEL-PLC?

RQ3: Which PLC experiences are perceived as contributing to teachers' change in self-efficacy in using SEL-based instructional strategies?

In this findings section, I used the teachers' experience throughout the SEL-based PLCs to explore how they adjusted their pedagogical approaches to support their students' social and emotional development and how the PLC learning experience changed their self-efficacy for using the SEL-based instructional strategies. Throughout their PLC learning experiences, the teachers developed narratives highlighting their beliefs, understandings, and applications for implementing all SEL-based instructional strategies. The findings unveiled how the SEL-based instructional strategies can be adjusted and utilized to support all students' social and emotional development (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Teachers' Implementation of the SEL-based Instructional Strategies
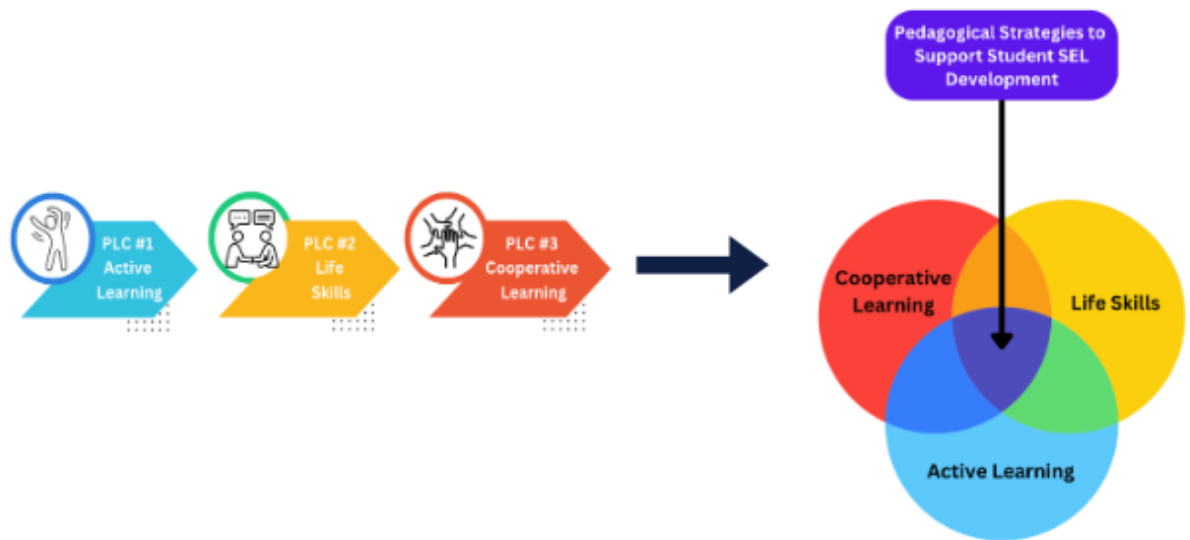
The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate how teachers can create learning experiences that support students' social and emotional development. The teachers articulate their learning experiences by implementing each SEL-based instructional strategy that guided their pedagogical choices that supported student success in the social, emotional, physical, and academic domains. Their stories express how the teachers nurtured PERMA-supportive classrooms conducive for Whole Child development (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. PERMA-Supportive Classrooms Conducive for Whole Child Development

I have organized the findings of this study by first providing a narrative describing the educational landscape of Cardinal Elementary School before the first SEL-based PLC meeting. I follow the narrative with the findings for each of the research questions. For each research question, I constructed categories that capture the recurring themes that convey an understanding of the single case of the SEL-based instructional strategies PLC.

The Introductory Meeting

The following account is my exploration of the educational landscape of Cardinal Elementary School before the PLCs began. Three emerging themes were identified from the two audio transcripts and my post-PLC researcher journal. One audio transcript came from my first interview with the principal of Cardinal Elementary School. The second audio transcript was from the introductory meeting with the principal of Cardinal Elementary School and the three fifth grade teachers who participated in this study.

A PERMA-supportive principal

In my initial engagements with Principal Smith, I was captivated by her selfless dedication to Cardinal Elementary School. Principal Smith exemplified a "relational sense of

care" (Noddings, 2012) that resonated with both students and teachers at Cardinal Elementary School. She consistently conveyed gratitude for the fifth grade educators' hard work, commitment to students, and resilience. Principal Smith acknowledged that the fifth grade teachers' unwavering support for their students stemmed from genuine concern—a concept described by Noddings (1984) as "engrossment," wherein the caregivers (i.e., the fifth grade teachers) attentively understood and addressed the emotional needs of the cared-for (i.e., the fifth grade students). Principal Smith identified this cohort of fifth graders as the most socially and emotionally vulnerable due to the compounded impact of schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic and trauma. Principal Smith led by example in appreciating open communication among teachers. She reflected on the positive transformation of a fifth grade student who took responsibility for their mistakes. During a counseling session with this student, Principal Smith expressed her pride in the student's improved communication skills. She recounted how the same student exhibited disruptive behavior a year prior, including throwing a chair, causing a significant classroom crisis, and using inappropriate language when reprimanded. The principal and teachers collaborated to establish meaningful connections with students and implement necessary structures. Principal Smith, speaking genuinely, commended the team for their dedication and hard work. Principal Smith purposefully incorporated restorative circles into teacher workdays at the beginning of the school year, leveraging support from the guidance counselor and social worker to demonstrate and guide teachers through the practice. She emphasized her commitment to supporting her students' Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) development. Acknowledging time constraints for in-depth restorative circle training, Principal Smith recognized the multitude of crucial topics competing for attention during the teacher's regularly scheduled Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions and staff meetings.

Despite these challenges, she expressed pride in her teachers' willingness to learn on the go and adapt practices, such as restorative circles, designed to enhance student SEL. To address increased discipline issues and cater to the social and emotional needs of a specific group of students, Principal Smith advocated for and successfully secured a third fifth grade teacher using Title One funds. This strategic move aimed to create smaller classes and better support students facing various challenges, including interpersonal conflicts and medication-related issues. In addition to restorative circles, teachers explored diverse strategies to support students' social and emotional needs. Guidance from the counselor and resources on platforms like Pinterest, utilized by several teachers, further enhanced their repertoire of supportive techniques. The fifth grade teaching team reflected on the impact of reduced interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic, identifying it as contributing to persistent challenges in student behavior. Notably, they observed that students lacked essential play skills, leading to increased incidents on the playground, necessitating de-escalation efforts during the return to academic settings. Principal Smith highlighted the restrictions imposed by the county administration, eliminating play kitchens in kindergarten classrooms, previously used for social, emotional, and educational experiences. Demonstrating sensitivity to the demands on teachers' time, Principal Smith empowered the fifth grade teachers to choose the format for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)-based instructional strategy PLC meetings. She delicately reminded them of the time commitment for the state-mandated science of reading training, underscoring her caring approach by acknowledging the additional time allocated for SEL-PLC activities. Principal Smith's nuanced understanding of her teachers' needs and strategic efforts to create a conducive learning environment was evident. She emphasized the importance of teachers witnessing strategies being modeled for them, recognizing their strengths, and fostering a collaborative and supportive educational community.

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The Teachers' Lived Experiences – SEL is Needed All Day, Every Day

According to the fifth grade teachers, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is deemed essential throughout the school day, recognizing its significance on par with academic learning. The fifth grade teachers consistently incorporate morning meetings focused on previous day events as part of their SEL framework. They believe that students' mental readiness is a prerequisite for effective learning; thus, SEL is considered a foundational element in their instructional approach. Despite recognizing the importance of SEL in large group settings, the fifth grade teachers find its impact varies. However, they report greater success during 'Cardinal' flex time, when students leave the homeroom class to work with other teachers for additional instructional support. This smaller group setting allows for personalized interactions and discussions with students, contributing to more effective implementation of SEL practices. The teachers note that although SEL interventions during flex time lead to initial calming effects, challenges may resurface later in the day, prompting proactive engagement and dialogue with students. Reflecting on past experiences with character education curricula, teachers note that simply implementing "just another curriculum" without prioritizing relationships proved ineffective, especially for high-needs students. They have observed that students, particularly those with high levels of trauma, respond more positively to an emphasis on relational aspects rather than viewing SEL as a mere instructional component. At Cardinal Elementary School, teachers recognize the significance of providing structured environments, particularly for students who may lack consistent support at home. Their collective commitment to student welfare underscores the school's unwavering support and dedication ethos. Despite these efforts, challenges persist, with students occasionally pushing boundaries and disrupting the learning environment. The fifth grade teachers, however, respond assertively, maintaining classroom

structure and expectations while striving to provide positive learning experiences for their students. Morning meetings serve as a platform for students to contribute to discussions, even on challenging days. To address behavioral challenges, the teachers have implemented Whole Brain Teaching engagement strategies, incorporating key elements of neuroscience. While noting a positive trend in student behavior, the teachers acknowledge occasional inconsistencies, particularly when students struggle to interact appropriately with peers inside and outside the academic classroom. Recess emerges as a notable area of contention, prompting the teachers to intervene and actively separate students during conflicts. The teachers also observe difficulties among students in managing strong emotions, prompting a focused exploration of de-escalation methods, including breathing techniques and grounding strategies. Despite facing challenges, the teachers express a sense of resilience and excitement for continued professional growth, particularly through their experiences in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and state-mandated literacy training. They eagerly anticipate the researcher's in-person collaboration to develop further Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)-based instructional strategies tailored to the unique needs of their students. According to the teachers, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is essential throughout the school day. Morning meetings, a regular practice for fifth grade students, serve as opportunities to reflect on past events, underscoring the teachers' belief in the equal importance of SEL alongside academic learning. They emphasized that students must be in a conducive mental state for effective learning. While whole-group SEL instruction yields inconsistent outcomes, teachers find greater success during flexible instructional periods, where small-group settings allow personalized student interactions. Despite efforts to cover SEL topics, instances of escalated behavior persist throughout the day, prompting teachers to address issues and engage students in dialogue. Reflecting on past experiences with character education

curricula, teachers note that simply implementing such programs without prioritizing relationships proved ineffective, especially for students grappling with trauma. At Cardinal Elementary School, teachers recognize the significance of providing structured environments, particularly for students who may lack consistent support at home. Their collective commitment to student welfare underscores the school's unwavering support and dedication ethos. While students generally seek positive learning experiences, challenges arise throughout the school day, testing teachers' resolve to maintain classroom order and uphold expectations. Fifth grade teachers have embraced Whole Brain Teaching strategies informed by neuroscience principles. These strategies empower students to take ownership of their behavior and encourage peer support for constructive choices. Despite observing improvements, teachers note sporadic instances of student conflict and difficulty in interpersonal interactions, notably during recess. Observations reveal that students struggle with emotional regulation, prompting teachers to explore de-escalation techniques such as breathing exercises and mindfulness strategies. Despite facing challenges, the teachers express a sense of resilience and excitement for continued professional growth to support their fifth grade students. They eagerly anticipate the researcher's in-person collaboration to develop Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)-based instructional strategies tailored to the unique needs of their students.

Teachers Prioritizing Their Time

The fifth grade teachers were enthusiastic about their upcoming Professional Learning Community (PLC) experiences and wasted no time delving into the logistics. With calendars in hand, they eagerly sought out available slots, aiming for Friday afternoons during their planning period, just as the instructional day ended. The teachers approached the principal to enlist the support of the art, music, and physical education instructors for school dismissal duties on PLC

meeting days. This request was crucial for the fifth grade teachers, as these specialist teachers concluded their instructional day with the fifth grade classes. Acknowledging the importance of student farewells, particularly before weekends, the teachers proposed a brief hiatus during the PLC sessions to ensure they could bid their students goodbye at the bus and car rider lines.

Furthermore, the teachers emphasized their need to adjourn by 3:30 pm, with Friday afternoons setting a natural time constraint. In planning the frequency of their meetings, the teachers opted for bi-weekly gatherings, aiming to convene three times before the winter holiday break. They began to engage in long-term planning to incorporate mindfulness activities into these sessions to equip students with coping mechanisms they could apply during their time away from school, encouraging them to report on their experiences upon their return. This team of teachers was motivated to get to work and shared that they wanted to have fun during our PLC time.

Teacher Implementation of SEL-based Instructional Strategies

The first research question I examined from this study was RQ1: How do K-5 teachers adapt and use the SEL-based instructional strategies presented through PLC meetings? The following categories were constructed as themes representing the teachers' experiences as they adapted or used the SEL-based instructional strategies: *finding their flow, time and space,* and *pivotal realizations*.

Finding Their Flow

The SEL-based PLC promoted three pedagogical strategies to support student SEL. From the inception of the SEL-PLC, the teachers shared that they viewed "social and emotional learning as important as academic learning because if they're not in a place where they're ready to learn, then they're not going to learn" (Jackie, PLC-intro transcript). The group of teachers

were focused on creating consistency with their students and were excited to learn more about the SEL-based instructional strategies: "We're all trying to provide some structure and I think they're getting it and it frustrates them. I am going to stay hard on them because I believe in them. And they may not get that at home but they will get it here from every single teacher I have come across here" (Cyndi, PLC-intro transcript). The teachers identified their students' prime social and emotional need: "They get upset at each other. It's just how they interact with each other. I mean, we were talking on the playground, they don't even know how to play together. They don't know how to deal with their emotions" (Susie, PLC-intro transcript).

PLC #1

During PLC #1, the teachers focused on how active learning strategies could support students' SEL. "I know I have seen the CASEL wheel before but I've never seen like this movement-based learning" (Jackie, PLC-1 transcript). I introduced the benefits of movement boosts for brain function throughout a lesson and shared a plethora of resources on how to create movement-based learning opportunities that connect to the general academic content of math, science, and English language arts. "I was going to say, just to give you feedback, I just like the idea of having them stand. These kids sit. That was, to me, like an "a-ha moment" there" (Susie, PLC-1 transcript). The teachers brainstormed how they could intentionally test out active learning strategies with their students. They identified a problem of practice: "We can focus on when we come in from recess. We switch for Cardinal time, and they come up upset from what has happened out at the recess field. And it's really difficult to get them focused. But if we do a movement, coordinated movement, at the same time at the beginning to get everyone on the same page" (Cyndi, PLC-1 transcript). "We could do this at Cardinal time when our numbers are

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not as large. This is where we could introduce it to them" (Susie, PLC-1 transcript). Jackie agreed, "I like that idea" (PLC-1 transcript).

Five weeks spanned between PLC #1 and #2 due to other teacher responsibilities: "I just noticed that 5th grade has a Data Dive meeting on the 18th from 11:30-3:15. Could we reschedule?" (Principal Smith, Email, November 8, 2022). "They have not forgotten about you. I know they have tried some of the ideas you shared. We are all set to meet you at 2:00 on the 9th" (Principal Smith, Email, December 1, 2023).

PLC #2

When PLC #2 began, the teachers shared how they integrated active learning with every group of students. "I've done it with two different groups, my homeroom and my Cardinal group several times. I didn't have the Infinity Cards from the resource, so I copied off these round discs and then had them when we were doing math stuff, or when I saw them getting bored or when I saw them getting obnoxious. So, we can also do the same thing with language and you know, getting in different lines that, you know, do this student let's do team let's do whole classes, which I had started experimenting with that this week" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript). "On Mondays for my Morning Meetings, I changed it to Movement Monday. So on Mondays, we do one movement SEL type of thing. Definitely with our Movement Mondays, I can tell a big difference. Like, they are excited to move! We've done it for the past five Mondays." (Jackie, PLC-2 transcript). Jackie also shared how the movement began to find its place in her math lessons: "With volume, we made up length, width, and height which that's not really a lot, but they were at least moving" (Jackie, PLC-2 transcript).

PLC #2 revealed how the teachers began to integrate active learning in during other academic areas, recess, and a parent night event Susie shared that she taught a unit about weather

and connected different types of movements to each type of cloud. Susie modeled the call and response activity with the entire PLC group that identified each type of cloud and associated movement. During recess, Cyndi organized silly relay races. "I had them run and skip forwards, backwards, and sideways. And all the kids were like, "can we do it again?" And then we gathered as a group and cheered" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript). During a reading night event, the teachers integrated the call and response connected to movement with a modeled book reading for parents. "By the third time through, the parents were chanting back like the students. It was great!" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript). During PLC #2, the Mood Meter as a strategy to support a student's recognition and communication about their feelings. "I'm sitting here thinking about writing class with all of these wonderful adjectives" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript). "We can print them off and laminate them for our kids. They could even wipe them off when we switch classes and switch back. And that way, every single classroom are able to track how they are feeling through the day" (Jackie, PLC-2 transcript).

PLC #2.1

After the second PLC meeting, I felt that I lost my flow! I scheduled a meeting with the teachers for what I labeled PLC 2.1 to ensure that their PLC needs were being met as I felt that "I tanked the second PLC session. I am having a tough time balancing the instructional and research elements of facilitating the PLC. The life skills portion of PLC #2 did not go as well as planned. I realize that I needed more time to break down the concepts and make connections to SEL and the CASEL framework. What I viewed as an easy connection to the National Health Education skills of goal setting, decision making, and interpersonal communication and relationships may have been overwhelming. I need to create some form of follow-up information for the teachers. I do not want to overwhelm them" (Post PLC-2 reflection). During PLC 2.1, I

expressed, "I don't care how long I've been teaching. I'm still learning. I totally appreciate this opportunity to work with you all and I really want your feedback. After our last meeting, so much occurred to me. That was the worst presentation ever. Originally, I had a pie in the sky idea for how this research was going to run in my proposal. Then, the realities began to happen and little did I know I was going to work with the Wonder Woman trio of the school who, when we had a break [between PLC meetings], did not just do one active learning strategy but did a multitude of things" (Researcher, PLC-2.1 transcript). I continued by sharing my frustration with myself in the process: "I feel really ineffective right now" (Researcher, PLC-2.1 transcript). The teachers were appreciative of my honesty and shared: "Okay, can I just intervene? Our next meeting should be over margaritas, okay?" (Susie, PLC-2.1 transcript). "I feel ineffective because I do [movements with my students] but I don't know if it is what you are talking about" (Susie, PLC-2.1 transcript).

The teachers continued to share their bumps in the road as they found their flow during the remainder of PLC 2.1. Cyndi shared that she "forced myself because if I didn't do it [make copies of the Mood Meter], I was not going to do it" (Cyndi, PLC-2.1 transcript). She continued to share the story of how she laminated the Mood Meters and put them on each of her desks. "The kids loved them. My homeroom comes in asking 'where is the marker?' and circle where they are" (Cyndi, PLC-2.1 transcript). Cyndi leveraged the Mood Meter to take an emotions inventory with her students each morning and share with the class that "nobody in this room should push your buttons today" (Cyndi, PLC-2.1). She also shared how she began to help her students analyze their shift on the mood meter. She shared her reflection of when she noticed students were circling words that shared their happiness: "I wondered what happened and the students shared, 'We got to play with each other on the playground for the first time since

October" (Cyndi, PLC-2.1 transcript). "The teachers' positivity, even when exhausted, is empowering. I am learning as much from them as they are learning from me" (Researcher, PLC-2.1 transcript). At the end of PLC 2.1, I asked "so, what other feedback do you have for me?" (PLC-2.1 transcript). Cyndi shared, "thank you for today. It was real" (Cyndi, PLC-2.1 transcript). "I am so glad that we had PLC 2.1 today. It is encouraging to feel that we are back on track" (post-PLC 2.1 researcher journal).

PLC #3

At the beginning of PLC #3 [February 2023], I sensed that the teachers were exhausted as they shared the students do not get a break before their scheduled spring break. When I asked them how they were doing, Jackie responded, "We're surviving" (PLC-3 transcript). "The teachers needed their SEL moment at the beginning of our session today to remember the great things they are doing with their students. They are working so hard. I remember the uninterrupted blocks of a school schedule that felt like an ultramarathon" (Researcher, Post-PLC-3 journal). The teachers divulged during the PLC #3 reflection segment that "life skills are being taught every day" (Cyndi, PLC-3 transcript) but "I don't know how to put it into the lesson plan" (Susie, PLC-3 transcript). The mood meters continued to be a beneficial strategy for the teachers that began to extend its influence into other classrooms. "Since Cyndi introduced the mood meter, I have connected it to my Zones of Regulation chart in my classroom. Now during my Cardinal time, [the students] come in and the first thing they want to do is talk about what zone everyone is in. They're initiating it; to talk about how we're feeling" (Jackie, PLC-3 transcript). Cyndi extended the learning opportunities with her students by using "myself as a model. It's been a hard day and I'll say I'm solidly in red. What does that mean?" (Cyndi, PLC-3 transcript).

She continued to reflect how her students have started to search for the definitions and discuss the situational triggers of the different words on the Mood Meter.

I introduced cooperative learning structures during PLC #3 and provided a packet of ideas based on Kagan Structures (Kagan, 2009). The teachers shared how they used group work during their classes and enjoyed recalling the creative activities that they have seen their peers facilitate such as the hot chocolate math review, the Super Bowl math activity where they turned the hallway into a football field to share student work when they answered questions correctly, and the reenactment of how food travels through the digestive system to create excrement using crackers, water, and ultra-sheer tights. "The teachers seemed to enjoy the cooperative learning packet. They asked a lot of clarifying questions that allowed us to discuss and connect to structures they already use in their classes" (Post PLC-3 Reflection). I shared with the teachers that I ran over our scheduled PLC time that day. Susie exclaimed, "Well now you made me look!" (PLC-3 transcript). "I know! I looked up at the clock for the first time" (Jackie, PLC-3 transcript). "The teachers seemed to find their flow" (Post PLC-3 Reflection).

PLC #4

During the PLC #4 reflection activity, the teachers disclosed that the students did not enjoy the cooperative learning strategies at first. The teachers shared that their students were used to selecting their own partners: "So previously when we did partner work, they would pick whoever they wanted and would sit there and chat and don't actually get their work done" (Susie, PLC-4 transcript). The students would talk at inopportune times: "There would be a test and they would just sit there and chat. They didn't get their work done" (Jackie, PLC-4 transcript). The teachers used a variety of ideas from cooperative learning resource packet from PLC #3 to help create unpredictable pairings of students for classwork. The students were

accustomed to working with their friends and would claim that they could not work with certain students. Susie reflected on how she held firm as she told the students, "Well, you will now. And they did not have a bit of trouble" (PLC-4 transcript).

The teachers shared how they consistently tested out different methods for pairing or grouping students ranging from drawing names from a bag, adding number stickers to chairs, adding color stickers to chairs, and constantly changing seating charts. As I began to process their pairing and grouping methods, I asked the teachers, "Did you do it because of the content you were teaching or the types of lessons you were teaching?" (Researcher, PLC-4 transcript). Susie shared, "Personally, I wanted to track just to see what would happen. Just to see how the kids would handle it" (PLC-4 transcript). She shared her observation of how her students began to tolerate the variety of strategies. Susie shared that her students' point of view shifted to, "Ok, I'm gonna work with you, but I'm not really a fan. So, let's work and get it done so I can go back to my seat [to sit with my friends]" (PLC-4 transcript). Jackie shared that she would implement the random pairing selections using the number or color stickers like Susie for her social studies guided reading time. However, "for math, I've been using their exit tickets and whatever data I have to strategically pair them, so that the kids that understand the content can teach it to the other kids" (Jackie, PLC-4 transcript).

Time and Space

PLC#1

During the first PLC session when active learning strategies were introduced, the teachers conceptualized how they could implement the active learning opportunities during the day: "I think we can find the time" (Susie, PLC-1 transcript) to connect active learning strategies to their academic content. "We could do this in Cardinal time when our numbers aren't as large. This is

where we can introduce it [active learning] to them" (Susie, PLC-1 transcript). "I can see this happening in morning meetings. And especially in math when I'm already trying to get them excited [for math]" (Jackie, PLC-1 transcript). I reflected after PLC #1 on howe teachers taught me something about practical ways for implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies: "The teachers brought up something that I did not consider. Start with smaller groups to begin implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies. They know themselves and understand their schedules and students the best" (post-PLC 1 Researcher Journal).

PLC #2

Five weeks elapsed between PLC #1 and #2. The teachers shared how they began to negotiate their time and space to integrate active learning strategies to find their flow to support student SEL. When the teachers developed their initial plans for integrating active learning strategies, they agreed to integrate similar activities into their Cardinal time. During the five weeks span of time, the teachers began to adapt and use the SEL-based instructional strategies independently from each other and based on their students' needs. "Now we [teachers] have all separated now. So, Mondays for my morning meeting, I changed it to movement Monday. Throughout that week when the students get restless or I feel like we need to get up and move, we will do that movement [from movement Monday]. And even sometimes they ask me if we [the students] can get up and do our movement from Monday?" (Jackie, PLC-2 transcript).

"I have not done it with every group. I have done it with two different groups, but I've done it with my homeroom [sigh] several times and my Cardinal group several times" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript). Cyndi reflected on her intentionality of giving herself notes on her lesson plans remember to add movement to her lessons and experiment with other ideas such as "doing the same [structure of activity] with language as we did in math or when I saw them getting

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bored or when I saw them getting obnoxious. I started to notice that we can get in different lines, we can get in teams, we can do whole class work" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript). Cyndi shared that she started to "experiment with time where I can shorten or lengthen the time. I noticed if somebody's coming in, like a jerk, you know, can I do it then to help change his attitude? Which, that *did* happen. I mean I got him on-task, but I got everyone else off-task to move [to change his mood]" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript).

PLC #2.1

The teachers noticed their students needed to revisit the SEL-based instructional strategies at different times of day and asked teachers for SEL-based activities. Their students often experienced conflicts during their scheduled recess time and their emotions would escalate. One day after the students transitioned from afternoon recess to their classroom, the students were instructed to circle two words on the Mood Meter. One student, Mark, circled three words and upon further investigation, the teacher shared that "it is never an accusatory thing [to ask the student why] because I really truly want to know why. [Mark stated] because this is how I feel" (Cyndi, PLC-2.1 transcript). Cyndi used this moment to support Mark because "he just did what we call self-advocating. He told me how he felt in a very respectful way" (Cyndi, PLC-2.1 transcript).

PLC #3

During the group reflection of PLC #3, the teachers shared their successes and constraints for implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies.

"Well, I don't know if I should say this in front of you [Principal Smith]? Nah, I'm just kidding. Well, we've had a lot of issues, like students just not being respectful. Yeah, I mean, to not only adults, but their peers. So, I had a little 'come to Jesus' meeting

with all three of the classes one day and I said, I've had it, you're not going to disrupt this class anymore. And so I told them, even though I have tables [for seating organization in my classroom], I have two desks like the old timey desks. I warned them. I said, alright, if you come in here, and you disturb the learning we are going to put a desk right back there [in the back of the classroom.] I've had two [students] that I've had to move back here. But they both knew what they had to do to in order to join their team. And they [the students] got up there in front of their class and apologized. Like wholehearted, sincere. Their apology was sincere. I told them you can't get up there and crack jokes. It has to be heartfelt. And the rest of the class clapped" (Susie, PLC-3 transcript).

Susie's story brought tears to everyone's eyes. "It was so powerful because the other kids just started - I didn't tell them to clap. I didn't tell them to do anything. They just started clapping. I was like, see? That's how much they appreciate it. And I told them both, like, I'm so proud of you. It took so much courage to get up here in front of this class and say those words. And they did it" (Susie, PLC-3 transcript). Principal Smith shared, "The boys are in two separate homerooms so neither of them saw the other one do it. And both classes clapped" (PLC-3 transcript). This story reinforced that SEL was best for their students when they were in the moment and could connect to their emotions. "I mean, I felt like that, not just the heartfelt apology because it was sincere from both of them, but I think the way the class reacted to it. They [students] weren't laughing or trying to make fun of them. I really believe that they [students] appreciated them doing this. That they [students who gave the apology] finally realized look, the rest of us are in here trying to learn" (Susie, PLC-3 transcript).

The teachers continued to reflect when they used the SEL-based instructional strategies. I reflected on the original plan and timing for our SEL-based PLC and shared "I was going meet

you all every other week. Well, this is taking time which is nice because that doesn't mean you have to do it every day or do it in a rushed sense. You do it when you need it maybe? Or you do it when it makes sense to it do it?" (Researcher, PLC-3 transcript). Susie shared the reality of "or when *it's* [SEL] is needed" (Susie, PLC-3 transcript). The teachers' stories "paint a picture that it's [SEL-based instructional strategies] not a curriculum. It is when you need it. It's your well-being and student well-being" (Researcher, PLC-3 transcript).

The stories continued to illuminate when the teachers felt using the SEL-based instructional strategies were key for their students' well-being: "So when things have happened in the classroom, that's when I get to use it most now. Because I can say, where are you right now? You knew that these triggers were about to happen. Can we back up a little bit? What could we have done differently so that when you saw them about to happen, you made a decision to write that [circle a word on the Mood Meter]. What would help with that? What can I do to help you, help you?" (Cyndi, PLC-3 transcript). From the teachers' stories, I realized that the SEL-based instructional strategies may be utilized without planning for it.

"So, you do not have a plan but that is okay! Because if it's [SEL-based instructional strategies] what was needed in the moment, there's no plan but you did it!" (Researcher, PLC-3 transcript). The teachers continued to reflect that SEL has to be reinforced throughout the day: "I mean, our Everyday Speech stuff [current SEL curriculum] lays out, like, it allows us to calm down in the morning, you know, and so we're able to bring that [SEL ideas] back in the middle of the day sometimes. But it's *in the moment* where they get it [SEL] better. I can say it all I want in the morning, but they're not practicing it. And so I have to bring it [SEL] back. I *have* to bring it back. And that's where they learn it. Because then I can say, do you remember when that [a

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situation] happened? Because in the mornings, nothing's happened yet, maybe. Possibly. But in the moment, they're going, "Ohhhhhh!" and then they made the connection. I'm talking about our tough kids. The tough ones. That's when they're making that connection finally, but they don't see it until then which totally stinks" (Cyndi, PLC-3 transcript).

Pivotal Realizations

The PLC meetings and the post-PLC interviews afforded valuable reflection that unveiled pivotal realizations regarding the implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategies. During PLC #3, the teachers were sharing meaningful stories of implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies and recognizing the impact for their classrooms: "We need to do this in September to lay the groundwork [with our students]" (Cyndi, PLC-3 transcript). I shared that my original plan was to start our PLC meetings in August: "That would have been awesome!" (Jackie, PLC-3 transcript). The teachers recognized how their students needed daily support with life skills and SEL. However, they did not realize how individual student situations would vary in degree or how the SEL-based instructional strategies would form a pedagogical toolbox to help their students' SEL to grow and flourish. "I could look at the tools that you gave us... I could look at it more as an integration rather than a focus. For me being able to look at it more as an integration, rather than a focus was helpful, because my focus had to be testing. Having to focus on something else was difficult. So having it as an integration was better for me, personally. But that was so helpful, because then I could throw it in in the middle of writing or [other lesson ideas]" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript).

Some students who had consistent negative behavioral occurrences that were deemed discipline issues craved positive interpersonal communication from their teachers.

"We started a behavior chart with one of our kids and he is extremely volatile. One day is a great day, the next is a bad day. He's the one whose father left [their home] at the beginning of the year and he's throwing chairs and desks. Since the behavior chart, we specifically started putting written praise on the chart. He's not interested in the rewards. He wants to see what we've written on the chart. Principal Smith did a forced choice chart with the student. If you had the choice of a candy reward or hanging out with your friends, which would you choose? If you had the choice of hanging out with your teacher or a bud, you know, and it basically came down to he wants time with us [the teachers] and he wants he wants to see us write [positive comments on his behavior chart]" (Cyndi, PLC-5 transcript).

Jackie conferred: "You know, after you said that yesterday... today when he left my room and as soon as I gave him his clipboard, he was reading it. I never really noticed that you said that yesterday. And so today I watched him. And he did it [read the clipboard comments]" (Jackie, PLC-5 transcript).

Pinnacle Moment

The critical pivotal realization that elucidates RQ1 [How the teachers adapt and use the SEL-based instructional strategies presented through PLC meetings?] occurred during PLC #4. During the close of the reflection, I asked, "Let me ask you, moving forward: we've done active learning, we've done the life skills, and now the cooperative learning. So, for each of you, which one do you feel most compelled to try again? Think about what you have enjoyed implementing; what you feel most self-efficacious about" (Researcher, PLC-4 transcript). Susie shared that she liked active learning and cooperative learning. Jackie shared that she liked using life skills and cooperative learning. Cyndi shared, "Because I am a music teacher [by training and past

experiences] I have always been great with the cooperative learning stuff, but and I've always loved movement. But now feeling like we have a good reason, you know, in case somebody walks in and we're doing something goofy with our movement, even in a regular English classroom. It's okay because it's planned. Or it's not planned. I see that they are getting the wiggles or whatever, and we all stand up and just move. That's been helpful because my population in my class needs it" (Cyndi, PLC-4 transcript).

Cyndi's answer intrigued me to consider how the teachers may have to shift their SEL-pedagogical strategies for each class they teach based on their rotation of homeroom classes: "I guess when I asked that question, I'm thinking about you [as an individual teacher]. But do you feel like that has to shift from class to class to class as y'all rotate?" (Researcher, PLC-4 transcript). The trio of teachers chimed in unison, "Yes"!" For clarification, I asked: "So, the answer you [all three teachers] gave….is that based on your homeroom? (Researcher, PLC-4). The teachers all answered "yes" again. I asked "ok, then if you think about your first rotation [of classes you teach in your subject area…." (Researcher, PLC-4 transcript), the teachers immediately interjected with "I would teach towards Jackie's style" (Susie, PLC-4 transcript). Jackie said, "I would lean into the active…" (PLC-4 transcript). "And I would lean more towards active and…which is…*Oh! That is so interesting because I have your class [Susie's class] first!*" (Cyndi, PLC-4 transcript). That was a momentous learning moment for all and a tremendous jump for the teachers' self-confidence.

"It was awesome to unpack how the teachers have their own preferences for teaching the SEL-based instructional strategies. I did not anticipate that the teachers would be influenced by their homeroom students' needs and tailor their SEL-based strategies to suit. Learning how the teachers leaned into the styles of their colleagues as

they taught their homerooms in the daily rotation was something I never considered. I assumed that the teachers would have their favorite methods and would teach all three classes the same way. To recognize and confirm how each teacher would bend and flex for their students was an astonishing moment for us to experience together!" (Researcher, post-PLC-4 journal).

Cyndi reflected that she shared similar information with a recent substitute teacher for how to approach each classroom to foster class community and success. She shared similar details for how to approach teaching each class based on the homeroom teachers' approaches for implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies. Our conversation during PLC #4 reinforced the teachers' insights and conceptions of that moment: "we just proved it. That is awesome!" (Cyndi, PLC-4 transcript). "Today, everyone's [the teachers] confidence and self-efficacy blossomed for teaching the SEL-based instructional strategies. We all just became better educators through our group processing and reflection today. It was simply amazing." (Researcher, post-PLC-4 journal).

Changes in Teacher Self-Efficacy for Teaching SEL

The second research question I examined from this study was RQ2: How do K-5 teachers' self-efficacy in teaching SEL change through their participation in the SEL-PLC? The following categories were constructed as themes representing how the teachers' self-efficacy in teaching SEL changed through their participation in the SEL-PLC: *positive gains for positive change, efficacy-forming growth experiences,* and *PERMA-supportive learning environments for the win*.

Positive Gains for Positive Change

The teachers remained dedicated to the learning process throughout the SEL-based PLC meetings. During the post-PLC teacher interviews, the teachers were asked about their perceived changes to their self-efficacy for teaching SEL and to elaborate on the reasons the numbers where selected. Table 8 details the answers from the teachers for Q2: On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least confident, and 5 being the most confident, how would you rate your confidence in integrating active learning, life skills, and cooperative learning in your instruction?

Table 8. Integrating SEL-based Instructional Strategies in Instruction

Teachers	Self-rating for confidence in integrating the SEL-based instructional strategies
Susie	4
Cyndi	5
Jackie	4

Table 9 details the answers from the teachers for Q3: On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least extent of positive change, and 5 being the highest extent of positive change, to what extent has your confidence in integrating active learning, life skills, and cooperative learning in your instruction changed before and after the PLC?

Table 9. Change in Confidence for Integrating SEL-based Instructional Strategies

Teachers	Self-rating of confidence before PLC	Self-rating of confidence after PLC
Susie	1	5
Cyndi	3	5
Jackie	2.5	5

Each teacher shared their reasons for selecting the numbers in Tables 8 and 9 during the post-PLC interviews.

Susie

Susie described her initial understandings of SEL as "very little" (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript). She reflected on how the conversations and the collaboration over time from the PLCs supported the gradual change of her understandings for implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies: "As our meetings progressed, even when it was not necessarily our [scheduled] meetings with you, but during our PLC times [with the other two teachers] some of these things would come into our thinking and our talk during our planning time. The further we got into it [the school year], that's when I felt like all of our confidence levels [increased] because we were like Oh! You know what? We could do this [integrate an SEL-based instructional strategy]. I am a five now." (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript). Susie felt an exponential positive change over time because of her participation in the SEL-PLC.

Cyndi

Cyndi's previous teaching experiences afforded her the opportunity to use movement in her music classroom. She shared how she, as a music teacher, was extremely confident in her addressing tough issues with her students and would support them to figure out solutions. With her transition to Cardinal Elementary School, she experienced adversity from the change in her teaching role that resulted in a decreased confidence self-rating score of three: "I was so focused on testing and doing what I was told to do." (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript). The new role triggered self-doubt: "Oh, well maybe I'm *not* [emphasis] doing my job. I let my kids' emotional state drop and that is when my relationship with the kids changed" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript. Cyndi credits student and parent feedback for the positive change to her confidence self-rating.

"When I am SEL- highly aware, empathetic self, it changes the kids and it builds trust with the parents. And their feedback is what tells me whether I'm on track or not. You know, if I have just stopped a suicide because I listened or because I contacted a parent because the parent was the best person to listen to this kid, you know. Or to hear if I've sat with a kid through a really rough time and the parent gives me feedback. "Yeah, this is the first time my kid has learned in three years." Or "this is the first time that somebody at the school has addressed this bullying issue. And even though we brought it to them for three years, and now it's fixed." Yeah, I'm doing my job. I'm doing what I'm supposed to, even though I didn't go into teaching for SEL. But that's how I know my number. That's why I gave it a five. It's not just my personal opinion; it's their feedback" (Cyndi, post-PLC transcript).

Jackie

Jackie described that her initial understandings of SEL was only about social and emotional states of her students and "not the act of learning and cooperative groups combined with that so I feel like I've broadened my understanding of what SEL really is" (Jackie, post-PLC interview transcript). Jackie reflected how contextualizing connections from daily school experiences allowed her to gain an improved understanding and appreciation for implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies: "I felt like what we did in the morning meetings with the life skills carried over into our cooperative groups. When we first started cooperative groups, they're [the students] like, "I don't want to work with this person." And then once we talked about that in the morning meeting and how to handle [situations like how], you might not really like that person, but here are some skills that you can use to get along. Then things started getting better with the cooperative learning" (Jackie, post-PLC interview transcript). Jackie shared that

her initial score was lower due to "active learning and cooperative learning. I just was like, "Well, how am I going to fit that in? Because I was worried, I didn't have enough time. But once we started doing it and using it more and more, I felt like it [using the strategies] kind of just came naturally. And whenever something came up, we just implemented which of the strategies that we thought was the best to handle that" (Jackie, post-PLC interview transcript). I shared that another teacher mentioned the same concern for how they were going to add the SEL-based instructional strategies into their lessons. "Yes, but it's really…. you're not adding anything, I feel like it's actually taking stuff off of us, because instead of fighting the kids to pay attention to you, you're just like, "Alright, let's take a little break, get it [the energy] out. And, with like, cooperative groups, instead of having kids just pick whoever they want, and getting off task we gave them [instructions], you know, this is *your* [a student] job in the group, this is *your* [a student] job in the group. And it really helped everybody stay engaged and be active learners" (Jackie, post-PLC interview transcript).

Efficacy-Forming Growth Experiences

Each SEL-PLC began with reflection time where the teachers shared an abundance of stories detailing their experiences of implementing SEL-based instructional strategies. The teachers' stories detail their pedagogical shifts and practices that supported affirming change to their self-efficacy for teaching SEL. The reflections established a lens for teachers to recognize positive transformations to their classroom environments for the duration of the SEL-PLC. The teacher reflections underscored positive changes evidence by their storied lived experiences that aligned to the four sources of self-efficacy.

Mastery Experiences

Throughout the entire PLC experience, the teachers reflected on their own experiences of developing competencies for implementing active learning, life skills, and cooperative learning structures with their students. The scheduling challenges between PLC #1 and #2, afforded the teachers to have five weeks to experiment with the implementation of active learning strategies. The teachers shared their methods of how they began to add active learning into their lessons: "I began to add it [notes of the active learning strategy] to my lesson plans after I did it [implementation]. I've done it [implementation] four different times and at least twice a week" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript). As the teachers shared their learning experiences with implementation, they maintained a positive light and continued to persist and adjust their active learning strategies: "Okay, let me start experimenting with time now where I can shorten the time. I can lengthen the time. [I began to see that] you're [students] not ready for this lesson. Come on do this [movement] and that that was good. The other day everybody's kind of lethargic and I was like "Everybody up! We're moving! Come on, let's go!" because they weren't focused and they were starting to zone out" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript). The teachers experienced success with their initial implementation of active learning during Cardinal time. They continued to implement active learning strategies into their specific content areas. Susie described how she emphasized movements in her weather unit: "C – Cirrus [clouds]. They are light and wispy [emphasis on changing language to a softer sound as bilateral waving arm movements were executed]. Cumulonimbus! [Susie] Cumulonimbus! [PLC group repeats word]. Rain coming down. [emphasis on loud to soft sounds and fingers wiggling from above the head down to the ground]" (Susie, PLC-2 transcript).

The Mood Meters were implemented to cultivate emotional well-being and provide language for students. The teachers found that the consistent use of the Mood Meters became an

useful tool for them to understand the causes of their students' moods. The teachers noted that

their students quickly formed a habit for completing the Mood Meter at different times of the

day: "They [students] come in [my classroom] and ask, "Where's the marker?" and then circle

where they are [on the Mood Meter]. My homeroom has gotten in the habit of circling two

words, so that I can kind of take an average and I can see what's going on [throughout the day].

And so, every morning it gives us something to talk about. I can see a "red", "Oh, you had a

fight with Dad?" She's [student] like, "Yes." I said, "So, nobody in this room should push your

buttons today." It's helping them learn [about] each other. But also, we've been able to talk

about triggers as well" (Cyndi, PLC-2.1 transcript).

Through experience and repetition of implementation, the teachers realized that their

classroom disruptions declined, classroom management was easier, and their students were on-

task during classroom activities: "A difference was previously, they [students] would just like

when we did partner work, pick whoever they want to work with. There would be a test and they

would just sit there and chat and don't actually get their work done. And we've done the [color

and number] stickers on the chairs. I feel like now it's to the point where they really don't

complain or argue about who's going to be their partner. They're just like, alright, this is it. And

I can work with them for this amount of time. And it'll be okay" (Jackie, PLC-4 transcript).

Regarding student time on-task, the teachers were very encouraged by the positive changes in

their classrooms: "I'm not going around putting out fires" (Susie, PLC-4 transcript). "I'm not

going around saying, "Right now is not the time to talk about who is dating who and the drama

in your relationship." (Jackie, PLC-4 transcript). Susie shared an interesting observation of her

students as they implemented cooperative learning strategies: "Sometimes they'll [students] be in

a little more of a hurry so they can get away [from the assigned student]" (PLC-4 transcript). I

followed up with "And you're not seeing a drop in quality [of schoolwork]?" (Researcher, PLC-4 transcript). Cyndi answered, "No, I am seeing an increase of quality [in their schoolwork]" (PLC-4 transcript).

During the final PLC meeting in May prior to end of grade testing season, the teachers shared that the SEL-based instructional strategies served as a toolbox: "So [in the beginning of the PLCs] I'm looking at your books, right? And I was like, oh, that sounds like something they [students] could do. I used it [an activity] again, like that very beginning number line that I did. What, in September? October? I did it again last week or the week before last and it [number line activity] worked! I was like, okay, today it works [when it may not have worked previously]. So, it's just been like going to Harbor Freight [hardware store] and picking up tools as you see them and need them" (Cyndi, PLC-5 transcript). The teachers continued to share that "they are having to pull out all the stops right now" (Cyndi, PLC-5 transcript) and shared that the combination of the SEL-based instructional strategies is more practical: "It is a combination [of SEL-based instructional strategies] because like some of the kids need to get up and move, some of them need to be given a specific role in the group to work in, and then some of them, you know, just need that extra SEL [life skills]. The teachers continued to share that as a school, all teachers were expected to use the Everyday Speech resources at least once a week however, they felt that they could embed SEL topics daily with the support of "great YouTube videos that will spark a discussion that we can you know apply to our class" (Jackie, PLC-5 transcript). Susie shared that the morning meeting conversations were a helpful strategy to employ. I summarized the conversation by sharing, "So you have [created] the community, you have the conversations but then it sounds like you all are using the [SEL-based instructional] strategies more often [compared to Everyday Speech]. So, it sounds like maybe one [Everyday Speech] is guiding

[you] but then the tools [SEL-based instructional strategies] are helping you keep the boat afloat, potentially?" (Researcher, PLC-5 transcript). Jackie responded, "Yes. That is a good analogy" (PLC-5 transcript).

Vicarious Experiences

The teachers vicariously developed positive changes to their self-efficacy though other people's implementation of SEL-based instructional strategies. The SEL-PLC afforded teachers the time to share, borrow, and brainstorm ideas for implementation. The teachers also tested the waters to integrate active learning strategies and content knowledge to challenge their students: "Remind me to tell Jackie that I used those number cards [during Cardinal time]. I said [to the students] now in two different teams come up with the largest number possible that is divisible by nine" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript). The SEL-PLC time allowed teachers to reflect on the alignment of their own practices as they learned vicariously through other teachers' experiences: "During times of the day and subjects, using the letter cards [like number cards]. That's my next goal. And then learning new movement strategies from my team since we are looking in different books" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript).

The SEL-PLC also afforded time for the teachers to credit each other's accomplishments and allow the students to lead changes to their classroom practices and procedures: "I've always had my zones of regulation chart in my classroom. Since Ms. [Cyndi] introduced the mood meter, at my cardinal time group, they come in and the first thing they want to do is talk about what zone everyone's in. And they're initiating talk about it" (Jackie, PLC-3 transcript). Susie and Jackie implemented each other's strategies of using color and number stickers on chairs [Susie's strategy discussed in PLC-4 transcript] and using exit ticket data to pair students based

on their acquisition and communication of their content knowledge [Jackie's strategy discussed in PLC-4 transcript].

Social Persuasion

Throughout the PLCs, the teachers reflected on situations where they received various forms of encouragement through verbal or non-verbal actions and dismal comments that supported changes in their self-efficacy for teaching SEL-based instructional strategies. The teachers' recognized how their self-efficacy was influenced by receiving different forms of feedback from their stakeholders pertaining to their implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategies.

Student Feedback. The teachers recognized that change was not easy for their students as teachers began to embed active learning strategies. Cyndi shared that has she was experimenting with class groupings for active learning, her students said, "[Ugh], we're still learning. [Sigh] we don't want to do this" (PLC-2 transcript). Cyndi's persistence continued with her first attempt with implementing active learning strategies with her students: "When I did number discs [active learning activity], my kids whined because they were tired. I told them to create the largest number you can where every other number is odd. I mean, so it's coming up with all these different kinds of patterns and [they students] had to work as a team to get it done. Kids hated it. They're like "You tricked us. We're learning." They literally said that" (PLC-2.1 transcript). Jackie shared that her students asked for active learning when they are noticing they are restless: "Ms. [Jackie], can we do our movements from Monday?" (PLC-2 transcript). The active learning strategies became a way for students to embrace their learning experiences. During the weather lesson and the movements associated with the different types of clouds, Susie shared that "the students helped make up the movements for the clouds" (PLC-2

transcript). During the post-PLC interview, Susie continued to share how active learning impacted student learning: "Like with the clouds, those children knew their clouds, you know what I'm saying? Like, they rocked it on that science EOG!" (post-PLC interview transcript). Over the course of the school year, the students developed a sense of community pride. Susie described a pivotal movement with a class where the students accepted a peer's heartfelt apology. The sincerity of the moment was returned by the classmates as they applauded the student because they were proud of his courage to make an intentional change that positively impacted the entire class. Teachers noticed additional changes of student actions as the SEL-based instructional strategies were implemented throughout the study. Cyndi recalled a powerful story of student respect and kindness toward a student who does not typically receive that attention from his peers. Cyndi implemented the use of Mood Meters to share their emotions as her students transitioned from recess back to the classroom. "And then Mark, I was proud of him because he is really whiny when he does not get his way. So [instead of getting upset and shutting down] he circled three words [on the Mood Meter.] I stopped and shared with the class what happened to Mark and shared that what he did is what we call self-advocating. He told me how he felt in a very, very respectful way" (Cyndi, PLC-4 transcript). During the final PLC #5, Cyndi shared a story of how their students celebrated the successes of other students: "So, both he and another kid who struggled at the beginning [of the year] got awards *finally* [emphasis] this last quarter like the most improved in science and the other for effort. [The awards day is] really subdued. But my whole class was yelling "YEAH!" and I was like yes, yes, yes [with fist pumps] because the class cheered them on" (PLC-5 transcript).

Parent Feedback. Throughout the reflection process, the teachers shared stories of parent feedback and support for implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies. During

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their reading night, the teachers added active learning strategies for parent to participate in related learning experiences their students are afforded during the school day. The teachers shared how much fun they had has the parents were active participants during the activities. During PLC #4, the teachers were reflecting on how their students were slowly showing improvements after their attempts for implementing all three SEL-based instructional strategies. The teachers shared a story about Mark, a student who had a fixed mindset about his academic abilities and used a great deal of amount of negative self-talk. When Mark would experience frustration in the learning experience, and he would "slam something down on his desk and say, "I'm just stupid. I'm not going to do it [schoolwork]" (Jackie, PLC-4 transcript). Cyndi added that one day in the hallway at school, she and Jackie stopped Mark and shared, "You know what we have just decided to do? [The teachers shared how they were not going to accept the negative self-talk from Mark.] And we came up with a reward kind of thing for him. And he [Mark] told his mom. I saw his mom at their basketball practice And she said, "yeah, he [Mark] told me I how you all talked [to him in the hallway]. And she said, "Thank you. Thank you." (Cyndi, PLC-4 transcript). Cyndi was positively impacted by the feedback and continued conversations from parents of her students. She reflected how parents "thanked me for letting their child use the wiggle chairs and go to the wiggle and Lego corner" (post-PLC interview). Cyndi added "So now like the parents that I'm hearing back from now are emailing me sharing "Oh my gosh, he still remembers when you did [during the school year]. He still remembers when you had them jumping up and down. Or he still remembers when you did this [destressing skill] and it really helped him with this presentation. Or he still or she has a whole lot more compassion now. Like she stops and listens while I'm saying something. How did you do that?" You know, like, the

parents are coming back and they're saying, "Hey, how did you get them to shut up for a second without pissing them off?" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript).

Administration Feedback. The teachers recalled a time when the county-level English Language Arts (ELA) supervisor observed the fifth grade ELA classes "while the kids were presenting. So, the kids were presenting their projects, but part of the presentation is that the kids had to give feedback [to the presenter] using the feedback sandwich. So, one of the things she wrote on her [observation notes] was, she said, "and I was so surprised that they were actually nice to each other." We've been working hard on this because at the beginning of the year, they [the students] weren't nice to each other at all" (Cyndi, PLC 2.1 transcript). The teachers were pleasantly surprised that an outsider noticed their efforts with the students.

Principal Smith was a participant with the SEL-PLC when her after-school schedule permitted. The teachers appreciated her support and feedback throughout the SEL-PLCs. Principal Smith leads with a lens of "emotional intelligence. I think it [leading with emotional intelligence] works with children and with adults. I think that makes me a very compassionate person. I think that makes me understand that people at their heart are trying to be good" (Principal Smith, pre-PLC interview 1 transcript). She continued to share "We love these kids. We are making a difference. The growth is not showing; I can't brag about my test scores. But we're struggling with lots of things here and we're doing a good job. I think that belief in others [is why I feel] we can do this [make a difference with our students]" (Principal Smith, pre-PLC interview 1 transcript).

During PLC #3, Susie reflected on how she had to move students to the back of her class because they were being disruptive and how the students apologized to the rest of the class to return to the activity. Principal Smith expressed her support of Susie's approach by stating, "You

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always have to prove you mean it" (Principal Smith, PLC 3 transcript). Principal Smith engaged in the reflection and was collegial as she asked, "Do you think they [the students] may have clapped [after the students apologized] because they're tired of being interrupted constantly during their instruction? Were they [the students] like I am proud of you and I am glad you are sorry?" (Principal Smith, PLC 3 transcript). During PLC #3, Principal Smith continued to express her trust in the teachers as they shared how they had to pivot between using Panorama Education and Everyday Speech for their SEL programming. The teachers shared how their students needed specific lessons and reminders about respect and how Everyday Speech had specific videos to highlight different areas of the school where students could demonstrate respect. Principal Smith affirmed her teachers: "Y'all know what your kids need" (Principal Smith, PLC 3 transcript). Principal Smith's feedback was intentional throughout the PLC experience: "I feel like the support that we received from our principal was imperative. Like, she was so on board with it [SEL-PLC] and would pat us on the back every chance she got for participating [in the SEL-PLC]" (post-PLC interview transcript).

Physiological/Affective

Throughout the PLCs, the teachers shared stories that expressed an array of emotions that fueled their growth experiences for implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies. At the conclusion of our introductory meeting and learning what the SEL-PLC would entail, Jackie exclaimed, "I am really excited [to get started]!" (Introduction meeting transcript). As the SEL-PLC were scheduled, the teachers experienced distress by having another meeting added to their busy schedules: "At the beginning, it felt like another meeting, it felt like another task, it felt like another thing to add to the list. And then you [the researcher] got us up and moving that first class PLC. I was like, God bless it. I do not want to get up" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview

transcript). As the teachers experienced movement during the first PLC, they began to experience a change of heart: "And then you got me up and moving. And I was like, duh Cyndi! This is what you're supposed to be doing with your kids. Don't forget. And that was a big [reminder]. I was like, don't forget, you're here for the kids, you're not here for the damn test. Don't forget. And so, thank you. I appreciate that" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript). During the post-PLC interview, Jackie expressed her concern for implementing new SEL-based instructional strategies: "How am I going to fit that in? Because I was worried that I did not have enough time" (post-PLC interview transcript).

The movement activities I shared during PLC #1 were designed to allow the teachers to experience firsthand how a little movement increase mobility and focus. "I used an activity I learned many years ago from my first learning opportunity from Jean Blaydes Madigan at our state conference back when I was teaching elementary PE. I had the teachers practice some self-awareness for how their bodies felt from sitting for an extended period of time through noticing how tight their muscles were in their neck, shoulders, lower back, and hamstrings. I proceeded to get the teachers on their feet and participate in activities that cross the midline like Jean would do in her learning sessions. After 5-10 minutes of movement, I had them recheck how tight their muscles where to compare. They could tell a difference after a few minutes of movement! I hope they are hooked" (Researcher, post-PLC 1 journal). I transitioned to sharing active learning resources during PLC #1 that connected to math, ELA, and science. At the end of PLC #1, Jackie exclaimed, "I'm excited! Like *really* [emphasis] excited! I want to go home and look at all of this stuff [resources] this weekend" (PLC-1 transcript).

The teachers experienced a rollercoaster of emotions throughout the ebbs and flows of the implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategies. The teachers shared their emotions

of pride for their students. As the students were learning how to use the Mood Meters and process their emotions, the began noticing the emotional state of their peers. "The kids are starting to check on their friends" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript). After reflecting on the two students who apologized for disrupting the other students' learning: "I was proud of them. I mean, I could've cried. I literally could've cried when both of them said option two [the class apology]" (Susie, PLC-2 transcript).

The teachers experienced moments of frustration and received a great deal of student dissent as they implemented cooperative learning strategies. "I went home that day feeling really deflated because I was like, I tried this new cooperative groups, and I thought it was going to be great. And all the kids hated it. Because after our meeting in the PLC about it, I was so hyped up about it, I came in the next day, put the stickers on the chairs, and then just threw 'em [the students] in there and it flopped" (Jackie, post-PLC interview transcript). The student dissent for cooperative learning began with undesirable comments: "At first, they were like, "We don't want to work with them" (Jackie, PLC-4 transcript). Susie confirmed that students were also saying "We can't work together" (PLC-4 transcript) while working in her classroom. In an attempt to mix up methods for grouping students, Cyndi shared how she "had names on tickets. I drew names out of the bag so they'd have to work with somebody different and sometimes it didn't work out that way. And sometimes I was like nooooooo [emphasis]! They [students who she did not want paired] are together! But, they were together and figured it out." (PLC-4 transcript).

The teachers focused on the positives and consistently were the cheerleaders for their students. I asked the teachers if they felt the improvements in student's willingness to work with others were a result of implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies. "Part of it is the mood meters but with a couple of them, I am seeing more maturity. When they are being

assigned to that person [for cooperative groups], they will say, "But I…..(sigh), I will work with them. I will have a growth mindset" (Cyndi, PLC-4 transcript). The messaging about having a growth mindset resonated with a student, Mark, who always would say that he was stupid during class. "Mark came up to me last week and just said, "I've decided that I'm going to have a growth mindset. I am not gonna do this anymore. So he got paired with somebody he didn't want. He said, "I'm not gonna! I'm gonna work on it [having a growth mindset while working with the other student]" (Cyndi, PLC-4 transcript). Mark's change of mindset was noticed in other classes: "The other day in math, he was about to say, "I just…I can't…..I am going to figure it out." And I was like, "Yes, Mark!" because he was about to say I can't do it and I give up like he always does. But, he stopped himself!" (Jackie, PLC-4 transcript). She continued to share, "I was like, "Mark! That is a big deal that you did not just say that you can't do it!" (Jackie, PLC-4 transcript). Very excited to hear this story, Cyndi exclaimed "He's done that three times this week! Heck yeah!!" (PLC-4 transcript). Even as consummate cheerleaders for Mark, Cyndi and Jackie shared their frustration with Mark: "We are going to nag you [to have a better mindset]. We went through so much. I think we just decided that we didn't want to hear it anymore. It just made me so mad" (Cyndi, PLC-4 transcript). Jackie confirmed "because he is capable" (PLC-4 transcript). Cyndi's staunch support for Mark continued: "And I got really upset with him one day. I said you are lying. Every time you say this [I'm stupid] you are lying. I don't know how you got his in your head. I said, "I don't know who has said it to you to make you believe this? You're making yourself believe it now. I'm not going to put up it. This is not allowed in my classroom. Period" (PLC-4 transcript).

　　　Throughout the implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategies, the teachers began to experience a sense of calming for themselves in their classrooms. The student dissent

decreased over the course of time: "I am not going around putting out fires" (Susie, PLC-4 transcript). "I am not going around saying "Right now is not the time to talk. They have gotten really used to just being told who to work with. And it worked out really nicely" (Jackie, PLC-4 transcript). With the implementation of using color stickers and numbers on chairs as an organizational strategy to support mixing up students for cooperative learning groups, Susie commented how her students "liked it. They really did well with it. And I didn't intentionally try to pair them up. I wanted to see if the higher [ability] kids would just try to get along with this child. And, believe it or not, it went really well" (PLC-4 transcript).

At the conclusion of the SEL-PLCs, the teachers were feeling extremely positive about their work with the implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategies. "The PLCs continued to remind me [this is what students need] and I was like, yeah, let's talk about this [SEL-based instructional strategies] because I'm done talking about the test. So yeah, the PLCs were a constant reminder for me, and it started to become a break for me. I was like, okay, remember Cyndi, grab everything you can while you're here, take it back to your room" (post-PLC interview transcript). The teachers felt secure in being flexible and in the moment with their students while implementing the best SEL-based instructional strategy: "It depends on the day, the kids, and what we gravitate to [which SEL-based instructional strategy]. I think they are all beneficial" (Jackie, PLC-5 transcript). "And I have explicit idea about how to address it [a situation that needs an SEL-based instructional strategy] when it happens. You know, which I did not have before [the strategies and knowledge of implementation]" (Susie, PLC-5 transcript). When reflecting on the amount of stress she felt earlier in the SEL-PLC meetings, Jackie shared "You're not adding anything [on us]. I feel like it's actually taking stuff off of us" (post-PLC interview transcript). I noticed a sense of calm confidence from the teachers at the end of our

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SEL-PLCs: "It has been an amazing ride with the teachers this year. They were able to discuss the positives about the tools in their SEL toolbox that I hoped they would find useful through this experience" (Researcher, post-PLC 5 journal).

The Small Wins

Throughout the SEL-PLCs, the teachers shared their stories about their implementation process with their students. Their stories incorporated observations of student growth, student ownership and advocacy, and the change in student behaviors guided by the core competencies of SEL. These stories of the small wins accentuate the outcomes that impacted teacher self-efficacy for implementing SEL-based instructional strategies and facilitated student flourishing. Throughout the eight month SEL-PLC, the teachers and students grew as they worked in tandem through PERMA-supportive experiences throughout the school day. These PERMA-supportive experiences that braced student SEL growth connect to the four sources of self-efficacy.

Mastery Experience

As the teachers implemented the SEL-based instructional strategies, the students also began their path to mastering their learning experiences that integrated active learning, life skills, and cooperative learning strategies. The teachers remarked that the students noticed when they needed to self-regulate their restlessness or emotions: "Miss [Cyndi], can I go to the wiggle corner?" (PLC-2 transcript). Cyndi also reflected that with particular groups of students: "I have to be more intentional with adding movement with a particular group [of students] because especially in the afternoons. I have a couple of wiggle corners [in my classroom] and in the afternoon, they instantly get occupied. I had to start setting a timer because they start distracting the class" (PLC-4 transcript).

The teachers observed that students began to demonstrate increased engagement in their lessons. During PLC #2, Susie shared how she and her students made up movements to remember the four types of clouds. After Susie had everyone in the PLC participate with the movements, I asked "So, with the side slide [movement] with the kids, what was [their reaction]? What did the kids do?" (Researcher, PLC-2 transcript). Susie answered, "Oh, they just slide [long emphasis to drag out the word slide]. They did their thing [dramatic slide slide] and they don't feel silly" (PLC-2 transcript). Throughout the SEL-PLCs, the teacher reflected on how different students enjoyed a variety of activities or roles they played as they participated in the activities. During the spring as the teachers were reviewing math in their Cardinal groups in preparation for an assessment, Cyndi was reflected how she brought back the physical number line activity with the number discs to review "math standard for the decimal place value. It was the last time they took their reassessment and I was like, okay, let's do something different because they were so freaking wiggly!" (PLC-5 transcript). Jackie helped recall the chant Cyndi created: "To the left, we multiply. To the right, we divide!" (PLC-5 transcript) Cyndi joyfully shared how a student embraced that movement activity: "I had the students stand up and shout it [To the left, we multiply. To the right, we divide]. [The student] had no shame. I mean [he was] shouting it, shouting it [group laughter] And kids were walking by [my classroom] for restroom breaks or whatever and asked what are y'all doing? So, they would get involved [in the chant and movement] too" (PLC-5 transcript).

Students continued to have mastery experiences that were facilitated through teacher modeling. Through these situations, student began to develop skills that supported student autonomy and advocacy. During PLC #3, Susie shared the story of the students choosing to apologize to the class so they could return to the learning activities. After her reflection, I

commented on the importance of how she modeled and facilitated that process to create a teachable moment: "You also modeled the fact that we [all people] can improve. But the point [is] that you allowed them to earn it back and what you modeled through facilitation, that was really meaningful for your students to know that [they can earn something back by making good choices]" (Researcher, PLC-3 transcript). Cyndi allowed her students to re-do a class seating chart. "I made [the student] promise that she would not take charge. It was neat to see them working together because she actually worked with two kids who are very used to working together and are very democratic about it as well" (PLC-4 transcript). As a result of the student-designed seating chart, one student who is usually flexible did not get her way: "[The student] put her foot down. She said [to me] there is one person I asked to not be beside and they put me beside him. Can you change it? And I did because she has been flexible all year and has gone above and beyond for me to help [a student]" (Cyndi, PLC-4 transcript). It was impactful for the students to gain experiences of autonomy and advocacy through the teacher modeling demonstration of trust with students.

The students developed and demonstrated skills of autonomy and self-advocacy through their mastery experiences with the Mood Meter. "Mark, I was proud of him because normally he is whiny. He circled three [words on the Mood Meter]. I said, "Team, we're just supposed to circle two." He said he wanted to circle three because this is how I feel" (Cyndi, PLC-2.1 transcript). Cyndi continued to reflect on the teachable moment and gained the attention of the entire class to explain what just happened with Mark: "This is important because what he [Mark] just did is what we call self-advocating. He told me how he felt in a very, very respectful way. Because he [expressed himself] in a polite way, I listened and gave him the ok for the three words [on the Mood Meter]" (PLC-2.1 transcript). Cyndi's reflection of the teachable moment

validated students can express their emotions in healthy ways and that she will be an active listener for her students.

Vicarious Experiences

The students vicariously developed SEL skills through the teachers' implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategies. While focusing on interpersonal communication through the use of the Mood Meters during the life skills portion of the SEL-PLC, students began to learn how to improve their working relationships with peers: "Those Mood Meters, man. That's probably the best thing that happened for my particular class all year. That was because they learned to circle [identify] their stuff [emotion words on the Mood Meter], [I can help students] see that he [a peer] has [circled] in the solid red in the upper right hand corner. Are you going to go like this [obsessively tapping peer on shoulder] to get his attention?" (Cyndi, PLC-4 transcript). The teachers recognized how the students began to internalize SEL and would notice when other fifth grade classrooms received different SEL information or teachable moments: " I can't remember which class [Cyndi or Jackie] it was. One of them came up to me and said, "Why didn't you talk about that [SEL information] with us?" (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript). Students experienced meaning-making as they embraced learning how others worked through their emotions: "I have used myself as a model [and have shared with students], "It's been a hard day and I'm somewhere between solidly in the red. What would we call it when [I feel this way]? Some of our struggling kids will say, "Is it frustration?" "No, it might be a little bit further off on the other side" so they are searching for different words" (Cyndi, PLC-3 transcript). Jackie recognized how her students were utilizing their vicarious learning experiences in Cyndi's class when she met with her Cardinal group in the afternoon: "At my Cardinal group time, they [students] come in and the first thing they want to do is talk about

what zone [of Regulation] everybody's in. And it's like, they're initiating to talk about how we're feeling" (PLC-3 transcript). During the reflection time in PLC #4, I shared an observation: "I guess maybe I had the misconception that you [teachers] were going to be intentionally adding this [SEL-instructional strategies] to content. When we first started out, really with active learning, I was like "Hey! Let's get up [and move]!" It was very intentional. But over time, I think our conversations have shifted. Do you feel like you're shifting away from content?" (Researcher, PLC-4 transcript) The teachers agreed that it was situational in all areas of the school, including the classroom, the playground during outdoor recess or in the cafeteria. Cyndi shared, "For me, it's all teachable moments" (PLC-4 transcript) that can be connected to real life situations. Throughout the SEL-PLC, the teachers reflected on many teachable moments that supported their student learning ad implementation of SEL throughout their school experiences.

Social Persuasion

Throughout the PLCs, the teachers reflected on situations where they supported their students' SEL through candid conversations and building relationships: "Steve had a tough start to our school year. The guy who he thought was his father just looked at him one day and said, "You're not my son" and just left the family. So, he has been violent and hateful and spiteful and angry" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript). She shared how she tried to establish a trusting relationship early in the school year: "So, he had gotten in trouble the first or second week of school and I pulled him out into the hallway. I asked him "What is going on?" He called me all different [not nice] names. And I said, "You know, I know. I know you don't know me yet, but I have been put here to [support] and love you. So, you can't get out of it, and you can't make me leave." Cyndi reflected how she got to prove that [her unwavering support] to Steve throughout

the school year. "By the end of the year, we were best buds" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript).

Cyndi shared another story about a student who was terribly bullied in the fourth grade. The parent of the child notified Cyndi about the history of bullying at the beginning the school year. The bullying continued in Cyndi's fifth grade classroom: "It got, not just reported [to the administration] by me but, I got the families involved to get it worked out. Because you know, people could press charges with some of the things that were being done. So, [I] got both families involved, and the counselor as well and got it all resolved. The keys were not just unconditional acceptance, but also getting the parents involved. I think that's a really good strong suit to get the families involved, so they can help their kids as well. Not just "Oh, well the teacher didn't do anything." No, the teacher does do something, but with the help of parents, and that's that is tantamount." (post-PLC interview transcript).

There were times that students held steadfast in their decisions to counter the teachable moments that were channeled through the implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategies. Susie's classroom was set up in table groups. She had a in-class discipline strategy of moving students to the back of the classroom if they disrupted the learning environment. The students were accustomed to two options: (1) to sit and not participate in the class activities or (2) stand in front of their classmates and apologize for disrupting the learning environment. "I had to use it once with one of our students in Miss [Cyndi's] class and one student in Miss [Jackie's] class. The student in Miss [Jackie's] class, he was back there two minutes. He got up [from the desk in the back of the room] and he said, "I'm sorry, for disrupting learning. May I please come back and join our class?" All the other students were that were like, thank you, of course [you can join us]. But on the flip side, the student in Miss [Cyndi's] class, chose to sit

there for three days. *For three days* [emphasis]. And I was rethinking it [allowing the child to sit for three days]. I [thought to myself] "Alright, what do you do? This ain't right." (post-PLC interview transcript). Susie shared her conflicted self-talk about the situation. She defended her stance as an "old school, older teacher that I am, I'm like [thinking] "No, I said it. I mean it" (post-PLC interview transcript). "I said [to the student], I'm gonna hold you accountable." And finally on the third day, he raised his hand, and I went back there [to the back of the classroom]. He said [emphasis: sheepishly], "Ms. [Susie], please. Please let me join the class." I said, "Well honey, you know what you have to do." And he did. I mean, it took him a while to get there [the point of sharing the actual apology]. I felt like he was testing me to see if I would cave. And so, I never had any more issues out of either one on them" (post-PLC interview transcript). Susie concluded by sharing that her decision may not be considered a best practice, but it worked for him. The student continued to take notes of the class content for the three days but was very upset when his classmates were participating in a hands-on, active learning activity without him. The teachers sometimes had to use tough love as a strategy based in social persuasion to build elements of student SEL.

Physiological/Affective Experiences

The SEL-based instructional strategies implemented by the teachers elicited an array of emotions that supported student success in their school experiences. The teachers shared that they felt I "added another thing in our toolbox that we could use. Because this particular class [of fifth graders] need so much. They are so needy all areas, not just academically but especially social emotional, that [we, the teachers] having to be intentional about it [implementing SEL-based instructional strategies] has been helpful. It's having to be intentional; it gave us a safe space to be able to be intentional instead of somebody walking in [questioning our pedagogy].

Having that backup [participating in the SEL-PLC], it relieves a lot of pressure" (Cyndi, PLC-4 transcript). The teachers commented on how the toolbox supported their perceptions of decreased stress levels for themselves and for their students as they continued to implement the SEL tools from their toolbox.

The teachers reflected on how the SEL-based instructional strategies brought a sense of calmness for their students in their classrooms. After the implementation of all three SEL-based instructional strategies, the teachers confirmed that they experienced positive outcomes with increased student time on-task and work quality from students during their classes: "I am not going around putting out fires" (Susie, PLC-4 transcript). "[We are] seeing an increase in quality" (Cyndi, PLC-4 transcript). "Because of how I pair them [my students] for math, [the] students that typically struggle to get their work done on their own have that support now to answer quality and the completion of their work as a group" (Jackie, PLC-4 transcript). As the teachers reflected on how their students reacted to the various strategies for pairing or grouping students, they noted with consistent implementation that "now it's to the point where they really don't complain or argue about who's going to be their partner. They're just like "alright, this is it. I can work with them for this amount of time and it'll be okay" (Jackie, PLC-4 transcript). I commented on my perceptions of a decrease in student stress levels based on the teachers' reflections for how they were implementing classroom organization strategies to support cooperative learning structures: "I think mixing it [organizational strategies] up, after a while, just is one less stress [for students]. I think it just takes away the [stressful] feelings of being picked last" (Researcher, PLC-4 transcript). My comment resurfaced in my post-PLC #4 journal where I reflected on the SHAPE America (2008) *Appropriate Instructional Practice Guidelines* document, particularly section *2.0: Instructional Strategies.*

"In the future, I must align the appropriate practices document to the SEL-based instructional strategies from our PLC. I must remember that classroom teachers do not get introduced to this kind of information during their methods classes. It would benefit all teachers to understand how their students' self-concept and self-worth could be strengthened if teachers would utilize strategies that we use in PE to "preserve every child's dignity and self-respect" [revisit section 2.2: Class Organization]. Note: Think about how you can present a dichotomy as a visual representation or a "looks like, sounds like, feels like" anchor chart of the connected developmentally appropriate practices from SHAPE America that can be applied in a generalist's classroom to support students' well-being. Also wondering if elementary education has a developmentally appropriate practice document – NAEYC has one for early childhood education" (Researcher, post PLC-4 journal).

Teacher Perceptions of PLC Experiences Contributing to Change in Self-Efficacy

The third research question I examined from this study was RQ3: Which PLC experiences are perceived as contributing to teachers' change in self-efficacy in using SEL-based instructional strategies? The following categories were constructed as themes representing the teachers' perceptions of PLC experiences that contributed to their change in self-efficacy in using the SEL-based instructional strategies: *amassed growth* and *unsuspected gains.*

Amassed Growth

The SEL-PLC meetings supported the teachers over an eight month period during the 2022-2023 school year. The teachers reflected how their SEL-PLC experiences were beneficial: "It was very rewarding to me to see, like, the small changes that were taking place" (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript). "I feel really about all of these strategies and feel like they really do help the students with their [academic] learning and their social and emotional learning" (Jackie,

post-PLC interview transcript). The PLCs was a "reminder that's what I needed to be doing [focusing on SEL] with my kids. The reminder that *is* [emphasis] what worked. It pissed me of at first that we had to add something new. It ticked me off, not on your [the researcher] part. But it was a constant reminder of what I was really there for. So, I appreciated that" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript).

The structure of the SEL-PLC was geared to introduce pedagogical strategies that could support students and their SEL development. The three main areas of focus included active learning, life skills, and cooperative learning structures. The teachers were generally familiar with some of the topics of the SEL-PLC but may not have considered its applications to their classroom environment.

New Ideas Fueled Teacher Creativity

The SEL-PLCs introduced several new ideas that were novel ideas for the teachers. "I know I have seen the CASEL wheel, but I have never seen this movement based learning" (Jackie, PLC-1 transcript). "I just like the idea of having them [students] stand. That was, to me, like a "a-ha moment" there. That might be really fun!" (Susie, PLC-1 transcript). The novel ideas ignited teacher creativity through their brainstorming processes: "I can feel the creativity flowing on a Friday!" (Researcher, PLC-1 transcript). During PLC #1, the teachers brainstormed how to initiate their implementation of active learning strategies during Cardinal Time: "We could do this during Cardinal Time when our [student] numbers aren't as large. This is where we could introduce it [active learning] to them" (Susie, PLC-1 transcript). "I mean, I'm really excited [to implement active learning] when we start off Cardinal Time" (Susie, PLC-1 transcript). The teachers' brainstorming branched to consider how to extend their SEL-instructional strategies to different parts of the school day and into other content areas. Jackie found connections for active

learning: "And in morning meetings, especially in math when I'm trying to get them excited about our lessons" (PLC-1 transcript).

During PLC #2, the teachers reflected on their active learning implementation strategies. When considering how they can improve their approach to implementing active learning strategies in the future, Jackie shared a how to make the SEL connection move beyond a single activity: "My specific one [active learning activity] I did was coming up with different movements to depict what emoji we're feeling between happy, sad, okay, or mad. Next time I do that [emoji movement activity] to connect it back to the zones of regulation. And then that way, we can continually talk about it [zones] and do the movement throughout the day" (PLC-2 transcript.

Life skills for SEL was the focus of PLC #2. The Mood Meter was introduced, and curricular connections were immediately recognized: I'm sitting here thinking about all of these wonderful adjectives" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript). The impact of the Mood Meter generated collective brainstorming for how to implement this strategy with students during PLC-2 (from the transcript):

> Cyndi: "Can we? What would you guys think about printing and laminating [the Mood Meters]?"
>
> Jackie: "Yeah, we just were saying we would love it if we could have this for our kids. We probably could print them off."
>
> Susie: "Yeah!"
>
> Cyndi: "We can laminate them and wipe off for every day. We could even take that, like if we shrunk it, and taped it to the corner of each desk, and then wipe it off."

Jackie: They could even wipe if off when we switch classes and switch back and that way all three classes in every single classroom are able to track how they're feeling throughout the day."

The teachers deemed the Mood Meter as a valuable tool due to the positive results from their students. They continued to brainstorm creative ways to find connections to continue its impact: "What if, because they're learning to figure out where they are - we had like a red folder, a yellow folder. If you're high energy up here. If you're red - angry, grab the folder when you walk in, find an activity in there. So, you drop the incentive to get rid of some of that energy so they will not knock the block off the person next to you" (Cyndi, PLC-2.1 transcript).

In addition to the Mood Meters, the teachers learned about the resources from the RMC Health website that shared the skills and sub-skills that connect to the CASEL framework. The teachers found an instant use for the resources: "I like, along with those posters – the one that says the steps posters for self-management. They also have scripts that you can print off that the kids can fill in. The sub-skills have the verbiage and the language that they can use" (Cyndi, PLC-2 transcript).

The teachers initially shared they frequently implemented cooperative learning into their classrooms. Principal Smith reiterated the distinction between cooperative learning and group work: "Our whole school could hear this just because I think we fall into the trap or misnomer of saying if I have you two [students as partners] work on that together, that's collaborative working and it's not. It's group work, and there's a big difference" (PLC-3 transcript). The teachers saw connections to interpersonal communication and relationships from the previous PLC and considered subtle ways to emphasize student respect: "I just need to add that part

[students saying thank you to each other]. They teach each other at their table teams. But just

adding that [simple] thank you" (Susie, PLC-3 transcript).

Unsuspected Gains

The post-PLC interviews shared critical insights to support which PLC experiences were

perceived as contributing the change in self-efficacy in using SEL-based instructional strategies.

The post-PLC interviews provided additional evidence and themes highlighting how the SEL-

PLC contributed to influencing the teachers through factors aligned with the four sources of self-

efficacy: *pleasant surprises*, *active and engaged learning community*, *feedback is a gift*, and

remembering their why.

Pleasant Surprises. The teachers experienced constraints and affordances as they

implemented the SEL-based instructional strategies. The teachers experienced adversity and

surprising insights as they embarked in their implementation practices: "I didn't realize that each

strategy would [not] work the same with each class. Like, I had to figure out, which strategy

worked best for the needs of each classroom, instead of like, forcing it on everybody. I had to

learn how Miss [Jackie]'s class needed more morning meaning [time]; they need more life skills.

And my class needed more just active learning. I think that was, like a negative experience. Like,

that was not fun. It wasn't fun for the students or myself, because I was like [clap, clap] this is

what we're gonna do. You know, and it just didn't work" (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript).

Susie also felt adversity making direction connections to her academic content area: "I taught

science. And so, it was a little more difficult, especially in the beginning to think, okay, how am

I gonna get this in? How am I gonna get like life skills in?" (post-PLC interview).

At times, the physiological and emotional cues through the teachers' implementation

experience caused adversity for each teacher: "I think at the beginning, um, having to look

through the books and choose something was stressful because it was just adding another thing" (post-PLC interview transcript). Jackie's optimism for cooperative learning was greater than her students' understandings: "Well, whenever I first tried the cooperative groups, there was a very negative response from my students. And so that kind of disheartened me a little bit because I was like, but it's gonna be great. And they were not buying into it" (post-PLC interview transcript).

These moments of adversity served as a pause for the teachers to contemplate how to best meet the imminent SEL needs for their students. Through the process of reviewing resources, Cyndi experienced confirmation: "I realized, hey, Cyndi, you're already doing that [integrating SEL experiences]. You just have to kind of keep track of it a little bit more. I think that was it was a release to keep me being myself. Okay, you know, and constantly looking for the SEL stuff. And that I could look at the tools that you gave us [and] look at it more as an integration rather than a focus. For me being able to look at it more as an integration, rather than a focus was helpful, because my focus had to be testing" (post-PLC interview transcript). The PLCs was a "reminder that's what I needed to be doing with my kids. The reminder of that *is* [emphasis] what worked" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript).

Jackie feelings of discouragement motivated her to create a learning experience that would guide her students to turn negatives into positives: "But, I went home and thought and made [a plan] for a morning meeting and like, made this slide and when through it. And then got 'em hyped up about it. [The slide had] a video on how we [the class] can work together. And then I had them give different examples of an experience they had that they didn't like where they worked with somebody. Then we put them [the slips with examples] in a pot and pulled them out - brainstormed ideas of how we could make that instead of a negative experience into a

positive one" (post-PLC interview). Jackie took the time with her class to reflect on how cooperation can lead to positive results and intentionally connected the student's past experiences for students to gain a deeper understanding for why they use cooperative learning in school. "I feel like they did buy in pretty quick, because we used cooperative groups for the rest of the year. And they really did what they needed to do and work together and didn't complain and be like well I don't want to work with them" (Jackie, post-PLC interview).

The teachers reflected on the pleasant surprises that developed over time with their dedication to implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies. Susie was proud of her students embracing active learning in science: "Those children knew their clouds; you know what I am saying? Like, they rocked it on that science EOG!" (post-PLC interview transcript). She discovered that establishing student choice of a partner served as a strong incentive for her cooperative learning structures: "So I grouped them - like the color of their shirt or the color of their hair or something [similar]. And then they had to go work with their team to do that [lesson activity]. And then once they finished with their rotations, then they can go back and work with their buddy, their friend, you know, they could choose their partner. And they were definitely on-task because they wanted to get back to their buddy" (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript).

Active and Engaged Learning Community. Through reflection and brainstorming during the SEL-PLCs, the teachers learned vicariously from each other as they implemented the SEL-based instructional strategies throughout the school year. The teachers enjoyed moving and learning throughout their own PLC experience: "One thing that helped my confidence was like our very first PLC when you [the researcher] got up there and you [the researcher] made us do those silly stretches. I was like, well, you know, if she's up there making us do those stretches and you know, not embarrassed about it, I can do that in front of my kids" (Jackie, post-PLC

interview transcript). The actual act of moving during the PLC was "the big knock on the head. This is about your kids remember what is best for the kids" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript).

The reflection stories from the teachers shed light on what they observed from each other at school: "She [Susie] does a lot of active learning. And so that inspires me to incorporate more active learning, but like purposeful active learning, because I'm good about the brain breaks and getting up and moving. But I want to make it more content-based" (Jackie, post-PLC interview transcript). Jackie complimented Cyndi's use of the Mood Meters: "I really liked how she had the mood meters on the desk. So I think I'm going to get those printed and put on my desks for this year" (post-PLC interview transcript). Jackie also drew from a county math curriculum coach who modeled a math lesson: "Her collaborative groups are what really inspired me to start using them [cooperative learning groups] as much as I did towards the end of the year. I saw the way that they [the students] were engaged and helping and supporting each other and wanted that for all the time" (post-PLC interview transcript).

Susie appreciated how Jackie was "really great, like [with] relationships with a couple of her students. Like she could just she knew, like the life skills, I really felt like for her that was a strength. And I picked up a lot watching her, listening to her talk to the students" (post-PLC interview transcript). Susie concurred with Jackie about the use of Mood Meters: "She did a wonderful job. Like introducing those [Mood Meters] in and the students were great about coming in [to her class] and saying, I'm here [the spot on the Mood Meter]. And I think it served the students well" (post-PLC interview transcript).

The SEL-PLC conversations embedded elements of discussion and reflection that created a safe community for everyone to be a "sounding board to each other" (Susie, post-PLC

interview transcript). "I definitely think like the collaboration, you know, the PLC meetings [helped me], I learned a lot. I mean, I really did from just us getting together and changes, like you [researcher] directing our conversations about it [SEL-based instructional strategies]" (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript). Susie commented on how the SEL-PLC was on-going throughout an eight month period: "Yeah, no, then this [embedding SEL-instructional] would not have happened. I wouldn't know what to do. I wouldn't be able to, like, do it on the fly now, you know? Because you [researcher] were there to guide us along and to, you know, provide us with the different materials and suggestions" (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript).

Feedback is a Gift. The teachers' dedication for implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies did not go unnoticed. The teachers reflected on the feedback they received as a result to implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies: "I did actually have a couple of parents and several of the students like as far as the active part [learning strategies]. They loved how they [students] were always up and moving and then responsible for their own learning" (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript). At the end of the school year, an new school administrator was completing class walkthroughs: "And I could have crawled under my desk, thinking is this first time I'm meeting my new principal. But she keeps talking about how all the children were still on task, you know, they were actively engaged. There were no, like, misbehaviors" (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript). Even in stressful situations, Susie shared "I feel like the support that we received from our principal [for participating in the SEL-PLC] was imperative. She was so on board with it, you know, and pat us on the back every chance she get got" (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript).

Cyndi's advocacy skills and support for student SEL garnered feedback of parent appreciation and shared examples: "You know, Miss [Cyndi], you're the only teacher that did

something about this. You didn't just say that you heard us. You did something [took action to bring the parents together to help remedy a bullying situation]." (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript). Cyndi shared how she would give students a variety of strategies that would release the emotional energy through physical energy, especially when the wiggle corners of her room were occupied in the afternoons. For example, she would tell her students to "get a paperclip; rub [the paperclip between their finger and thumb], grab a rock, keep a rock in your pocket. Grab that nickel in your pocket. Just something. Let it [the energy] out" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript). "I'm hearing back [some] parents from last year. [The parent communication shared] "Oh my gosh, he still remembers when you did with the [pocket trick]. And it really helped him with this presentation" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript). Cyndi shared her appreciation for the administrative support and feedback throughout the SEL-PLC. Cyndi recalled a conversation with Principal Smith: Your [grade level] team worked more closely than any other [grade level] team that I had. And She said it could be because of the SEL focus and research that you guys were doing [in the SEL-PLC]. But she said you guys work together about these behavior problems. None of my other teams did. Your [team] worked together to solve the problems. And she said, "I appreciated that more than you know." (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript).

Jackie consistently receives positive feedback on her teacher observations completed by her school administrators: "I get really positive classroom management and [student] relationships, but not really negative on the content, but just [comments] like, "Could you do it [teach the content] this way instead?" And so I feel like that's [SEL-PLC] really helped me strive to incorporate more hands-on activities and student-centered learning for math and like letting them go and explore first before just being [Jackie using direct instruction] like, "Alright, here's how you do it." And then once they've [students] explored, we [the class] use their [student-

designed] strategies to kind of come up with our [class] strategy" (Jackie, post-PLC interview transcript).

Remembering their Why. The teachers experienced an array of emotions throughout the eight month SEL-PLC experiences. The SEL-PLC empowered the teachers to focus on the heart of why they were educators: "They matter, they're important, and they are loved" (Jackie, post-PLC interview transcript). She continued to reflect on the significance and fulfillment of her work with students: "I feel like a lot of my students come from not great home lives. And that really influences me to want to help them learn how to, like, deal with the different feelings that they may feel at school or at home or wherever they are and give them strategies that they can use to move forward since they might not be getting any of that [support] at home" (Jackie, post-PLC interview transcript). Jackie shared during PLC #4 that she felt most self-efficacious about "life skills and cooperative learning" (PLC-4 transcript). Jackie was mindful of her students' emotional capacity as she shared: "With life skills, for the most part that was positive. Sometimes, depending on what topic it was, things might not have been positive for particular students if it like hit a chord in them" (post-PLC interview transcript).

The teachers were proud of their students' academic achievements and SEL growth. During PLC #5, the teachers were discussing the upcoming end-of-grade (EOG) tests and academic growth: "Eighty-eight percent [in science]? I have never seen scores like that" (Cyndi, PLC-5 interview transcript). Susie confirmed during her post-PLC interview that the students excelled on their Science EOG. Through the SEL-PLC experience, Susie experiences a great deal of change in her self-efficacy for teaching the SEL-based instructional strategies. Susie mentioned how I (as the PLC facilitator) provided support: "I mean, to be honest, I had no idea about this stuff when we started, I was scared to death! I don't know what to do! But then you

came in, you kind of boosted us up, you know" (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript). Her fear

turned into her own path of gaining a growth mindset for teaching the SEL-based instructional

strategies: "You know what, I can do this. I'm just going to take baby steps now. Yes. And those

baby steps led to leaps!" (post-PLC interview). Susie expressed how she was gratifying it was to

support her students' academic learning and SEL growth: "I really believe because they were

active [and] were working cooperatively, they may not have enjoyed it to begin with. But in the

end, they did it [worked cooperatively]. And then like, the life skills, just bringing in different

parts of it, whether it was from myself, or from the student who was not having the best day. I

mean, we just kind of all learn from each other, honestly, you know, we learn from each other.

And I'm hoping their confidence is better now, too" (Susie, post-PLC interview transcript).

The SEL-PLCs served as an emotional release from the stress Cyndi experienced in her

new position at Cardinal Elementary School. Cyndi used storytelling as a form of reflection and

it served to be therapeutic for her: "Once you let me out of that box [of focusing primarily on

testing], I was okay to do what I wanted to do. And I didn't feel the pressure. So just the relief in

the PLC is having the release from the pressure and you [researcher] allowing me to tell the

stories, because that is how I communicate" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript). The SEL-

PLC resources I provided supported Cyndi's autonomy for teaching creatively: "Yeah, but the

mood meter specifically. And then all those websites specifically around [the Mood Meter]

because I got jazzed with it. And so being able to jump into that, but then having that plethora

where I could grab what I wanted. It wasn't forced. So having that there so that I could dig in as

much as I wanted, was great. And then having your [researcher] encouragement to chase it, and

to just go, "hey, yeah, this is what I want. Do more." Having the freedom to do that [have

autonomy] was good. And getting to design it, the way that I felt would be great for my students was the best part" (post-PLC interview transcript).

Cyndi found solace and *remembered her why* in the SEL-PLC learning experiences: "So there is a scripture in the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy that says that we're to teach our children in our coming in and are going out that we're to teach our kids, when we're sitting down, when we're standing up, when we're walking along the wayside, they were to teach our kids always, and so that's what I do. I mean, that's how I live my life" (post-PLC interview transcript). She continued to express "I'm constantly teach…it's an integration, it's a constant integration. So getting that release from you [researcher/PLC facilitator], when it was not so mandated, you know, when it wasn't stuff that just had to be [mandated and taught in one way. And for me, it was the organic thing [teaching without mandates]. It's integrated, and the integration was beautiful that that helped relieve a whole lot of pressure. And it helped me integrate it more.]" (Cyndi, post-PLC interview transcript). Cyndi fervently shared "They [SEL-PLC], just your [researcher as PLC facilitator] release for me to come back to who I really am. That was [silence]. Thank you [to researcher]. Just thank you because it kept me grounded. I was just so angry all year" (post-PLC interview transcript).

Summary

The findings highlighted the changes of teacher self-efficacy for the implementation of SEL-based instructional strategies. The positive impact and change of teacher self-efficacy for implementing the SEL-based instructional strategies is supported by the teachers plans for future implementation. The teachers shared how they planned to start the subsequent school year using some of the pedagogical tools they acquired in the SEL-PLC. Jackie was positively impacted by what she learned through the experience of adding cooperative learning that resulted in creating a

presentation with a video: "Well, I now know that whenever we start using our cooperative groups this year that I'm going to just go ahead and start off with that presentation again. And that way, I can have them ready and excited about it instead of grumbling" (post-PLC interview transcript). "But with active learning, definitely, I am going to prepare for that better this year, because I want to have them [the students] up and moving around, not just for brain breaks, but for learning content" (post-PLC interview transcript).

Susie confidently expressed her self-efficacy for using the SEL-based instructional strategies: "I feel like now I can pull something out on the fly. You know, just like at open house last night, there were a couple of students [I observed] and I'm thinking [to myself], "Oh, honey, okay, we're gonna have [to develop] some life skills. You know, like, that [increased awareness] has definitely boosted my confidence, because now I know what I'm going [to do] to hit the ground running with them" (post-PLC interview transcript). Susie added to her vision of the upcoming school year: "And then of course, I did see where cooperative learning, definitely [will be needed]. I think that's important for not just beginning of the year, but just to build classroom culture" (post-PLC interview transcript). Susie experienced a tremendous boost to her confidence coupled with positive changes to her self-efficacy for the implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategies: "Absolutely [my confidence has grown]! I'm hoping that it [growing confidence] did [for] those students. I hope that they'll carry some of those things to middle school. You know, like, it doesn't just stop here [in fifth grade]. I hope that they think back [reflect] and think [to themselves], "Oh, you know what? Now Ms. [Susie] taught me better than that [laughter]! Yeah, so that's what I'm hoping for" (post-PLC interview transcript).

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The gardener does not make a plant grow.

The job of a gardener is to create

optimal conditions.

Sir Ken Robinson

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional face-to-face instruction for K-12 students in the United States, emphasizing the importance of addressing both academic and social-emotional well-being. While traditional teaching methods prevail, integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) pedagogies can significantly enhance students' skills, which is crucial for success in various life domains. Despite recognizing the benefits of SEL, teachers often need more training and knowledge to implement SEL skills effectively. Current SEL professional development programs lack continuity and coherence, impacting teacher learning outcomes. Understanding these challenges and improving SEL professional development is vital for supporting students' overall well-being.

In the study, I implemented a qualitative case study to explore the perceptions of the participants' experiences in an on-going PLC based on integrating social and emotional learning into their classroom settings; how specific elements of a PLC and how three different SEL-based instructional strategies could be integrated within the general academic curricula; and what elements of a PLC and SEL-based instructional strategies contributed to a change in the participant's self-efficacy. The design of the PLC was intentionally constructed for participants who may have had varied experiences and beliefs regarding social and emotional learning. Each participant built their knowledge through their respective participation in the PLC. The collective group of participants shared their thoughts and experiences throughout the study, which built

their understanding of SEL-based instructional strategies for various distinctive and sometimes complex situations. The social interactions within this case study prompt different perspectives through debriefing, reflection, collaboration, and shared meaning-making (Hord, 2009). This study answers the call of Zee and Koomen's (2016) push for longitudinal studies of TSE considering the "potential fluctuating nature of TSE" (p. 1010). This study afforded co-construction of meaning through the social context of the learning opportunities and interactions over an eight month study and reflection on their professional learning experiences influenced by the SEL-PLC (Andrienko-Genin et al., 2023).

This chapter will discuss a summary of findings based on each research question. The findings from this exploratory case study have implications for educators and other educational leaders who focus on TSE and SEL. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The discussion is structured according to the three research questions outlined in the introduction to the study.

RQ1: How do K-5 teachers adapt and use the SEL-based instructional strategies presented through PLC meetings?

In examining how the teachers adapted and used the SEL-based instructional strategies throughout the SEL-PLC, all three teachers instituted a collective plan to introduce active learning as an SEL pedagogy during a common time in their schedules starting with their Cardinal time. This was an intentional way for the teachers to start with smaller groups that afforded them the time and space to learn how to add a new instructional and classroom management approach with their students. The teachers also began to individually select

pragmatic implementation methods that were conducive to their classroom instruction styles, academic content, and classroom environments. Classroom teachers have an exclusive perspective and understanding of their classroom. Classrooms are ecosystems that are "wonderfully complicated and intricate settings where the addition of each unique person exponentially and beautifully complexifies" (Walker et al., 2021, p. 3) that distinctive space. From an ecological perspective, the teachers were able to view their students' needs and select the appropriate strategy that supported the specific situations in the classroom. The teachers' decision making promoted symbiotic relationships that intertwined classroom "connectedness, relationships, and contextual interdependency" (Walker et al., 2021, p. 3) as they implemented the SEL-based instructional strategies.

The teachers were aware and understood the necessity for continuous SEL support for their students. They worked fervently to create a classroom environment and ecology centered on positive relationships, intending to assist their students in finding their academic, social, and emotional success (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Through the SEL-PLCs, teachers found that supporting their students through the implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategies brought an opportunity but also posed challenges in their efforts (Domitrovich et al., 2016). The original goal for the SEL-PLC immersed the teachers to find ways to bridge SEL to their academic content. The teachers realized successful methods to link the SEL-based instructional strategies to the academic content. However, throughout the SEL-PLC experiences, the teachers recognized how the SEL-based instructional strategies provided them with pragmatic ways to focus on SEL throughout the school day.

Conclusively, a schools' endeavors to promote SEL should encompass a comprehensive approach that includes explicit instruction in the requisite skills for fostering personal and social

awareness and responsibility, as advocated by Darling-Hammond et al. (2018). This approach aims to create a conducive classroom environment and ecology that nurtures the holistic growth of students, encompassing their social, emotional, and academic development (Jones & Bouffard, 2017; Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The insights gained from teachers' experiences in employing and adapting SEL instructional strategies underscore the nuanced nature of SEL implementation. While SEL may be allocated specific time slots within the classroom schedule, the lived experiences of the teachers in this study highlight that the essence of SEL lies in responding to students' needs in real-time, irrespective of temporal constraints.

RQ2: How do K-5 teachers' self-efficacy in teaching SEL change through their participation in the SEL-PLC?

In exploring how the teachers' self-efficacy in teaching SEL changed through their participation in the SEL-PLC, each teacher demonstrated notable changes in TSE. Their confidence levels increased significantly, with self-ratings indicating the highest extent of positive change at five (5) post-PLC. These enhancements in TSE stemmed from a variety of efficacy-forming growth experiences that incorporated all four sources of self-efficacy. As the SEL-PLC progressed, the teachers began to unveil the intricacies of the ebbs and flows of implementation strategies produced through mastery experiences. The teachers shared their personal journeys using storytelling as a medium (Narayanan & Ordynans, 2022). Their reflective practice illuminated their cognitive processes and contributed to a deeper understanding of their experiences, both individually and within their teaching contexts. Collaborating within the SEL-PLCs, teachers vicariously drew from each other's experiences and created new meanings, particularly as they navigated shifts in pedagogy and receiving varied feedback from students, parents, and school administration. The teachers' steadfast commitment

to the SEL-PLC fostered a safe space for an individualized and shared experiences of meaning-making that bolstered their development of self-efficacy.

In examining the efficacy-forming growth experiences that developed from the SEL-PLC, social persuasion and physiological/affective indicators were essential to building TSE. The social persuasion served as validation for the teachers as they implemented the SEL-based instructional strategies. Even when their students reacted unfavorably to the cooperative learning strategies, their feedback fueled the teachers to leverage their knowledge of students and address misunderstandings to find relevant ways to improve their implementation strategies. A key discovery from the findings revealed that the efficacy-forming growth experiences were not isolated occurrences. As the levels of TSE changed over time, the teachers' reflections flourished into robust stories that highlighted the interconnection between teacher and student success. The reflection stories were energized with positive physiological/affective indicators for both teachers and their students. The changes of TSE drew strength from the positive impacts in their classrooms and the social and emotional flourishing of their students.

RQ3: Which PLC experiences are perceived as contributing to teachers' change in self-efficacy in using SEL-based instructional strategies?

In ascertaining which PLC experiences were perceived as contributing to the change in TSE in using SEL-based instructional strategies, the teachers found utility to each PLC experience. The design of the SEL-PLC introduced SEL-based pedagogical strategies that fueled their confidence and stimulated teacher creativity to flow as they brainstormed and planned for implementation. The SEL-PLCs provided the teachers with resources and modeled examples to unpack how to approach implementation of the SEL-based instructional strategy. The teachers

found value in the nuggets of information that they each needed that transformed into tools for their SEL pedagogical skills toolbox.

Research on TSE has consistently shown its correlation with several positive teacher and student outcomes (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990; Schunk et al., 2014). The shift in TSE was sparked by the sentiment of a "Maslow before Blooms" (Raschdorf et al., 2020; Kaspar & Massey, 2022) pedagogical approach that contributed to the realization of positive student social and emotional changes and momentum towards student flourishing. The teachers' reflections celebrated the observed growth in student agency that included increased time on-task during a variety of academic tasks. The SEL-based instructional strategies nurtured a classroom atmosphere where students took initiative in their learning through relevant and meaningful experiences. For instance, the integration of the Mood Meter was often student-initiated at times they deemed necessary for identifying their emotions. The Mood Meter provided students with a deeper comprehension of the variety, sources, and intensity of their emotions. Over time, these insights empowered their voices and supported their growth and contributions to a PERMA-supportive classroom environment. Their enhanced agency was evident through empowerment, ownership, and the development of advocacy skills guided by SEL core competencies. Teachers shared stories of small victories in student outcomes that reciprocally influenced their TSE for implementing SEL-based instructional strategies, creating a PERMA-supportive classroom environment where teacher-student collaboration promoted human flourishing (Seligman, 2011).

Interpretations and Implications

The findings in this study have respective theoretical, conceptual, and practical implications. From the theoretical perspective, the findings provide support for how TSE can positively change with information one gains through the four sources of Bandura's (1997)

social cognitive theory. While studies about social cognitive theory and SEL have grown in abundance in the field of education, it is important to consider moving beyond quantitative survey data to capture which of the four sources are self-efficacy are deemed impactful for teachers who participate in a variety of learning experiences. Zee and Koomen (2016) called for "greater emphasis…placed on longitudinal analysis" (p. 1010). This study captured nuances of the effects of the sources of TSE through qualitative methodology to pursue deeper understandings and contextualized meaning-making gained from the teachers' learning experiences connected to SEL (Dyson et al., 2021).

The findings of this study also illustrated how utilizing ongoing PD grounded in social cognitive theory and the PERMA theory of well-being has the potential to increase TSE to promote SEL within elementary school settings. By providing support to classroom teachers through a PLC focused on the implementation of SEL-based instructional strategies facilitated a novel and contextually dependent learning space for teachers to develop self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Mintzes et al., 2012). The findings situated the teachers as educational connoisseurs that used criticism in an iterative process navigating numerous experiences throughout the SEL-PLC (Eisner, 1991; Schwandt, 1998). This approach unveiled that supporting student SEL is also iterative and does not stay on a linear path to be produced in a lesson or temporal path as a checkpoint to proceed to the next SEL lesson or topic. Transitioning to a theoretical stance complementary of qualitatively exploring to understand individual's nuanced and contextual experiences over extended periods of time can lead to more individualized contributions for improved SEL in a variety of school settings for both teacher and student.

From a conceptual perspective, researchers, school administrators, and teacher practitioners continue to reexamine the underpinnings for approaches to teaching and learning of

SEL (Wigelsworth et al., 2022; Dyson et al., 2020). To date, there is a robust amount of evidence centered on the benefits of SEL programs and curriculum; however, there is a lack of empirical evidence to yield what mixtures of pedagogical practices and instructional elements are utilized and conveyed for specific student SEL needs. To my knowledge, this is the first study with elementary school teachers that sought to change TSE through the implementation of SEL-based instructional strategies that originated from the discipline of health and physical education to create a holistic approach to supporting student SEL and well-being. Reconceptualizing approaches for teaching and learning SEL that move away from a teaching manual may bring new perspectives and renewed hope for how to realistically introduce, integrate, and embed SEL into a child's entire school day, especially during critical times when they need it the most to thrive and flourish.

From a practical perspective, the approach and utilization of the SEL-based instructional strategies proved to positively change TSE. Teacher educators, pre-service, in-service teachers, and school administrators should consider ways to scaffold and implement pragmatic approaches for creating a PERMA-supportive school culture that embeds SEL-instructional strategies with every facet of the school day. When an entire school can embrace supporting their students' SEL in the moment, each educator and supporting adults will "meet their students where they are" and personalize the SEL experience to best support each student in their overall growth and development. The personalized SEL embedded throughout a PERMA-supportive school can support students over time and not only during a specific time of the day guided by a teacher's manual. The personalized SEL approach to create a PERMA-supportive school can be a way of life to support teacher and student flourishing.

Social Cognitive Theory and SEL

The findings of this study support the emerging insights on how to practically implement SEL to positively build self-efficacy for both teacher and student. The current educational landscape does not afford teachers a great deal of flexibility due to the emphasis on academic testing. The SEL-PLC afforded teachers the opportunity to be flexible with SEL implementation through the pedagogical strategies of active learning, life skills, and cooperative learning (Jones et al., 2017). The findings from this study revealed that the model of triadic reciprocality in Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory developed to become a representation of how a PERMA-supportive ecology can be developed (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Triadic Reciprocality to Support PERMA-Supportive Classroom Ecologies
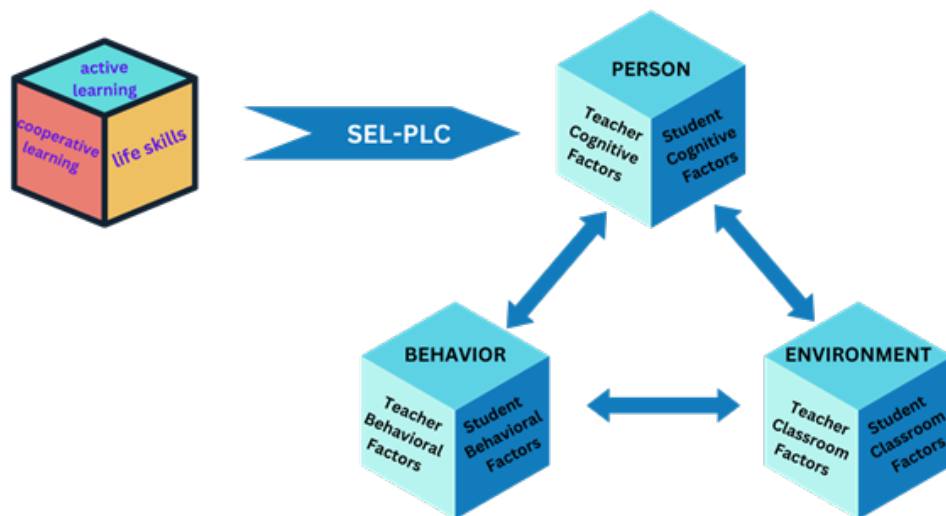
The SEL-PLC served as a medium for teachers to learn new pedagogical strategies (cognitive factors) to support their students' specific SEL needs (behavioral factors). While these initial interactions were bidirectional in nature (e.g., teacher instructs students through a learning task integrating active learning [cognitive] and students enjoy the learning experience [behavior]) the students developed SEL knowledge (cognitive) that improved the quality if their

lived experiences in school. The teachers persisted over the course of eight months to continue to

problem-solve and create classrooms supportive of their students' academic, social, and

emotional needs. Through their unwavering support, the teachers cultivated the co-creation of a

PERMA-supportive classroom environment (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. The Co-Creation of PERMA-Supportive Classrooms
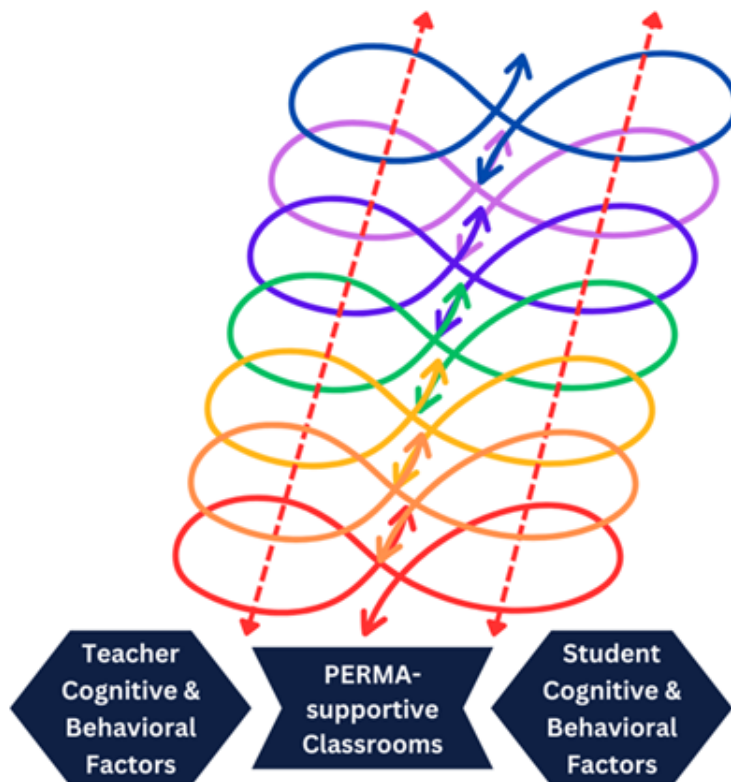
The findings from this study illuminated that the creation of the PERMA-supportive

classroom is the quintessence of teachers and students working in tandem to contribute to an

optimal learning environment that supports flourishing in multiple domains. The infinite layers

of meaning-making through SEL-embedded tasks can promote or restrict the development of

self-efficacy for teachers and students. In the spirit of Freire (1970), SEL-embedded tasks

contend the banking concept of education. The teachers and students can share an exchange of

roles and through important dialogues and experiences, everyone can teach and learn the core

substance of SEL together. In the spirit of Dewey (1938) traditional education focused on "subject-matter for study facts" (p. 23) do not support learning experiences that prepare for life experiences. Using the SEL-based instructional strategies supports teachers and students to work in tandem as they "discover the connection which actually exists *within* [sic] experience between the achievements of the past and the issues of the present" (Dewey, 1938, p. 23). Schooling devoted to SEL as a way of learning will prepare students to learn from their past and have a deeper appreciation for learning in the moment.

Limitations and Future Research

The design and implementation of this study have several limitations. First, as I addressed in the methodology chapter, the final number of participants for the study yielded a small number from one grade level team. While purposive sampling focused on one school location, the original plan was to study how the SEL-PLC would have changed TSE for all participants within the school in all six grade levels. This study focused on a single case study comprised of the fifth grade teacher SEL-PLC. With more participants within the school inclusive of all grade levels, this study could have developed into a multiple case study. The multiple case study would have afforded a within and cross case analysis that could have produced different results. Future research could explore how an SEL-PLC could be implemented school-wide to learn of specific pedagogical practices that would allow the SEL-based instructional strategies to scaffold in order to support a PERMA-supportive school climate.

Another limitation to this study is that the results were from data that relied on the participants' PLC and interview audio files and transcripts. This study did not include classroom observations as a source of data. It is important to acknowledge that the study collected qualitative data over an extended period. Through a qualitative methodological approach, the

findings support the importance of providing narratives that share the nuances to teachers' lived experiences through professional learning opportunities. Future research could integrate classroom observations to deepen the understandings of the classroom climate and for the PD to be tailored to specific needs or inquiries from the teacher. The study encompassed three SEL-based instructional strategies. Through classroom observations by the researcher, the SEL-based instructional strategies instruction and modeling could be contextualized for the specific needs of the classroom and observed student academic, social, and emotional needs.

To enhance the scope of future research, it would be beneficial to broaden the investigation into SEL implementation methods by integrating student feedback to establish a continuous feedback loop for educators. Encompassing an action research approach to integrating SEL-based instructional strategies while incorporating student voice brings an enhanced level of efficacy to the implementation process. Student voice invites an honest perspective for how the students perceive and value the SEL experiences throughout their school day. Through the use of authentic assessment, teachers can receive feedback on their implementation of SEL-based instructional strategies. When students begin to feel that their voice is being honored and heard, this feedback can be a form of trust-building to enhance the teacher-student relationship. This can be a powerful development in what Noddings (1984, 2005a, 2005b) emphasized as "care" between the "carer" [teacher] and the "cared for" [student]. Trusting students to share their authentic thoughts and opinions while teachers embrace and use the student feedback creates a relationship of mutual understanding. The action research approach using authentic assessment can construct PERMA-supportive classrooms that radiate what Noddings (1984, 2005a, 2005b) articulated as the four major components to caring: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation.

In teacher education preparation programs, it is recommended to incorporate the four components of Noddings' (1984, 2005a, 2005b) Ethic of Care as it integrates with SEL and classroom behavior into its curriculum and field work preparation experiences. The data from the opening paragraph of this dissertation supports the notion that teachers entering the field must be equipped with more knowledge and guided experiences that connect with SEL through a lens of care to support their students' vast and growing needs. Soutter (2019) shared the student answers regarding their thoughts on the impact of SEL as it related to their school culture. The answers predominantly linked students' perceptions of SEL for being leaders in the school to compliance or good behavior. Every child's behavior is a form of communication that can open doors to help students understand themselves and others. Cultivating next generation's leaders cannot be an act of compliance to SEL-based lessons. Our next generation of teachers must be an educational force who support the development of their students to become generational leaders through their facilitation and actions anchored in the ethic of care.

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APPENDIX A: ADULT CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: Exploring Teacher Self-Efficacy within the Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning Pedagogies

Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor: Judy Fowler (PI) and Dr. Dale Schunk (Faculty Advisor)

Participant's Name:

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 can download 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 purpose of this study is to explore the development of teacher self-efficacy within the implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL) pedagogies.

Why are you asking me?
You are asked to participate in this study because you are currently employed as a teacher or principal in a public elementary school.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?
If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete two (2) survey and participate in five (5) teacher PLC meetings that focus on the implementation of SEL-based pedagogies that integrate with your current curriculum and standards. Your group reflections during your PLC time will be used as data for this study. In addition, your lesson ideas and researcher reflection notes will be used as data in this study. You will be invited to participate in one (1) one-on-one interview at the end of the study. The one-on-one interview will be audio-recorded and will last no longer than 30 minutes. Participants will be asked to review written transcriptions. You will be asked to answer questions regarding your experiences during the study. The study will take place during existing PLC times at your school.

Principals will only be interviewed before and after the PLC learning session

Is there any audio/video recording?

Yes. The interviews and PLC meetings will be digitally recorded and transcribed. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interviews. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for comments you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed although the principal investigator (Judy Fowler) will try hard to limit access of the recording as described below. In addition, if the interviews and PLC meetings take place via Zoom, the video recording will be used and your image will be identifiable. Participants may choose to not have their video shared during the Zoom meeting.

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 Judy Fowler (jafowle3@uncg.edu, 336-669-2650) or Dr. Dale Schunk (dhschunk@uncg.edu, 336-334-5000).

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?
Findings of this study may help teacher educators to better design teacher education programs to support both preservice and in-service teachers. This study may be beneficial in assisting researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in further understanding how social and emotional learning can be incorporated into existing curricula, future practice, policy, teacher-education, and continued professional development for teachers.

Are there any benefits to *me* for taking part in this research study?
There are no direct benefits to participants in this study.

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 in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. All data used for the purpose of this study will be deidentified prior to analysis. A master list containing your name will be stored separately on a password-protected computer in the researcher's home office. The original paper data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office at UNCG. The electronic data will be stored in the online cloud service named Box under a protected and secured UNCG account. Contact lists, recruitment records, or other documents that contain your personal information will be destroyed when no longer required for the research. 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.
Absolute confidentiality of data provided through the Internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access. Please be sure to close your browser when finished so no one will be able to see what you have been doing.
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 clicking "I agree" below, 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.

- Yes, I agree.
- No, I decline.

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B: PLC AGENDAS

Professional Learning of SEL Pedagogies during PLC times
(_____) Elementary School
PLC Meeting Rotation #1

Time	Theme: SEL & Student Well-being	Facilitator's Notes
2 minutes	Welcome & Overview of PLC	Provide general outline agenda of the SEL-PLCs
10 minutes	Review of CASEL's SEL framework • Group discussion – what are your students' main SEL needs?	View the interactive SEL wheel
5 minutes	Student Well-being • Social & Emotional Climate	Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model PDF Using the WSCC Model to Integrate SEL PDF
10 minutes	SEL Instructional Strategy #1: Brain Boosters • The "What" and "Why": Brain Boosters help students increase or refocus their energy while learning. • Connection to SEL: • The "How": Judy will model a **Brain Booster** activity with teachers • Share Brain Booster Resources	fitBoost online activity Edutopia: Using Brain Breaks to Restore Students' Focus K-5 Classroom Energizers
20 minutes	PLC Planning Time • PLC groups will explore resources and instructional strategies to integrate Brain Booster into a lesson. • Action Item: PLC's will share how they will implement Brain Boosters into a lesson in the next week.	Teachers will share their lesson ideas for implementation.
5 minutes	Housekeeping & Closing Reminders • Tell Judy when you will teach your lesson next week • Schedule next PLC meeting in 2 weeks – bring a copy of your lesson plan that integrated the Brain Boosters. We will reflect on the lesson together.	

Sample Agenda – Professional Learning of SEL Pedagogies during PLC times
(_____) Elementary School
PLC Meeting Rotation #2

Time	Theme: SEL Skills	Facilitator's Notes
15 minutes	Whole Group Debrief of the Brain Booster Lesson • How did the lesson go? • What did the students do during the lesson? How do you think the students felt during the lesson? • What other supports can I help provide you to learn more about Brain Boosters?	
10 minutes	SEL Instructional Strategy #2: SEL skills • The "What" and "Why": SEL skills can be learned • Connection to SEL: Key skills – interpersonal communication, decision-making, & self-management • The "How": Judy will model *interpersonal communication learning activity (Meet & Greet)* • Share resources for SEL skills	SEL Skills from RMC
20 minutes	PLC Planning Time • PLC groups will explore resources and instructional strategies to integrate SEL-skills into a lesson. • Action Item: PLC's will share how they will implement SEL skills into a lesson in the next week.	Teachers will share their lesson ideas for implementation.
5 minutes	Housekeeping & Closing Reminders • Tell Judy when you will teach your lesson next week • Schedule next PLC meeting in 2 weeks – bring a copy of your lesson plan that integrated SEL skills. We will reflect on the lesson together.	

Sample Agenda – Professional Learning of SEL Pedagogies during PLC times
(_____) Elementary School
PLC Meeting Rotation #3

Time	Theme: Cooperative Learning Strategies	Facilitator's Notes
15 minutes	Whole Group Debrief of the SEL Skills Lesson • How did the lesson go? • What did the students do during the lesson? How do you think the students felt during the lesson? • What other supports can I help provide you to learn more about SEL Skills?	
10 minutes	SEL Instructional Strategy #3: Cooperative Learning Strategies • The "What" and "Why": CL promotes positive interpersonal relationships, produces motivation to learn, and enhance self-esteem (Creighton & Szymkowiak, 2014). Key Components to CL will be introduced. • Connection to SEL: Supports positive social outcomes including positive interpersonal relationships and the ability to work collaboratively. • The "How": Judy will model **Group Processing** • Share resources for Cooperative Learning Strategies	<u>Cooperative Learning: The Foundation for Active Learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2018)</u> Five Essential Elements of Cooperative Learning PDF
20 minutes	PLC Planning Time • PLC groups will explore resources and instructional strategies to integrate Cooperative Learning Strategies into a lesson. • Action Item: PLC's will share how they will implement Cooperative Learning Strategies into a lesson in the next week.	Teachers will share their lesson ideas for implementation.
5 minutes	Housekeeping & Closing Reminders • Tell Judy when you will teach your lesson next week • Schedule next PLC meeting in 2 weeks – bring a copy of your lesson plan that integrated Cooperative Learning Strategies. We will reflect on the lesson together.	

Sample Agenda – Professional Learning of SEL Pedagogies during PLC times
(_____) Elementary School
PLC Meeting Rotation #4

Time	Theme: SEL Instructional Strategy of Choice	Facilitator's Notes
15 minutes	Whole Group Debrief of the Cooperative Learning Strategies Lesson • How did the lesson go? • What did the students do during the lesson? How do you think the students felt during the lesson? • What other supports can I help provide you to learn more about Cooperative Learning Strategies?	
10 minutes	SEL Instructional Strategy of Choice • Teachers can self-select the SEL Instructional Strategy of Choice they would like to use from the 3 previous rotations. • Judy will share additional supports based on previous PLC meetings.	Support Resources TBD for each PLC
20 minutes	PLC Planning Time • PLC groups will explore resources and instructional strategies to integrate Cooperative Learning Strategies into a lesson. • Action Item: PLC's will share how they will implement their SEL Instructional Strategy of Choice	Teachers will share their lesson ideas for implementation.
5 minutes	Housekeeping & Closing Reminders • Tell Judy when you will teach your lesson next week • Schedule next PLC meeting in 2 weeks – bring a copy of your lesson plan that integrated SEL Instructional Strategy of Choice. We will reflect on the lesson together.	

Sample Agenda – Professional Learning of SEL Pedagogies during PLC times
(_____) Elementary School
PLC Meeting Rotation #5

Time	Theme: SEL Instructional Strategy of Choice	Facilitator's Notes
25 minutes	Whole Group Debrief of the SEL Instructional Strategy of Choice Lesson • Why did you select your SEL Instructional Strategy of Choice for this lesson? • How did the lesson go? • What did the students do during the lesson? How do you think the students felt during the lesson?	
20 minutes	(_____) Elementary School Forward Progress • Q: What professional learning topics should your school focus on to better support student's social-emotional growth? • Program Evaluation Questions on Survey	

APPENDIX C: PROTOCOL FOR PLC DISCUSSIONS

Overview of Five-Step Process for PLC Sessions
Debrief
Ask PLC to share how they implemented the SEL Instructional Strategy in their lessons and describe the impact these strategies had on student learning and engagement. Next, ask PLC to describe any challenges they and/or students experienced and how they might adapt their instruction using the SEL Instructional Strategy to improve student learning.
Define Session Goals
Review key insights from the previous PLC session. State the focus and goals of the session.
Explore New Practices and Compare Them to Current Practices
Access PLC's prior knowledge and experiences related to the topic of the session (New SEL Instructional Strategy). PLC will move into new learning by participating in a modeled learning experience with the featured SEL Instructional Strategy and exploring new resources. Compare current teaching practices with newly learned concepts.
Experiment & Brainstorm with Newly Learned Strategies
PLC to collaborate and brainstorm the application of the SEL Instructional Strategy addressed in the PLC session.
Reflect and Plan
Guide PLC members in thinking about how the new learning relates to previous knowledge and practice. Then, provide time for team members to plan how to implement these strategies in their classrooms prior to the next PLC session. Encourage PLC to set clear targets for student learning using the SEL Instructional Strategy and remind them to be prepared to share their experiences implementing the new strategies during the next session.

Source: Professional Learning Communities Facilitator's Guide: Reading Deeper and

Actively Engaging with Texts (Actively Learn, n.d.).

PLC Field Notes Observation Matrix

PLC Meeting for: Date:

Start Time – End Time:

Observation Notes (statements of observations of events experienced and contact as little interpretation as possible)	Theoretical/Interpretive Notes (researcher interprets, infers, and notes new concepts and linked to existing knowledge.	Methodological Notes (researcher's memos to self of methods or questions that the observational notes raise)

APPENDIX E: TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. We will focus our discussion on the SEL-based instructional strategies, including active learning, life skills, and cooperative learning, in our discussion today.

Before we start, do you have any questions for me?

We will start with your **use of the SEL-based instructional strategies**.
      1. How did you integrate the different SEL-based instructional strategies, including active learning, life skills, and cooperative learning in your instruction?
          a. Can you elaborate on the specific lesson or activity?
          b. How did the lesson/activity go? Did you need to make any adaptations? What was the outcome?
          c. Will you make any changes if you were to use the same strategy again in the future?

I am also interested in learning more about your **self-efficacy for teaching SEL**.
      2. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least confident, and 5 being the most confident, how would you rate your confidence in integrating active learning, life skills, and cooperative learning in your instruction?
      3. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least extent of positive change, and 5 being the highest extent of positive change, to what extent has your confidence in integrating active learning, life skills, and cooperative learning in your instruction changed before and after the PLC?
      4. Can you elaborate on reasons why you selected these numbers?
          a. What was your initial understanding of SEL-based instructional strategies?
          b. How did that understandings change overtime?
          c. What was your initial confidence level?
          d. How did your confidence change overtime?

Reflecting on what we did through the PLC, let's talk about **what PLC experiences may have influenced your use of the SEL-based instructional strategies**.
      5. I would like to start by asking you to think broadly about your confidence as a teacher. What are some important influences on your teaching confidence, including both positive experiences that may increase your confidence and negative experiences that may decrease your confidence.
      6. Reflecting specifically on your confidence using the SEL-based instructional strategies, what were some positive and negative experiences that may have influenced your confidence?
          a. Did you have positive or negative experiences with SEL-based instructional strategy integration? How do you know that a particular lesson has gone well or not well? Does that influence your confidence as a teacher? How?

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b.   How about others' experiences you may have seen, read, or observed? Are there any of those experiences that influenced your confidence?

c.   How about what others say about your teaching? Of the things people said to you about your teaching, what positive and/or negative comments stand out for you?

d.   How about some of the most prominent feelings and emotions that you experience when you are teaching or preparing to teach? How do these feelings and emotions influence your confidence?

7.   You may have already shared this, but I would like to focus specifically on our PLC experiences, what are some important experiences that may have influenced your confidence as a teacher?

8.   Are there other things we have not discussed that you feel influenced your confidence to integrate SEL-based instructional strategies?

Thank you for sharing your experiences! Based on our PLC discussions, I have summarized your sharings. Can you read it and let me know if I missed anything that may need to be highlighted?

Thank you!