The Social Emotional Learning Cohort: Professional Learning for Inspiring Change

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My problem of practice is the disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline practices by educators with Black children and children with disabilities, and the related pervasive problem of educator secondary traumatic stress and burn-out. What are the solutions for these educational dilemmas? The HealthyCHILD (HC) model. HC combines the most promising solutions from the research and the most efficacious activities of similar field-validated models into a comprehensive model that addresses the underlying root causes of these problems of practice–unaddressed trauma, and educator secondary traumatic stress, unaddressed mental health needs, and educator discrimination/bias. The HC model consists of 8 research-informed domains 1) policies and procedures, 2) staff development, 3) collaboration, 4) environments, 5) relationships, 6) assessment, 7) social-emotional learning, and 8) mental health and wellness, that guide the partnerships' efforts and empower educators to understand and realize a shared vision of being a school where all children are fully included and thrive. For this study, one strategy within the "staff development" domain of the HC model – the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Cohort, will be targeted and analyzed. The SEL Cohort is a collaborative project co-constructed with a local early childhood program that has three broad purposes:

1. improving the skills and knowledge of educators in trauma sensitive practice, social emotional learning and mindfulness through collaborative and independent study, expertise exchange, professional dialogue, and inquiry-based learning,

2. improving the outcomes of children by spreading participants' expertise and insight, and

3. sustaining continuous quality improvement and innovation efforts in the program.

Each school year, educators within the early childhood program can apply to participate in a SEL Cohort, which consists of four 2.5-hour collaborative learning sessions, up to four 30-60-minute individual learning sessions, and thirty hours of independent study. This study will use a mixed method approach to answer four questions:

1. Did the SEL Cohort occur as planned?

2. How did participants rate the quality of the SEL Cohort activities?

3. What was the impact on the participants?

4. What was the spread of expertise and insight?

Taken together, this information will help the co-facilitators better understand the participants' experiences and inform future iterations of the SEL Cohort.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

1.0 Introduction to Problem of Practice

My problem of practice is the disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline practices by educators with Black children and children with disabilities. The disproportionate number of Black children who have faced exclusionary discipline practices (i.e., suspensions and expulsions) from U. S. public schools has been documented as far back as the early 1970s (Children's Defense Fund, 1975). Data clearly indicates that Black children and children with disabilities are more at risk for exclusion. For example, Black children are three times as likely as their white peers, and children with disabilities are twice as likely as their non-disabled peers to receive a suspension or expulsion (US DOE, 2016). Black children also receive far more frequent and harsher punishment than children of any other race (Skiba et al., 2011). Black boys represent 19% of preschool enrollment, but 45% of suspensions and Black girls represent 20% of preschool enrollment, but 54% of suspensions (US DOE, 2016).

This is an urgent problem of practice because children who receive exclusionary discipline have a greater chance of further difficulties including failure in school, future suspension and expulsion, and entrance into the juvenile justice system (Gregory et al., 2010). This problem of practice is within my sphere of influence and aligned with the goals of the University of Pittsburgh School of Education, the Office of Child Development, the program I direct, HealthyCHILD, as well as our early childhood partners. Furthermore, this problem of practice is forward-thinking; if we don't address this educational dilemma, we will continue to perpetuate the cradle to prison pipeline.

1.1 Root Causes

In my review of the research literature, I uncovered multiple potential root causes of educators use of exclusionary discipline practices and will discuss these below. For the purposes of this study, I will be focusing on the following four root causes:

1. Adverse childhood events and unaddressed trauma

2. Educator secondary traumatic stress

3. Unaddressed mental health needs

4. Discrimination and bias

1.2 Adverse childhood events and unaddressed trauma

Childhood stress levels are at an all-time high and childhood trauma has been named our nations single most important public health challenge (Van der Kolk, 2014). In 2016, the national survey of children's health (NSCH) examined the prevalence of one or more adverse childhood events (ACE) among children from birth through age 17, as reported by parent or guardian. ACEs include: lack of emotional attachments to caregiver; frequent changes in caregivers; recurrent family crisis incidents; homelessness; hunger and malnutrition; physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; divorce and/or domestic violence; chronic unemployment; single-teen-parent head of household; lack of parental education; poor role models for temperament and self-regulatory behavior; illness or chronic medical conditions in family members; drug/alcohol abuse; community violence; and parent incarceration. Results from the NSCH found that 45% of the children in the United States have experienced at least 1 ACE; one in ten children nationally has

experienced three or more ACEs, placing them in the high-risk category, and that economic hardship, and divorce or separation were the most common ACEs reported nationally and in all states. It was also found that children of different races did not experience ACEs at the same rate; 61% of Black children experience at least one ACE, as compared to 40% of white children, and 23% of Asian children.

Numerous research studies highlight the negative impact of cumulative ACEs and associated trauma on overall child development, school success, youth and adult physical health, and successful adaptation in life (Shonkoff, 2012; Blair & Raver, 2012; Yoshikawa, et. al, 2012; Fugiura & Yamaki, 2005). Studies show that as economic hardship has increased, the incidence of developmental delay and disability has increased in the US—a rate now estimated at nearly 20% (Fugiura & Yamaki, 2005). We know that the more chronic and recurrent adverse events are in childhood, the higher the child's risk is for future neurodevelopmental, behavioral, learning, and chronic medical problems (Felitti, 1998). ACEs, whether at home, school, or in the community, have been associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and higher rates of separation anxiety, social anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and oppositional and aggressive behavior (Overstreet & Matthews, 2011; Runchkin, Henrich, Jones, Vermeiren, & Schwab-Stone, 2007). In addition, children who repeatedly experience ACEs often have a dysregulated stress response system and alterations in the architecture of their brains (Shonkoff, 2014). These alterations impair their ability to pay attention, cope with daily stressors, and self-regulate their emotions and behaviors (Blair & Diamond, 2008). There is an urgent need for interventions that buffer the impact of adversity in childhood.

1.3 Educator secondary traumatic stress

It is well established that early childhood educators are stressed, and at risk for burnout. We also know that educators are at risk of experiencing secondary traumatic stress when teaching children who have high ACE scores. Secondary traumatic stress is the feelings of distress that arise from learning about difficult things that have happened to others. We also know that educator stress is associated with poor school climate (Zinsser et al., 2013). and preschool student expulsion (Silver & Zinsser, 2020). It also contributes to the persistent challenge of educator turnover. Nearly one-third of educators leave the workforce each year, citing high stress levels as a critical contributor (Wells, 2015). Rates are most rapid for new educators---about 41% of educators leave in their first five years on the job—and the turnover rate is considerably higher in poor schools than it is in more affluent ones (Ingersoll, Merill, & Stuckey, 2014). This constant turnover of educators hinders the development of strong, trusting professional relationships (Byrk & Schneider, 2002) which in turn hinders innovation and improvement. It is important to note that these statistics were compiled before the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing stress encountered by educators, children, and families. It is hypothesized that educators' current stress and burnout levels are even higher than in the past. There is an urgent need for interventions that buffer the impact of secondary traumatic stress on educators.

1.4 Unaddressed mental health needs

A wide range of research, including a 2015 report from the University of Maryland's Center for School Mental Health, highlights the increasing magnitude and severity of school

behavioral and mental health needs. Between 20% and 38% of youth in the United States have diagnosable mental health disorders, while 9% to 13% have serious disturbances that impact their daily functioning. Furthermore, nationally, and locally, the number of children who need significant mental health support is growing, due to several troubling trends (e.g., intergenerational trauma, opioid crisis, failing safety nets, exposure to racism, fear related to immigrant status, community violence) and most recently, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. By conservative estimates, one in five children will experience mental health concerns that could benefit from early identification and intervention. However, less than half of these children can access mental health services due to a variety of challenges (e.g., long wait lists for services, lack of accessibility, confusion about where to get services), with some research indicating that 75% of children with emotional and behavioral disorders are not receiving mental health services. There is an urgent need for interventions to increase educator's knowledge and use of mental health prevention and promotion practices.

1.5 Discrimination and bias

Researchers have found that implicit bias contributes to discriminatory discipline by influencing the way educators respond to challenging behavior (McIntosh, Girvan, Horner & Smolkowski, 2014; Whitford et al., 2016). Black children are often seen is less innocent compared to other races and ethnicities (Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta, & DiTomasso, 2014) and as more likely to misbehave (Gilliam, 2016). In addition, Black children's behavior is seen as more severe, disruptive, and irritating and in need of action than their white peers' behavior (Okonofau and Eberhardt, 2015). There is an urgent need for interventions aimed at reducing

discriminatory discipline by addressing educator implicit biases rather than simply addressing child behavior in isolation.

2.0 Promising Research-Informed Solutions

2.1 Trauma-Sensitive Practice

Research consistently confirms the potential negative consequences of early childhood adversity and trauma. In addition, research has shown the benefit of supportive, responsive relationships with adults for buffering the effects of early childhood adversity. As such, adult responsive capacities have become a key target for interventions that aim to promote positive outcomes for children who have experienced trauma. Educators that do not have knowledge of trauma may fail to recognize when behaviors are trauma-related responses, not intentional, willful misbehavior. This oversight may increase educators use of exclusionary discipline practices.

Trauma sensitive practice is an approach that focuses on building adult capacities. Over the past decade, increased awareness of the impacts and pervasiveness of early childhood trauma has driven efforts to promote trauma sensitivity in schools, primarily through teacher professional development and school policy reform efforts (Cole, Eisner, Gregory, & Ristuccia, 2013). The Trauma and Policy Institute defines a trauma-sensitive school as one in which all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported and where addressing trauma's impact on learning on a school-wide basis is at the center of its educational mission -- a place where an on-going, inquiry-based process allows for the necessary teamwork, coordination, creativity and sharing of responsibility for all students, and where continuous learning is for educators as well as students (TPLI, 2005). Becoming trauma-sensitive requires new ways of thinking, as well as new knowledge skills and practices. Educators benefit when they receive regular training, coaching and reflective practice on trauma, its impact, trauma sensitive practices, and self-care, however

7

this requires the school to create environments where continuous learning, and innovation and improvement are the part of what everyone does (Guarino, 2018).

2.2 Social Emotional Learning

Social emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development and enhances our ability to integrate skills, attitudes, and behaviors to deal effectively with daily tasks and challenges. Extensive research has shown its benefits in improving academic performance (Durlak and Weissberg, 2005; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Shellinger, 2011) and its positive impact up to 18 years later on academics, and conduct problems, emotional distress, and drug use (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak & Weissberg, 2017). In addition, research has shown that mental health is positively affected by social emotional learning and these factors combine to enhance improvements in academic performance (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialongo, & Leaf, 2008; Thapa, Cohen, Higgins-D'Alessandro, & Guffey, 2012). Furthermore, social emotional learning can be leveraged to help educators and children acknowledge, address, and heal from trauma and the ways we have all been impacted by racism and systemic oppression, create inclusive learning environments, and mitigate the effects of implicit bias and discrimination. (Jagers, et al., 2018). Schools need to have formal strategies in place for educating staff, children and parents about trauma informed, culturally responsive SEL. SEL that is trauma-informed and culturally responsive focuses on children's strengths, assets, and contributions, and leverages opportunities to create positive experiences in the classroom and set children up for success. Educators with highly developed social-emotional skills experience more positive emotions in the classroom, receive more support from co-workers, employ more effective coping strategies during

8

times of stress, and report less burnout and greater job satisfaction. Educators need to recognize that if they want to effectively promote SEL, they need to make building their own social emotional skills and racial literacy a priority (Jagers, et al., 2018).

2.3 Mindfulness-Based Interventions

Research has long linked a lack of personal awareness to the power and persistence of implicit bias (Devine et al., 2012; Nosek et al., 2007). Mindfulness-based interventions that focus on increasing awareness of implicit and explicit bias and building empathy through perspective taking can significantly reduce a teacher's implicit and explicit bias, and in turn reduce suspension rates and discriminatory discipline practices (Lueke & Gibson, 2015; Warren, 2017; Okonofua, Paunesku, and Walton, 2016; Whitford and Emerson, 2019).

Moreover, research has identified vulnerable decision points where there is potential for intervening before the decision is made to rely on harsh, punitive, exclusionary practices (McIntosh et al., 2014). Teaching adults to be mindful in their interactions with children can improve the quality of their relationships with children by increasing positive behavioral strategies and decreasing the use of negative behavioral strategies (Coatsworth et al., 2014). This is important because it empowers educators to pause and assess their thoughts and actions, which in turn allows them to be responsive with children instead of reactive. Mindful awareness can allow educators to make mid-course corrections in actions that feel natural, unforced, and generated from within.

In addition, educators who attended mindfulness training and who implemented mindfulness practices reported feeling less stressed and anxious, saw fewer behavioral problems,

and noted an increase in compliance in their classrooms (Black & Fernando, 2014; Napoli, 2004; Singh, Lancioni, Winton, Karazsia, Singh, 2013). Furthermore, mindfulness practices have been shown to improve self-regulation and attention, to reduce depression and anxiety, and to improve overall well-being in adults (Baer, 2003; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004), and although the existing research is limited, mindfulness practices have been shown to improve emotional regulation, attention span, and social skills in children (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, & Davidson, 2014; Greenberg & Harris, 2012; Zelazo & Lyons, 2011).

2.4 Synthesis

Now, more than ever, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and spotlight on racial disparities, educators require new supports, to address trauma, secondary traumatic stress, mental health, and discrimination/bias. Empowering educators to envision and enact trauma-sensitive practices and social emotional learning is critical to improving education. In addition, educator focused interventions, such as mindfulness, may increase educator's feelings of well-being, reduce educator stress, increase positive teacher-child interactions, and reduce the impact of educator's implicit biases, and therefore, decrease educator's use of exclusionary discipline practices.

3.0 Review of Context and Stakeholders

Adverse childhood events are pervasive in the local early childhood program. 100% of the children served are from families with low incomes, with the percentage of children in poverty being between 23-38%. Moreover, the average ACE score for small sample of families and children was 5 (Larson, et al., 2017) with the high-risk cut-off in national research at 3 for later medical and mental health diagnoses (Felitti, 1998). In addition, at least 10% of those children are identified as having a disability, and between 6-16% are identified as having a high risk for future disabilities.

Although the county is resource-rich in many ways (e.g., PA LAUNCH, 2015), there are still major gaps in service, particularly around early childhood trauma and mental health, both in terms of access (e.g., waitlists and high caseloads), and inequitable disparities (e.g., an overrepresentation of Black children needing services and not receiving them). Currently, treatment is reserved for the most high-need children who have been diagnosed with a disability or mental illness. This "wait to fail to serve" approach doesn't capitalize on the powerful impact of early intervention and prevention-promotion supports.

Although, data on the use of exclusionary discipline practice at the local level in unavailable, we know from national data, that Black children are overrepresented in the total number of preschool students expelled. Black children only account for about one-fifth of enrollment, they account for about half of the children expelled (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). We also know that the rate at which children are expelled from public preschools is nearly three-fold the rate of children in grades Kindergarten to 12 across the United States (Gilliam & Shaahar, 2006).

The early childhood program recognizes that its' educators struggle with mitigating the impact of adverse childhood events and addressing the mental health needs of their students. In addition, they recognize educator stress levels are at an all-time high. Furthermore, they recognize the role educator stress, discrimination, and implicit bias play in educator's response to challenging behavior and their use of exclusionary discipline practices.

They also recognize that many of their educators lack the critical knowledge and skills (i.e., trauma sensitive practice, social emotional learning, and mindfulness-based interventions) needed to buffer the toxic stress that many of the children in their classroom are experiencing. However, making and sustaining quality improvements and innovating in these areas has been a challenge for the early childhood program, as it has been for the field of education at large. Educators have difficulty implementing new practices in their daily work after attending traditional "sit and get" professional development sessions, even when the content is targeted to the educator's interests and needs. Furthermore, educators have difficulty implementing evidence-based practices and interventions because they are often not well suited for their context and need too many adaptations to "fit". Lastly, contextual factors, such as not enough time in the school day for staff development, collaboration and coaching also limit the program's ability to make and sustain quality improvements.

4.0 Change Idea and Logic Model

The SEL Cohort – professional development for inspiring change -- is a collaborative project designed and implemented with a local early childhood program that has three broad purposes:

1. improving the skills and knowledge of educators in trauma sensitive practice, social emotional learning and mindfulness through collaborative and independent study, expertise exchange, professional dialogue, and inquiry-based learning,

2. improving the outcomes of children by spreading participants' expertise and insight, and

3. sustaining continuous quality improvement efforts in the program.

The logic model, table 1, displays the interdependent elements that will allow the early childhood program to achieve its' desired outcomes, and support inclusion of _all_ children:

1. a district-wide innovation and improvement community – the SEL Cohort

2. a set of quality improvement tools – the SEL Cohort format and content, and

3. processes and structures that support routines for independent and collaborative learning, expert consultation and sharing of expertise and insight.

When implemented effectively, the SEL Cohort will provide increased organizational capacity and support for continuous quality improvement and innovation, and will result in a series of outputs, such as SEL projects and professional development modules. Small tests of change or Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles are a method for introducing a change into a complex system and rapidly learning from practice (Byrk et al., 2015; Deming, 1994; Lewis, 2015). These cycles are part of the SEL Cohort processes and help participants, and the early childhood program, learn

about how an idea works on a small scale before deciding to make sweeping changes across the program (Byrk et al., 2015; Deming, 1994; Lewis, 2015).

It is hypothesized that SEL Cohort participants will enhance their knowledge and skills related to trauma-sensitive practice, SEL and mindfulness, and experience feelings of collective- and self-efficacy by participating in an SEL Cohort. This will lead to stronger leadership and educators who are better equipped to address issues of equity and discrimination. In addition, this project will allow the early childhood program to engage in and sustain continuous quality improvement and innovation efforts which, over time, will lead to fully inclusive trauma-sensitive, culturally responsive classrooms and schools where all children thrive, and the use of exclusionary discipline is eliminated.

Table 1. SEL Cohort Logic Model

Inputs and resources	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
-time and space -educator compensation -SEL Cohort Application -collaborative learning session content and format -co-facilitators -early childhood program administrator participation	-collaborative and individual learning sessions -independent study -professional dialogue -expertise exchange -resource sharing -develop professional development module	-number of participants -number of learning sessions -professional development modules created and presented by participants	-changes in knowledge and skills related to trauma sensitivity, social emotional learning, and equity -increased feelings of collective- and self-efficacy -spread of participants' expertise and insights -sustainable strategy for continuous improvement and innovation	-stronger leadership in trauma sensitive practice, SEL and equity -inclusive classrooms/schools where all children thrive -elimination of the use of exclusionary discipline practices

4.1 SEL Cohort Content

In the first collaborative learning session, participants share about their professional pathways and professional identity formation. The objective of the first session is to build relationships, develop individual and shared understanding and vision for the SEL Cohort, share our roadmap and process with the group, and introduce our topical focus areas - trauma, social emotional learning, and equity. In the second collaborative learning session, participants are introduced to information from *"SEL and equity pitfalls and recommendations"* by the National Equity Project (www.nationalequityproject.org) and from *"Equity and social and emotional learning: a cultural analysis"* by Robert Jagers and asked to think about ways to leverage SEL for healing trauma and equity. In the third collaborative learning session, participants are asked to share about the SEL topics that they have explored/ learned about during independent study and individual learning sessions, as well as their plan to apply and test what they've learned by implementing a small "test of change" (i.e., PDSA cycle). This allows participants the opportunity to receive feedback and suggestions from the co-facilitators, the early childhood program administrators, and fellow SEL Cohort participants. In the fourth collaborative learning session, participants are asked to share any small tests of change that they have underway. At this point, participants also begin developing a plan for spreading their expertise and insights (i.e., creating and presenting a professional development session). In addition, the following articles are shared with participants: *"Integrating SEL, equity and trauma work for multiplied success"* by Jessica Berlinski and "*Why we can't afford whitewashed social emotional learning"* by Dena Simmons as well as information about mindfulness practice.

4.2 SEL Cohort Format

Upon joining a SEL Cohort, participants commit to participating in four 2.5-hour collaborative learning sessions, up to four 30-60-minute individual learning sessions, and 30 hours of independent study. In addition, participants agree to share their expertise and insight at a program-wide professional development session, and if interested and accepted, at the annual Pa Early Childhood Education Summit Conference at Penn State.

The collaborative learning sessions are co-facilitated by the author and a contracted early childhood behavior support consultant. The early childhood administrators attend all collaborative learning sessions. During the collaborative learning sessions participants learn about each other, and their interests related to SEL, trauma, and equity and engage in professional dialogue around the most pressing problems of practice related to trauma, SEL and equity.

Participants can also request up to four 60-minute individual learning sessions. Individual learning sessions are offered and facilitated by the author and/or the behavior consultant. When appropriate and available, additional content experts are invited to individual learning sessions. In addition, educators can participate in experiential learning when opportunities are available. Each participant is also provided a SEL Cohort guide to track their SEL journey, and a copy of all collaborative learning session Power Point slides. In addition, participants are provided with "My Mindful SEL Journey" to guide their learning and use of mindfulness practice (Appendices B and C).

Furthermore, the facilitator guides the SEL Cohort participants' work while keeping in mind the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate's (CPED) principles of design and the Carnegie Foundation's six core principles of improvement to accelerate learning, displayed in table 2.

Table 2. CPED principles of design and Carnegie Foundation's 6 core principles of improvment to accelarate learning

CPED principles of design	Carnegie Foundation's six core principles of improvement to accelerate learning
1. incorporate an equity and justice lens, 2. improve outcomes for individuals, families, organizations, and communities, 3. learn with and from communities through partnerships, 4. identify problems through both theoretical and practice lenses, 5. integrate practical and research knowledge, 6. link theory with systemic and systematic inquiry, and 7. generate, transform, and use knowledge and practice	1. make the work problem-specific and user-centered, 2. see the system and work processes produce the current outcomes, 3. engage in rapid cycles of inquiry using PDSA cycles, 4. fail fast and small and learn from those failures, 5. embed measurement of both anticipated and unanticipated consequences, and 6. pay attention to variance. what works, where and why.

4.3 Evaluation Questions

This study aimed to systematically assess the implementation, quality, and impact of the SEL Cohort. A mixed method approach was used to examine four questions:

1. To what degree did the SEL Cohort occur as planned?

2. How did the participants rate the quality of the SEL Cohort activities?

3. What was the impact on the participants?

4. What was the spread of expertise and insight?

Taken together, this information will help the co-facilitators and early childhood program administrators better understand the participants' experiences and inform future iterations of the SEL Cohort.

4.4 Research Design

The research design for this study will be a single-group post-test design. As such, this study will not be able to verify that reported changes are attributable to the SEL Cohort (Campbell & Stanley, 1963); however, significant changes as perceived and reported by participants could indicate promise for the SEL Cohort and encourage further study using pre- post-test experimental designs. All data will be stored in Box. The University of Pittsburgh's Institutional Review Board found my study to be exempt, as it is part of the continuous quality improvement of the HealthyCHILD model.

4.5 Research Measures and Data Analysis Plan

4.5.1 Research Measures

4.5.1.1 Fidelity Checklist

To determine to what degree the SEL Cohort occurred as planned, notes from the collaborative and individual learning sessions will be archived and reviewed for fidelity using a fidelity checklist (Appendix F). The fidelity checklist will ask whether each planned activity for the SEL Cohort was delivered to the participants by the co-facilitators, as well as if the co-facilitator provided a collaborative learning context, by asking for participant ideas and perspectives at least three times, and by giving at least three encouraging or validating responses to participant comments (Robertson, et al., in press).

4.5.1.2 Artifacts

Data will be collected regarding participant attendance at collaborative and individual learning sessions and number of independent study hours completed to verify the dosage with which participants engaged in the SEL Cohort. In addition, artifacts, such as the content of collaborative and individual learning sessions, including the PowerPoint slides, handouts and presenter notes will be archived and reviewed to assess fidelity.

4.5.1.3 Online survey

A Qualtrics online survey will be co-created with the co-facilitator and early childhood administrators to assess the SEL Cohort's impact on participants, the quality of SEL Cohort activities, and suggestions for the future (Appendix E). All participants from SEL Cohorts 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 (n=20) will be asked to complete the survey and will be offered gift cards as an incentive for completion.

4.5.2 Data analysis plan

Descriptive analysis will be used to summarize the review of artifacts and the qualitative and quantitative data collected via the online survey.

5.0 Data Summary/Results

5.1 Setting and participants

SEL Cohort 1.0 was conducted on-site in the early childhood program and in the community. SEL Cohorts 2.0 and 3.0 were conducted virtually on the Zoom platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were recruited via an application process in February/March of each school year. The application was changed from a paper and pencil application to an online application for SEL Cohort 3.0 due to the pandemic and the desire to better track participants over time (Appendix A). Each year, all applicants who applied to participate in a cohort were accepted into the cohort. SEL Cohort 2.0 had three participants withdraw due to the pandemic. SEL Cohort 3.0 had two participants withdraw due to personal reasons. One teacher and one education coach returned to participate in a SEL Cohort for a second time to work on a new project or to extend/continue the work they started during their first round. All cohorts were heterogenous and included participants working with children in different age ranges and with a range in professional role. See table 3 for a breakdown of participants' professional roles.

Table 3. Participants' professional roles

Cohort	Total Participants	Participants Professional Role
SEL Cohort 1.0	7	1 teacher, 2 education assistants, 2 education coaches, 2 family service specialists
SEL Cohort 2.0	5	3 teachers, 1 education assistant, 1 coordinator
SEL Cohort 3.0	8	3 teachers, 4 education coaches, 1 family services specialist

5.2 Fidelity

All collaborative and individual learning sessions were delivered to the group by the co-facilitators as planned. In addition, the co-facilitators provided a collaborative learning context, by asking for participant ideas and perspectives at least three times, and by giving at least three encouraging or validating responses to participant comments 100% of the time. Due to the virtual format, co-facilitators found it more difficult to engage the participants in the SEL Cohort Guide and in My Mindful SEL Journey (Appendix B and C). Co-facilitators reviewed portions of these resources with participants via email, however they were not used in whole as planned.

5.3 Participation

All participants attended each collaborative learning session and completed 30 hours of independent study. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic three participants decided to postpone their participation after being accepted into SEL Cohort 2.0, and 2 postponed their participation after being accepted into SEL Cohort 3.0. Twelve SEL Cohort participants completed the survey; four participants from each Cohort.

5.4 Quality ratings of SEL cohort activities

Participants were asked to rate how interesting they found each component of the session on a 1 (not at all interesting) to a 5 (extremely interesting) scale and how helpful they thought the

component would be on a 1 (not at all helpful) to 5 (extremely helpful) scale. Results are displayed

below in tables 4 and 5.

Table 4. How interesting was each SEL Cohort Activity?

Activity	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Count
Collaborative learning sessions	4.00	5.00	4.92	.28	.08	12
Individual learning sessions	4.00	5.00	4.82	.39	.15	11
Presenting their work/projects	4.00	5.00	4.75	.43	.19	12
Experiential learning, if applicable	4.00	5.00	4.56	.50	.25	9

All components of the SEL Cohort were perceived by participants as being interesting.

The range of scores for each component was 4.56 and 4.92. The collaborative learning sessions

were rated as most interesting (mean=4.92). Individual learning sessions were rated 4.82.

Presenting/sharing their work was rated 4.75. experiential learning was rated 4.56.

Table 5. How helpful was each SEL Cohort Activity?

Activity	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Count
Collaborative learning sessions	3.00	5.00	4.82	.57	.33	11
Individual learning sessions	4.00	5.00	4.70	.46	.21	10
Presenting their work/projects	4.00	5.00	4.64	.48	.23	11
Experiential learning, if applicable	4.00	5.00	4.67	.47	.22	6

All components of the SEL Cohort were perceived by participants as being helpful. The

range of scores for each component was 4.64 to 4.82. The collaborative learning sessions were

rated as the most helpful activity (mean=4.82).   Individual learning sessions were rated 4.7.

Presenting/sharing their work was rated 4.64. experiential learning was rated 4.67.

Participants were also asked to qualitatively describe their favorite and least favorite SEL Cohort activities and to provide any suggestions for improving the session in the future. Most participants reported being with and getting to know their peers and collaboration as favorite parts of the SEL Cohort. The virtual format seems to have been a least favorite part.

Lastly, participants were asked how satisfying their experience with the SEL Cohort was overall. On average, participants reported being very close to extremely satisfied (mean=4.83). Results are displayed in table 6.

Table 6. How satisfied were participants with their overall experience?

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Count
Overall Satisfaction	4.00	5.00	4.83	.37	.14	12

5.5 Impact on participants

At post SEL Cohort, participants completed a survey that included questions about the impact of the SEL Cohort on participants. Specifically, participants were asked what they have done differently in their practice that they attribute to participating in the SEL Cohort; if participating in the SEL Cohort changed how they think about innovation and improvement, trauma, SEL, mindfulness or equity; if they had any changes in their feelings of collective- and self- efficacy and how participating in the SEL Cohort impacted them overall, including their overall satisfaction.

5.5.1 Changes to participants' practice

      Participants reported notable changes in their beliefs and practices. Many participants mentioned changes to their social emotional teaching, such as "spending more time on SEL and relationship building", having "more conversations around SEL" and including more activities and lessons in the classroom. One participant reported she allows each child to tell her about their feelings and doesn't quickly dismiss any. One participant reported being more mindful of traumas students are experiencing. One participant mentioned being a "better listener" and another reported being able understand their peers "on a deeper level". Participants also reported changes in their ability to take on multiple perspectives. One participant stated an "eagerness to view situations from multiple perspectives" to better communicate with all the people that she works with. Another reported that she is "better able to change" her "mindset" because of an expanded perspective. Another reported discussing ideas with coworkers more often and being "more willing to ask for help". Another participant reported changing the language they use and moving towards a strength-based approach when working with children with challenging behaviors. Participants also reported "creating sensory paths" and being inspired towards new learning. Participants also reported an increase in self-care, taking more time for themselves – ". I have taken time to find the resources I need for myself and my students", and "using more mindful moments, more deep breathing, yoga, sensory paths, remaining calm more often, taking a step back to reflect instead of reacting when I'm working in a classroom."

5.5.2 Changes in beliefs about innovation and improvement, trauma, SEL, mindfulness or equity

All respondents but one, reported, yes to changes in their beliefs in one or more of these areas. One respondent reported that it didn't change her thinking, but did offer her new ideas for SEL. Respondents reported being more aware of SEL, more mindful about mental health, more reflective and self-aware, new thinking around trauma, and mindfulness, and more awareness about the small and large ways lives can be damaged and healed. One respondent reported she now practices mindfulness at least once a day for herself and her students and another remarked how much she "loves using the mindfulness kits."

5.5.3 Changes in feelings of self- and collective- efficacy

Most participants who completed the survey (10 out of 12) reported yes, their feelings of self and collective efficacy changed. One participant reported no and the other left this question blank. Notable comments include: "I now feel more prepared in creating social emotional resources to share with the staff that I coach. I also feel more confident in noticing social emotional learning opportunities that take place in the classroom."; "ABSOLUTELY!!!! 100% It allowed me to open up and discuss a topic near and dear to my heart. Hoping that it will be able to reach others and make an impact on them as much as it did on me.", "Yes, power in numbers!", and "Revisiting what I am passionate about by looking back at my own history and journey was powerful for me. Being given the platform to share at the Early Childhood Summit and in our own EC community was also empowering. I love the saying your vibe attracts your tribe. You do not know who shares similar passions until you talk about your own."

5.5.4 Overall impact on participants

Overall, participants reported innumerable positive impacts from participating in the SEL cohort, both professionally and personally. Participants reported that their beliefs and perspectives expanded and changed, and all but one participant reported an increase in their knowledge and skills. Participants reported developing a deeper understanding of themselves and each other, trauma, social emotional learning, and mindfulness. One participant reported that the SEL Cohort "helped to break down barriers and shed light on topics that typically were muted" and that she "gained a voice" that she did not have before. All participants were appreciative of the opportunity to collaborate and discuss these topics with their colleagues and with the co-facilitators.

5.6 Spread Of Expertise and Insight

Data was also collected regarding the spread of participants' expertise and insight. Specifically, the number of presentations and estimated number of peers who attended was tracked. All SEL Cohorts developed professional development sessions and presented to their peers within the EC program, as well as to peers across the state at the Pa Early Childhood Summit. In addition, to further support the spread of expertise and insight, "take away" kits related to each topic (i.e., mindfulness kits, yoga cards, materials to create sensory pathways, etc.…) were provided at each session.

In SEL Cohort 1.0 and SEL Cohort 2.0, all participants developed presentations and presented to their peers (n=60) within the early childhood program and at the Pa. Early Childhood Summit. In SEL cohort 3.0, 5 participants developed presentations and presented to their peers

within the early childhood program and at the Pa. Early Childhood Summit. In addition, two participants have presented their projects/topics to a group of kindergarten to 2nd grade teachers in the district and at a local private elementary school. Topics of the participants' presentations are displayed in table 7.

Table 7. SEL Cohort participant chose SEL topics

Cohort	Professional Development Topics
SEL Cohort 1.0	• adult-child interactions • educator wellness • mindfulness • sensory pathways • yoga • vulnerability • the power of words
SEL Cohort 2.0	• trauma sensitive classrooms • emotional safety • positive racial identity development • what would Mr. Rogers do – setting intentions • emotion promotion
SEL Cohort 3.0	• team building/communication • trauma-sensitive classrooms (part 2) • sensory-friendly classrooms • teacher affirmations • exercise for physical and mental health • how to be an ally • empathy and perspective taking

6.0 Conclusion

Quantitative data indicated that participants found SEL Cohort activities both interesting and helpful, and their overall satisfaction with participation in the SEL Cohort was high. The collaborative learning sessions were rated as most interesting and most helpful activity. Participants also reported positive changes in their beliefs, knowledge, and practice, as well as in their self- and collective efficacy. In addition, based on data reviewed, the spread of expertise and insight has been successful; out of 20 participants across three SEL cohorts, 18 (90%) developed presentations and presented to their peers, and 12 (60%) presented at the Pa Early Childhood Summit.

For what worked well, all participants agreed that having set aside time and guidance to practice mindfulness, to engage in reflective practice, and to complete a project of their choosing was one of the key components of the program. Another key component was the author's provision of resources, which participants reported eliminated frustration and saved them time since they did not have to search for their own credible resources. A third aspect that participants reported worked well was having a safe space to collaborate, ask questions, to be confused, and to work things out together. This was especially true for SEL Cohort 2.0 because it occurred during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and at the height of the George Floyd protests. SEL Cohort 2.0 participants reported that the meetings were helpful because it allowed them to have genuine conversations with like-minded colleagues. Lastly, participants reported that having co-facilitators who were from outside of the program allowed the participants to be more open with their conversations and ideas. Results indicate promise for the SEL Cohort and encourage further study using pre- post-test experimental designs.

7.0 Next Steps

The author will meet with the co-facilitator and early childhood program administrators to review feedback from SEL Cohort 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 participants, and discuss the following future possibilities:

- Increase educator access to the SEL Cohort participants' projects by creating asynchronous online learning opportunities.

- As soon as possible, return to in-person format for collaborative learning sessions instead of virtual format.

- Support continued connection as a larger SEL Cohort (1.0, 2.0 and 3.0) by holding biannual meetings for all participants (past and current).

- Create opportunities for past SEL Cohort participants to be mentors for new participants.

- Assist SEL Cohort participants with writing proposals to fund and support the implementation of their projects (i.e., purchasing new children's books, or items to make classrooms more inclusive).

- Pursue educators who would be good SEL leaders to participate in a Cohort.

- Create a timeline with due dates to help participants stay on track and see their whole journey from start to finish.

- Plan for closer collaboration and connection with the HealthyCHILD Developmental Healthcare Consultants.

- Teach participants about the 5 habits of an improver to encourage within themselves and others (Lucas & Nacer, 2015):

1. learning - questioning, problem finding, reflection,

2. influencing - empathic, comfortable with conflict, facilitative,

3. resilience - calculated risk taking, optimism, ability to tolerate uncertainty,

4. creativity - idea generation, critical thinking, team player, and

5. systems thinking - accepting of change, synthesizing, connection making.

- Refine data collection plan to include pre and post test data to determine if changes are attributable to the SEL Cohort.

- Continue to develop a goal attainment scale (GAS) to better measure quality of participants projects. Test use of the GAS with the next SEL Cohort.

- Create a measure to determine how peers who attended the participants professional development sessions are using the new information. This ability to measure, or at least anecdotally dictate, how the people in attendance at the PD use what they learn could help to support a change in how professional development is delivered in the district in the future.

Appendix A SEL Cohort Application

The Social-Emotional Learning Cohort
Professional Development for Inspiring Change

© CASEL 2017
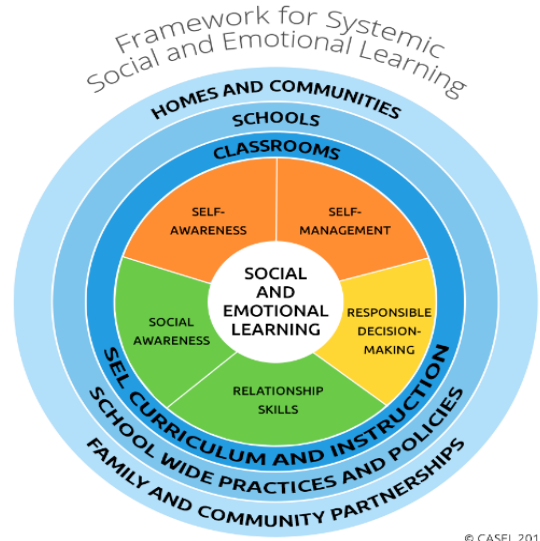
SEL Cohort participants will:

➢ Engage in 4 collaborative learning sessions and 1 planning session.

  ○ SEL Exploration: 4/14/21 3:45-6:15 p.m.

  ○ SEL Expansion: 5/5/21 3:45-6:15p.m. and /12/21 3:45-5:15p.m.

  ○ SEL in Review: 6/9/21 3:45-6:15 p.m.

  ○ PD Planning Session- July date to be determined

➢ Identify an area of SEL that they are interested in

➢ Explore and learn about the topic via in individual learning sessions and

  experiential learning

➢ Develop a plan for applying and testing what they learned

➢ Present their learning and project to their peers on the program-wide professional development day

The Social-Emotional Learning Cohort
Professional Development for Inspiring Change

Incentives for Participation:

➢ Workshop pay for collaborative and individual learning sessions and independent study (up to 30 hours)

➢ Customized social emotional resource kit

➢ Personalized support to help your reach your goals

Application Procedure: If interested, please fill out this online application. Selected applicants will be informed of their acceptance by April 1.
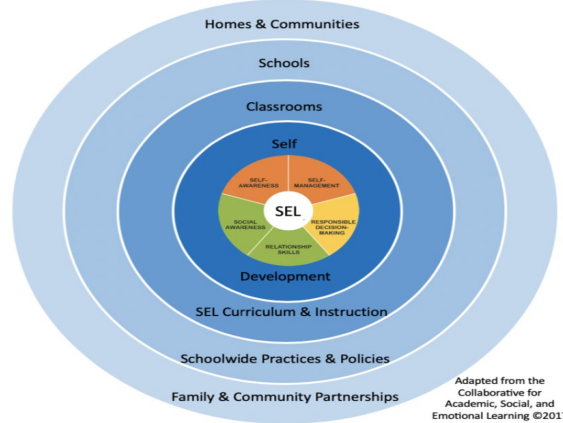
The Social-Emotional Learning Cohort Guide

Social Emotional Learning that starts with self and expands OUT

The purpose of this packet and related sessions is to inspire you to discover ways you can support your own social emotional learning and that of others.

The Vision

Adapted from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning ©2017

Social and Emotional Skill Quick Self-Assessment

1. Self-Awareness
The ability to recognize your own emotions, thought and behaviors. To know your own strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset".

This area for me _____ needs a lot of focus _____ needs some focus _____ is a strength

2. Self-Management
The ability to regulate your emotions, thoughts and behaviors in different situations – effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating yourself. This is also the ability to set and achieve goals.

This area for me _____ needs a lot of focus _____ needs some focus _____ is a strength

3. Social Awareness
The ability to take perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand cultural, and social norms for behavior.

This area for me _____ needs a lot of focus _____ needs some focus _____ is a strength

4. Relationship Skills
The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

This area for me _____ needs a lot of focus _____ needs some focus _____ is a strength

5. Responsible Decision Making
The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of yourself and others.

This area for me.   ___ needs a lot of focus   ___ needs some focus   ___ is a strength

Adapted from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning ©2017

Rearview Mirrors

Career Path

Life? People? Effort? Experience(s)? Opportunities?

Career Choice

When? Who? Why? How? Plan?

Early Life

People? Places? Things? Feelings? Circumstances?

SEL Cohort – Plan of Action Outline   Name:

S	**Significance** – choose an area/topic that is significant to you.	O	**Outcomes** – determine how the impact of your efforts could be measured.
How would you define or describe your topic?		What variables are you trying to impact?	
Why is this topic significant to you? To your early childhood program?		How might those variables be measured/tracked?	
E	**Explore** – consider at least a few different perspectives on the topic and variables that impact it.	U	**Understand** – reflect on your efforts and outcomes.
Perspectives on this topic:		Describe what happened?	
Variables that impact the topic:		Describe what you learned?	
L	**Lead** – create and launch an action plan/ small test of change.	T	**Tell** – share your learning to include and impact others
Action Plan/ Small Test of Change		What 3 things can others learn from your efforts and the outcomes?	
1		1	
2		2	
3		3	
4		Where will you share your learning?	
5			

SEL Cohort Action Planning

SIGNIFICANCE

Given the dialogue and discovery we have engaged in as a SEL Cohort, describe a topic that has **SIGNIFICANCE** to you.

Describe why this particular topic has **SIGNIFICANCE** to you and to the early childhood program.

Some Potential Areas and Topic to Consider (not an exhaustive list)

Mindfulness	Self SEL	Brain Development
Respecting Stories	Team SEL	Pre-frontal Cortex
Self-Awareness	Classroom SEL	Dysregulation
Self-Management	Family SEL	Co-regulation
Social Awareness	Building SEL	Emotional Security
Relationship Skills	Reflection	Trauma
Decision Making	Journaling	Family-School Partnership

SEL Cohort Action Planning

EXPLORATION

EXPLORE the topic, seek information, different perspectives, impactful variables, promising practices, etc. Keep track of what you are doing and learning.

Some Potential Places of Exploration

Your Team	Books
Parents of Children	Articles
Children	Reputable Websites
Building Leaders	On-line
SEL Cohort Co-facilitators	Workshops
Education Coaches	Webinars
Early Childhood Program Administration	Topic Experts

SEL Cohort Action Planning

LEAD

Use your exploration to create and launch an action plan and small test of change designed to impact social emotional learning. Define steps below.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Some Potential Action Steps

Do something different (change practice)

Create something new

Engage others to help

Facilitate the use of available resources

Build awareness of important SEL topics

Take advantage of a routine opportunity

Strategically advocate for enhanced SEL

SEL Cohort Action Planning

OUTCOMES

Determine how the impact of your efforts could be measured.

What variables were you trying to impact?

What impact did your work have on those variables?

Potential Outcome Measures

SEL Cohort Action Planning

UNDERSTAND

Reflect on your efforts and outcomes.

Describe what happened?

Describe what you learned/ what you did/ what changed.

Potential Refection Questions

SEL Cohort Action Planning

Share your learning to include and impact others.

What 3 things can others learn from your work.

1.

2.

3.

Brainstorm some great ways for others to learn those 3 things?

Some Sharing Methods

My Mindful SEL Journey

You will begin your SEL journey by engaging in reflective practice to enhance your self-awareness around your own social emotional skills, including your social awareness, self-regulation, relationship, and decision-making skills. The lessons in this book alternate between **Mindfulness Practices** and **Reflective Practice** around each of CASEL's 5 SEL competencies.

Mindfulness Practices are about increasing our well-being - and the well-being of those around us. It's a way of understanding the causes of the happiness and joy, and the causes of stress, discomfort, and dissatisfaction. As we learn to pay attention to our experience, we begin to find ways of living that really work.

Reflective Practice is important because it empowers you to assess your own performance, become aware of your strengths, as well as your limits and vulnerabilities. It also allows us to make mid-course corrections in our work practices that feel natural, unforced, and generated from within. Reflective practice is an investment in your development.

Enjoy your Mindful SEL Journey!

Mindful Breathing

Conscious awareness of breathing can bring together our minds and bodies to ground us in the present moment. The best thing about mindful breathing is that it can be done anytime and anywhere, to de-stress.

Practice. Find a comfortable seated position, with your back straight, but at ease. Sit on a comfortable cushion on the floor with your knees below your diaphragm or in a chair with your feet on the floor. Place your hand on your abdomen or chest, so you can feel your body expand and contract with each breath. Your mind will wander. That's OK. Mindfulness is about gently bringing yourself back to the present when you realize you are not present. Focusing on the sensation of your breath will help. Be aware of each inhale and exhale. It helps some people to pair the breath with a silent affirmation or positive statement. For example, on the inhale, silently say "calm." On the exhale, silently say "peace." Use whatever word or phrase nourishes you.

Reflection.

- How easy or hard was it to focus on your breath?

- Did you find that you got distracted? Were you able to gently guide yourself back to your breath?

- How did it feel in your body to be quiet and still?

- How did it feel to be focused only on your breath?

- What's your plan for future use of mindful breathing, if any?

Reflective Practice – Self - Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to accurately recognize your own emotions, thoughts, and values and how these things influence your behavior. The ability to accurately assess your strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset" is critical to life success.

Reflect on a moment of stress/discomfort in your professional practice (with children or adults) and answer the following questions to build your self-awareness around the event:

- What happened? Where and with whom did it happen?

- What were your thoughts? What were your feelings?

- How exactly did your emotions manifest physically? Where in your body did you feel tension arise? What were the specific sensations (e.g., tightness, pain, heat, throbbing)?

- What were your behaviors?

- Were you able to pause and take a mindful moment to focus on your breath, destress and remain calm, so you could 'respond' instead of 'react'? Describe your experience.

- What were you able to lean into and learn from this event and your discomfort?

Mindful Perspective-taking

Try to see yourself in the children you work with, your colleagues, or the parents of the children in your classroom/school. Put yourself in their shoes. This practice can help you gain perspective and increases compassion, altruism, and social behavior—essential qualities for a thriving school community. For example, if a child acts up, try to first remember what it was like for you when you were a child.

Practice. Here are some sentence stems to help you think about how you can really bring this into your teaching practice:

- "Breathing in, I see myself as the parent of _____ (child's name). Breathing out, I recognize we are a team and we want the best for _____ (child's name)."

- "Breathing in, I see myself as _____ (child's name). Breathing out, I recognize that _____ (child's name) wants to be seen, heard, and valued."

- "Breathing in, I see myself as _____ (colleague's name). Breathing out, I recognize that _____ (colleague's name) wants what's best for the children in our school."

Reflection.

- How easy or hard was it to take the other person's perspective?

- How did it feel?

- How did it change your thinking?

- What's your plan for future use of mindful perspective taking, if any?

Reflective Practice – Social Awareness

Social awareness is the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

Reflect on a moment of stress/discomfort in your professional practice (with children or adults) and answer the following questions to build your social awareness around the event:

- What happened? Where and with whom did it happen?

- What were the other person's thoughts? What was their perspective? Come up with at least 3 possible perspectives other than your own.

- What were their feelings? How exactly did their emotions manifest physically? What were their behaviors?

- Instead of asking "what is wrong with this person?", ask "what happened to this person?". How does this change your thinking?

- How does applying a "social awareness lens" improve your understanding and response?

- What were you able to lean into and learn from this event and your discomfort?

Mindful Body Scan

When we're aware of our body, we are more connected to our actual experience and able to take care of ourselves physically as well as emotionally. Emotions are not just experienced as an attitude or in our mind, but also in our body as well. When we are upset and angry we might feel a flow of sensations in our face, chest, belly, or broadly over the body. As we become more conscious of our body, we can learn to listen to it more deeply. Sometimes, intuition seems to arise from a deep listening to our body. We learn things about ourselves, our environment and our relationships by listening deeply to our body. Paying attention to our bodies gives us an opportunity to address our moods and emotions in more skillful ways.

Practice. The body scan can be done seated or lying down. Sometimes you might notice

this practice bringing energy to the body and mind. Other times, you may notice relaxation and perhaps even sleepiness. If excessive relaxation and sleepiness arise and you would like to encourage more alertness, open your eyes and sit up straight. Either way, position yourself comfortably and mindfully observe what's happening. Body scans are recommended before bed to help induce sleep or when your body is anxious and needs a rest. Insight Timer (search body scan or sleep under the meditation tab) is a good resource for this practice.

Reflection.

- How easy or hard was it to focus during the body scan?

- Did you find that you got distracted? Were you able to gently guide yourself back to your scan?

- How did it feel in your body? Did parts of your body feel differently?

- What's your plan for future use of body scans, if any?

Reflective Practice – Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is the ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

Reflect on a moment of stress/discomfort in your professional practice (with children or adults), and answer the following questions to examine the role of self-regulation (yours or the other persons) in the event:

- What happened? Where and with whom did it happen?

- What were your thoughts? What were your feelings? What were your behaviors? Did you "respond" or "react"? Do you wish you would have responded differently?

- What were the other person's thoughts? What were the other person's feelings? What were their behaviors? Did they seem to "respond" or "react"? What did that look like?

- What self-regulation techniques, if any, did you or the other person use? How did the technique impact the event?

- How does applying a "self-regulation lens" improve your understanding and practice?

- What were you able to lean into and learn from this event and your discomfort?

Mindful Listening

Another great way to begin practicing mindfulness is by focusing your attention on sounds. This is typically a bit easier than bringing your attention to the breath. That's the beautiful thing about mindfulness, there are so many different ways we can practice, and when it comes down to it, they are all about paying attention: to our breath or our thoughts, to sounds, to the movements of our body, to sensations, or to the many other elements in our field of awareness.

Practice.
One way you can practice mindful listening is with the use of a timer and bell (Insight Timer is a good free App for this). You sit comfortably, close your eyes and listen to the sound of the bell and try to focus on the sound and listen until the sound fades away completely. The you have a moment of silence and then repeat listening to the bell. You can repeat this process as many times as you like.

Reflection.

- How easy or hard was it to be quiet and listen to one sound?

- Did you find that you got distracted while listening to the bell?

- What other sounds could you hear besides the bell?

- How did it feel in your body to be quiet and focus on sound?

- What's your plan for future use of mindful listening, if any?

Reflective Practice – Relationship Skills

The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and group is an important life skill. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed are critical to happiness and success in life.

> Human relationships are primary in all of living. When the gusty winds blow and shake our lives, if we know that people care about us, we may bend with the wind... but we won't break.
>
> — *Fred Rogers* —

Reflect on a "challenging" relationship.

List 3 positives about the person (fun facts, things that the do well)
  ➢
  ➢
  ➢

List 3 things that bring the person joy (interests, preferences)
  ➢
  ➢
  ➢

List 3 things the person does to bring you joy (what puts a smile on your face, any shared interests)
  ➢
  ➢
  ➢

Refer to the strategies listed on the "Connection sheet" handout and commit to doing them with the person for 2-5 minutes a day for 10 days. Write 3 strategies you will use (consider the person's interests) and when and how you will make it happen!

➢
➢
➢

Refer to the "relationship busters" handout. Write which 3 "relationship busters" you will commit to stopping one thing over the next month.
➢
➢
➢

If the person you chose is a child, who are the other important adults in the child's life? How will you communicate, connect, and share joy about the child with the other important adults in the child's life? Identify 3 other "important adults". Write 3 ideas to improving positive connection and communication with those people.

➢
➢
➢

Mindful Moments

Whether it's tying your shoes, walking the path from the parking lot to your classroom, or eating a meal, choosing one activity to engage in mindfully can nourish your ability to pay attention and see circumstances with fresh eyes.

Practice taking a "mindful moment" at least 2 times each day. Transitions seem to be an ideal place to insert this practice...from work to home, from a meal to another activity, etc.… Examples: Practice mindfulness during a coffee or tea break in the staff room. Use your breathing to cultivate awareness of the present moment, so you can pay attention to the taste of your drink. Really taste and savor what you are drinking. Practice mindfulness during transitional time you spend waiting, such as while in traffic or while you wait for the computer to reboot. If we live to be 70 years old, we will have spent three years of our lives waiting. Imagine if that time had been spent practicing mindfulness.

Reflection.

- Describe the mindful moments you tried? When and what did you do?

- How did you feel on days when you were able to take mindful moments?

- How easy or hard was it to incorporate mindful moments into your day?

- What's your plan for future use of mindful moments, if any?

Reflective Practice – Responsible Decision Making

Responsible decision making is the ability to make constructive choices about our behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. This includes the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

Reflect on a moment of stress/discomfort in your professional practice (with children or adults), and answer the following questions to examine the role of "responsible decision making" (yours or the other persons) in the event:

- What happened? Where and with whom did it happen?

- What were your thoughts? What were your feelings? What were your behaviors?

- Was it easy or difficult to decide about what to do? What did that look and feel like?

- What were the other person's thoughts? What were their feelings? What were their behaviors?

- Did it seem easy or difficult for the other person to decide about what to do? What did that look like?

- How does applying a "responsible decision-making lens" improve your understanding and practice?

- What were you able to lean into and learn from this event and your discomfort?

Concluding Remarks

If you've made it this far, we consider that a success! Seriously. Its particularly important at the beginning of one's encounter with mindfulness, self-awareness, and reflection to simply keep going. Another key is to give mindfulness a fair chance by reaching an adequate 'dosage.' When we take Tylenol for a headache, we usually take 500 or 1000 milligrams. If we took 5 milligrams, we would never know if the Tylenol really works or not. Similarly, mindfulness requires adequate 'dosage.' Patience and perseverance will serve you well.

Appendix D Online Survey

1. Name (optional)

2. I participated in...

◯ SEL Cohort 1.0 (2019)

◯ SEL Cohort 2.0 (2020)

◯ SEL Cohort 3.0 (2021)

3. Rate how interesting you found each component of the SEL Cohort on a 1 (not at all interesting) to a 5 (very interesting) scale.

<table>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">1= not at all interesting;
5= extremely interesting</td><td></td><td>Not Applicable</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Collaborative (group) Learning Sessions with peers ()</td><td colspan="6"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Individual Learning Sessions ()</td><td colspan="6"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Presenting/Sharing Their Work ()</td><td colspan="6"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Experiential Learning, if applicable. ()</td><td colspan="6"></td></tr>
</table>

4. Rate how helpful you thought each component of the SEL Cohort was, on a 1 (not at all helpful) to a 5 (very helpful) scale.

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Not Applicable</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
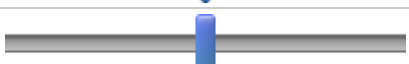<tr><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Collaborative (group) Learning Sessions with peers ()</td><td colspan="5"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Individual Learning Sessions ()</td><td colspan="5"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Experiential Learning, if applicable. ()</td><td colspan="5"></td></tr>
</table>

Presenting/Sharing their work. ()	

5. How did participating in the SEL Cohort impact you?

6. What do you see as the benefits (to educators and children and families) of a program like the SEL Cohort?

7. Describe your favorite and/or least favorite aspects of the SEL Cohort.

8. Has participating in the SEL Cohort changed your feelings of collective and/or self-efficacy? If yes, please describe.

9. Has participating in the SEL Cohort changed how you think about innovation and improvement, trauma, SEL, mindfulness or equity? If yes, please describe.

10. Describe what you have done differently in your practice that you attribute to participating in the SEL Cohort?

11. How would you describe the SEL Cohort to your peers?

12. How likely would you be to recommend signing up for a SEL Cohort to a colleague, on a 1 (not at all likely) to a 5 (very likely) scale.

	1	2	3	3	4	5

1 = not at all likely 5 = very likely ()	

13. How satisfied were you with your OVERALL experience in SEL Cohort on a scale of 1 (no at all satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied)

	1	2	3	3	4	5

1= not at all satisfied . 5= very satisfied ()	

14. Please share any other information you think would be useful for us in future planning.

Appendix E Fidelity Checklist

1. Was each activity of the collaborative learning session delivered to the group by the co-facilitators?

2. Did the co-facilitators provide a collaborative learning context, by asking for participant ideas and perspectives at least three times?

3. Did the co-facilitators provide a collaborative learning context, by giving at least three encouraging comments?

4. Did the co-facilitators provide a collaborative learning context, by validating participant comments?

Appendix F Survey Responses

Describe your favorite and/or least favorite aspects of the SEL Cohort.
- My favorite aspect was the first session when we drew our road map stories and shared them with the group. My least favorite part was it ending!   - I enjoyed the process start to finish! I am very grateful for the SEL cohort and staff that helped along the way.   - I would have to say there wasn't much that I did not like about the cohort, except due to Covid, we were unable to meet in person. When working on and discussing the topics brought to the table this year, it would have been AMAZING to discuss in person because of how passionate and important each topic meant to us. It was a great learning experience and I got to meet such an amazing group of fellow educators, that with their experiences, research and presentations allowed me to grow personally and professionally.   - Favorite: collaboration with colleagues Least: figuring out APA style   - I liked being able to share out and listen to others' ideas. My least favorite part was the workbook. I don't think we were able to utilize it fully while being virtual. So, I think some components/activities were overlooked that may have been beneficial. Especially in the beginning when we were starting to explore and think about what our topics could be.   - One of my favorite aspects of SEL Cohort getting to know my team members better thought shared experiences and personal stories.   - I do not think I have a least favorite. I struggled with the radar chart, but when it was time for me to prepare for the presentation, I really understood the benefit of the radar chart. For me, the exercise helped me to shift my topic. I am a visual learner, so the radar chart was impactful after I had time to sit and study it.   - Getting to share my classroom video with the district and visiting the private school was awesome!   - I loved meeting and learning with everyone! I wished we could meet in person more to learn from each other.   - Presenting at in-services, making sensory paths, having the students use the sensory paths, getting a machine to cut the sensory paths. The food provided at the meetings was a plus!   - SEL in the pandemic sucked. There weren't enough opportunities to connect with the large group or in our small sessions.   - The interactions with other coworkers and experts in the field of social emotional learning was powerful. I didn't become an educator to be a lone wolf. This opportunity to glean from others was one of the best parts of the program.   - I loved hearing the ideas and thought process of others, and how they came to choose their topics. I didn't care for the virtual format, but not much to be done about that for now.

Describe what you have done differently in your practice that you attribute to participating in the SEL Cohort?

- I have focused more time on social emotional learning and relationship building with children, families, and staff. I feel like I have the eagerness to view situations from multiple perspectives to better communicate with all the people that I work with. I feel like I am starting to understand my peers on a deeper level.
- More conversations around SEL and being mindful of the unnoticed traumas that students are facing.
- Incorporating new ideas and activities into our weekly lessons that will benefit our scholars social and emotional well-being. It also allowed me to discuss different ideas with my coworkers to help improve our classroom management, team relationship building and communication, and overall classroom environment.
- Creating sensory paths for others. I'm also now taking classes to become a therapeutic riding instructor.
- I make myself listen more and expand my able to change my mind set.
- I will be using the ideas from Jessica!
- I try to take the time to allow each child to tell me about their feelings and not quickly dismiss any. I look for more ways to include activities and lessons in the classroom.
- I am a calmer person.
- I'm using more mindful moments, more deep breathing, yoga, sensory paths, remaining calm more often, taking a step back to reflect instead of reacting when I'm working in a classroom.
- I have taken time for myself. I have taken time to find the resources I need for myself and my students. I am more willing to ask for help in order to be a better educator, friend, parent etc.
- I am working to change my language around individuals with neurodiverse brains and I am promoting the same change in others. I'm more focused on identifying strengths in all challenging students that are brought to my attention.

Has participating in the SEL Cohort changed how you think about innovation and improvement, trauma, SEL, mindfulness or equity? If yes, please describe.
• Yes - All of the above! The SEL cohort has made me become more aware of those topics in my everyday work.   • Yes   • Not necessarily changed only made me find new, helpful ways that I can manage, plan and help my students develop the social and emotional skills needed to flourish and grow in all areas of life.   • I try to be more mindful myself for my mental health.   • Yes. The journey model is very important and impactful.   • yes, it has made me more reflective and aware of interactions and the results that occur.   • Great ideas from within the program   • Trauma was presented really well and made me think of it in thoughtful way.   • I try to practice mindfulness at least once a day. For myself and the children in my class.   • Yes! I love using the mindfulness kits!   • Yes, participating has highlighted large and small ways that our lives can be damaged and healed.   • I realized that SEL is a much bigger range of topics than I realized, and we each see the need for it differently.

Has participating in the SEL Cohort changed your feelings of collective and/or self-efficacy? If yes, please describe.
• Yes, I now feel more prepared in creating social emotional resources to share with the staff that I coach. I also feel more confident in noticing social emotional learning opportunities that take place in the classroom.
• ABSOLUTELY!!!! 100% It allowed me to open up and discuss a topic near and dear to my heart. Hoping that it will be able to reach others and make an impact on them as much as it did on me.
• Yes, power in numbers!
• Revisiting what I am passionate about by looking back at my own history and journey was powerful for me. Being given the platform to share at the Early Childhood Summit and in our own EC community was also empowering. I love the saying your vibe attracts your tribe. You do not know who shares similar passions until you talk about your own.
• Try to be more mindful of others and my own feelings and experiences, issues that affect my work life and personal life.
• Reaffirmed feelings
• Yes, I think by working on the cohort it reaffirmed that working as a collective is effective and beneficial.
• Yes, I am a more effective educator because of this cohort.
• Yes! I'm getting better at dealing with challenging behaviors due to what I have learned during the SEL cohort.
• Yes. The refinement process of hearing and seeing other people's research and experiences has broadened my own beliefs.

How did participating in the SEL Cohort impact you?

- Participating in the SEL Cohort gave me an opportunity to meet with and engage in conversation about early childhood and social emotional development with my peers. Without the SEL cohort, I would still feel a little secluded in our EHS program, because we rarely engage with the EC staff and coaches. It was super helpful to hear the EC educator and coach perspectives while also merely have conversations with each other around social emotional development. I also learned a lot about myself, my history, and how that impacts my work each day. I am super happy to have had the opportunity to participate in the cohort.
- I was able to have a deeper level of SEL and in the impact it not only has on our students but our families as well.
- Being a part of the SEL Cohort made a huge impact on me both personally and professionally. Researching my topic open up my eyes even more on "What exactly My Privilege" is and how It can be utilized, to promote positivity, unity and acceptance of All regardless of their social status. Professionally it allowed me to find new ways to incorporate Allyship within my classroom. To provide my scholars a Positive Model behavior to hopefully impact them in a positive manner. Helping develop the social and emotional skills Presenting helped me gain confidence by having to speak on a subject that is sometimes difficult to discuss. It allowed me to begin on a journey that will hopefully be impactful on others.
- I use a lot more movement and yoga in our day. We also now have sensory paths at our school.
- My journey is not fresh in my mind; however, I do know that it was very impactful for me.
- Having the opportunity to share my thoughts on how race impacts early childhood was a huge breakthrough for me. Being involved in the cohort helped to break down barriers and shed light on topics that typically were muted in our program. I truly feel like I gained a voice that I did not have before.
- I use many techniques that I discovered in my Cohort and presentation from other cohorts.
- More confidence in what I know, as research backed my thoughts.
- It was great to receive feedback and insight from peers and other leaders outside our program.
- By working with others, it broadened my view of what SEL can be and what it can involve.
- I feel that I have become a better educator, I can look into myself and change the way I react and respond to behaviors. If I can handle myself then I can handle the situation.
- It allowed me to research something that I was passionate about…Sensory Paths. It allowed me to present at a conference at PSU and at an PPS in-service! The sensory paths really caught on before covid!! Hopefully we can continue them in the future! It also allowed me to learn a lot from my other colleagues!
- The level of self-reflection that I now expect from myself and encourage in my teammates has increased tremendously. I find myself more willing to take the extra few seconds to think through all I know about my students, their families, or my coworkers before reacting. I am hungrier to learn and study about my profession than I have been since college, almost 20 years ago.
- It allowed me to have the opportunity to reflect on a topic with great personal meaning to me, and to share that knowledge with others.

How would you describe the SEL Cohort to your peers?
• I would describe this as an experience like no other! I not only learned more about social emotional learning but learned a lot more about myself and how my past shaped who I am today and why I teach.
• An experience to unpack one's own social emotional learning and provided the opportunity understand SEL on a surface level. The deeper work happens as we unpack what SEL is and how useful and critical it is in our work.
• One of the best things I have ever decided to do and hope to get the chance to do again.
• A group to collaborate and change your way of thinking.
• The SEL cohort is a professional learning community that gives individuals the time and space to explore what they are passionate about, develop a learning project, and apply their learning to their practices.
• I would describe the journey I took with my Cohort team members. Share some of the exercises and how I tapped into our creative side and share what I learned from working with a group.
• A chance to grow and work with others you may not get time with.
• It is an opportunity to collaborate and share ideas around SEL. A space to reflect on our current practices both with ourselves, as educators and with our students.
• I great experience that everyone can benefit from.
• It's a great program to be a part of.
• The SEL Cohort is a chance to learn and focus on the foundation pieces of our being. It allows us the situation to evaluate our beliefs about ourselves and our students in order to be better at life as human and educators.

Other information participants thought would be useful.
• I am a very last-minute person who is very forgetful thanks to ADD, so something that would be beneficial to me would be a timeline and or due date/checklist to keep me on track when certain things are due or where we should be when working on certain things. But that is just me personally... LOL
• I would like to participate as a peer or mentor in the future.
• Time in our session went so fast that you didn't want to be late and at the end of the day rushing to get the meeting was at times stressful due to traffic and location. Possible starting at early time.

How does the SEL Cohort benefit educators, children and families?

- Educator benefits – The opportunity to collaborate with each other around the topic of social emotional learning was huge. We are so busy during the workday that we rarely get to stop and have collaborative conversations like we did during the SEL sessions. I wish this could happen more often. if only we could add more hours to the normal day!! LOL. Children benefits – Educators are now focusing on social emotional learning, now more than ever, which directly impacts a child's ability to cope with big feelings and manage their own social emotional development while learning in our EC and EHS classrooms. Family benefits – Families are now receiving more resources around social emotional learning while also developing partnerships with educators around their child's social emotional learning.
- I use SEL in my practice to encourage students to share out their feelings (Individual and group settings) and we strategies together problem-solving techniques as well as extended their vocabulary and social skills.
- For my fellow educators, I am hoping that it will impact them in a way that it did for me and find ways to incorporate Allyship in their own schools, individual classroom and communities. Hoping that it would then in return make their workplace a safe, comfortable welcoming environment for ALL. For my Scholars and Families, I hope that they will accept my willingness to become more understanding and supportive of the struggles they face on a daily basis. I hope that it will continue to make our classroom grow socially and emotionally by our teachings of Allyship through our daily experiences.
- Bouncing new ideas off one another and taking the input and turning it into practice.
- The benefits of the SEL cohort are many. The journey allows the professional to reflect on their why and what they are passionate about. The individual and community learning allows the professional time and space to grow. Applying the learning to their work, positively impacts the program, children, and families. I would recommend SEL for all staff.
- I feel it supports self-learning and best practices when dealing with families, staff, and coworkers; enhanced my personal skills.
- Grow from within, ideas from front line, based upon our own community
- It allows us time to reflect on our current practices and take the time to see how new methods or ideas can be implemented. The cohorts afford us the time to really put some effort and energy into how we can help our current families.
- Educators can learn about something that they are interested in and develop strategies to help both children and families.
- It allowed the educators to pick a project/issue that they were concerned about and find ways to improve the situation by researching and talking to other colleagues in the classroom about the issue. Educators like hearing/learning from other educators from the same program/school/classroom as them!
- It makes better educators. If someone comes wiling to learn and try, then they will walk away changed and wanting change for others.
- I hope others will learn from my presentation and reflect on their current mindset and practices, then move forward and grow!

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