

# INCREASING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR ELLS

## **Increasing Social and Emotional Learning for ELLs**

by

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**INCREASING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR ELLS**

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## INCREASING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR ELLS

### Abstract

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development 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. This project examines the need for adequate social and emotional learning practices incorporated in the classroom is a problem that ELLs/bilingual students face. Research shows the implementation of standardized testing, racial disparities in discipline, the lack of teacher preparation and culturally adapted programs have contributed to the problem of inauthentic incorporation of SEL programs in the ENL classroom. This capstone project will discuss the urgency of incorporating SEL practices in the classroom because of the increased experiences of ELLs with emotional trauma as a result of immigration, discrimination, alienation, possible separation from family members or friends, discrimination, social rejection, poverty, anxiety, and educational stress. Implementation of SEL programs and restorative practices promotes positive outcomes for ELLs within academic and life success. The professional development plan I developed will first advocates for ELLs by providing teachers information for them to fully understand the increased struggles ELLs experience and what troubling emotions this can cause and understand the benefits of incorporating SEL. Participants will learn effective instructional practices to seamlessly incorporate SEL throughout academic curriculum in order to continue to meet the social, emotional, and cultural needs of students while meeting the school curriculum goals.

*Keywords:* English Language Learners (ELLs), Limited English Proficiency (LEP), social and emotional learning (SEL), socioemotional competence, professional development

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### Chapter 1: Introduction

A problem that ELLs/bilingual students face is the need for adequate social and emotional learning practices incorporated in the classroom. According to Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, CASEL (2021), social and emotional learning (SEL) is 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. It has been argued that SEL are more important skills to learn for children than academic skills. SEL can be incorporated in instruction by being taught, modeled, and practiced leading to positive student outcomes that are important for success in school and in life. According to two decades of research by CASEL (2021), if SEL is neglected for students, it may lead to substance abuse, detention facilities, emotional distress, poverty, and inhibit economic ability. The benefits of SEL are short-term as well as long-term, positively impacting students up to eighteen years post schooling (CASEL, 2021).

Although there is research on the benefits of incorporating SEL integrated for the general education classroom, there is a lack of research on classroom language diversity for ELL and non-ELL students' social-emotional development (Meng, 2018). This is a district level problem if it is not advocated for in school curriculum, which transcends to the school level and the classroom level. If this problem is not solved, ELLs will suffer emotionally, an existing vulnerable group whom needs to be supported. If this type of education is not incorporated even more so for ELLs, it could have severe consequences for students who already have challenging and taxing emotional experience than the general education student has. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2021), the suicide rates among teens is rising, "suicide was

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the second leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 10 and 34” in 2019 and it is crucial for this issue to be resolved for the well-being of the students, the families, the teachers, the community and the country at large. Thus, educators need to be aware of this issue because of its relevance to today’s changing societal needs and it is not going to get resolved if we do not make changes starting at the classroom level with the youth of the country.

Through personal experience, I have taught in both general education ELA and specified ENL classrooms where the curriculum’s focus is solely on rigorous academic content, with little incorporation of social-emotional curriculum. One social and emotional activity I’ve witnessed was a one-time activity where students had to write a mistake, they’ve made on a left flipflop and then turn that “mistake” into an “opportunity” on the right flipflop. The administration at my school district was persistent in including SEL in the classroom, but based on my experiences and research, social and emotional programs work best in naturalistic school environments (Carroll et al., 2020). As an ELA teacher, the English Department requires educators to track student learning by compiling a Final Exam Portfolio at the end of the year as their evidence for learning throughout the academic school year. There are two student-work pieces included: The Mid-Year Self-Reflection as well as the Final-Self Reflection, in which students take part in a formal, 5-paragraph-essay responding to self-reflective questions about themselves and their academics. In theory, this SEL assessment works well as a self-reflective piece, however, in practice, I’ve had students provide feedback that this type of activity adds to their stress. I think it is crucial to incorporate SEL and self-reflective pieces in a more authentic way, incorporated into the academic curriculum throughout the year, which will not only create more manageable tasks for students but also be highly effective.

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With standardized testing present in schools, it is challenging for educators to incorporate the adequate SEL activities while following the strict guidelines of reaching content curriculum goals for the school year when preparing students for said standardized testing. Thus, the inadequate social and emotional curriculum incorporated in the ENL classroom needs to be at the forefront for bettering education because if not changed, then it will affect student mental health, which can snowball into affecting their families' and teachers' mental health as well.

This is a multidimensional issue that can encompass all social, emotional, and even economic levels due to the overall mental state of the individual. Advocates for this issue begins with the school administrators, the district's board of education, the general and TESOL educators, school counselors and the ELLs enrolled at the school. Ways that this problem can be solved is within the following areas of practices to successfully incorporate SEL for ELLs: establish high expectations with culturally responsive teaching, attending to social and emotional regulation skill building, and maintain an advocate for students by designing systems for intervention while maintaining and monitoring consistent progress of the student. Social and emotional support needs to be within the following areas: the crucial need to negate the push of cultural hegemony, using culturally relevant and responsive education, the previous presidential administration and societal climate, and the social and emotional awareness of refugee and immigrant children.

ELLs need the utmost support academically and most importantly, socially and emotionally, where educators and administration and other school staff must continue to advocate for their SEL first and foremost. SEL programs must be advocated for first in the ELL classroom because without SEL and positive mental health, then students will fail or be less motivated academically. This domino effect, the lack of SEL programs negatively effecting

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students' mental health which will negatively impact students' academic performance, will contribute to the existing, and problematic, achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs. SEL programs are highly beneficial because not only do they teach youth to become socially-aware and establish and maintain respectful relationships with themselves, family, friends, school staff and the larger community, it also enforces the practice of safe and healthy habits, develop positive work habits, as well as healthy organization and stress management which will prepare ELLs for college, career and transcend to life success.

Over the last century, life for youth and adolescents have changed drastically, where families have faced an increase in economic and social pressures, and the integration of technology where students are exposed to an increase of complexities within their mental health when seeing the world through the media-focused lens. Students having unlimited access to information and social constructs within the ever-evolving technological advances is taxing on students' mental health, self-esteem and self-awareness. According to the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), a survey in which monitors priority health behaviors and experiences among students across the country, have noted a large percentage of adolescents engage in risky behaviors that jeopardize their futures like substance use, violence, bullying, unprotected sexual intercourse, resulting in mental health difficulties. Students who engage in such risky behaviors have SEL competence deficits which result in a decreased academic performance and lower positive educational experiences. The results found by YRBSS help in understanding the factors that contribute to the leading causes of illness, death, and disability among youth and young adults, which stresses the need for advocating and implementing adequate and authentic SEL programs within schools, specifically the culturally diverse communities which are already vulnerable populations as it stands.

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Therefore, I will create a PD that will be incorporated after school, for educators and administrators. The PD will be broken into three sessions, directly after school, which will feature a presentation about what SEL is and why it is important, increasing mindfulness for the participants to be able to effectively use SEL and apply it in teaching, and finally a collaborative discussion about intervention practices and skills to successfully incorporate when interacting with ELLs and bilingual students in the classroom.



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### Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this Chapter, I review the literature about the lack of integrated SEL programs for ELLs. Many educators do not know how to incorporate social and emotional learning (SEL) in the classroom (Buchanan et al., 2009; Martinez, 2016). Often times SEL programs efforts are just that, efforts, where they are typically introduced as short-term, “pilot” programs that are not authentically integrated in the academic goal of the school. This stems from the strength of the leadership in schools, If the school leaders of the district are not strong in their conviction of incorporating and advocating of authentic use of SEL in the classroom, specifically the ENL classroom, then there is rarely any support for the quality implementation of these programs or rarely any staff development in how to incorporate SEL in the classroom.

Four themes emerged including standardized testing, racial disparities in discipline, lack of teacher preparation, and effective SEL programs for ELLs. Drawing on Albert Bandura’s (1977) Social Learning Theory (SLT) Abraham Maslow’s (1900) Humanistic Learning Theory (HLT), I argue not only are educators responsible for teaching language and content demands, but they must also teach students to be responsible, caring and socially competent individuals to become a positive and contributing citizen beyond schooling years. That is, teachers of ELLs need to be culturally literate, intellectually reflective, and to be able to use social and emotional skills to transform into lifelong learners beyond the classroom.

#### **Understanding SEL through Social Learning Theory and Humanistic Learning Theory**

Albert Bandura’s (1977) SLT highlights the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes and emotional reactions of others. This theory is grounded in examining how both of the environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human behavior and human learning. The successful integration of SEL programs for ELL through the

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SLT begins with the following conceptual model framework: Federal Policies and Supports, State Policies and Supports, Districtwide SEL programs, Schoolwide SEL programs (also a subdivision is within family and community partnerships), Short-Term Student Outcomes as a result of SEL programs, and finally Long-Term Student Outcomes as a result of successful SEL programs (Durlak et al., 2015). The SLT is centered around child-based observational learning, where students are surrounded by many influential individuals that are examples of observable behaviors that can be imitated. Thus, observational learning, role models (i.e. teachers) must be modeling ideal behavior within the social emotional competencies.

SLT is connected to SEL because it focuses on how cognitive factors are involved in learning, where SEL is incorporated in instruction. The aim of SEL is to first the focus on students' mental health and social/emotional skill building, then academic learning and language skills. The additional components within effective implementation of SEL programs outlining the five interrelated domains of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies that provide a foundation to navigate school with SEL skill building and will transcend into life success as well (Durlak et al., 2015). The short-term and long-term cognitive mindset and behavioral outcomes from evidence based SEL programs are in coordination within the realms of classrooms, schools, families and communities' advocacy and strategies applied to develop culturally diverse youth's SEL development and school performance. Finally, the district, state and federal policies are the support that enhances quality SEL programs and better outcomes for all.

Abraham Maslow's HLT (1900) focuses on teaching strategies that are student-centered, stressing the goal that all of the students' needs (mental and physical) must be met in order for them to learn and succeed in the classroom. The HLT also highlights building students' self-esteem, goals and full autonomy (Javadi, 2019), which is directly relevant through SEL programs

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that are used in schools because SEL programs have the same goals, ensuring students' needs are fully met. This includes harnessing the concept that if students are upset/distressed, they are less likely to be able to focus on academic studies, so incorporating emotional and social skill building in the classroom goes hand in hand with academic learning.

Fundamentally, SEL and the HLT are interconnected in that both are centered around the human emotions and self-actualization. The leading principles of HLT for the classroom are incorporating student choice, fostering engaging lessons for self-motivation, incorporating self-reflective opportunities with self-evaluation, acknowledging feelings and knowledge, and are both vital to the learning process, and finally, establishing a safe learning environment for students to be able to thrive and succeed academically (Durlak et al., 2015; Javadi, 2019). Standardized testing does not work with the HLT educational approach because memorization is not a meaningful way to learn, which is notable in the argument that there must be an increase in more authentic opportunities for students to learn social and emotional skills, rather than focusing on a curriculum solely on content where educators are "teaching for the test" at the end of the school year (Rosales, 2021). Thus, SEL and academic learning must be integrated, in order for students to thrive and succeed in both school and post-graduation.

### **Standardized Testing**

The alignment of academic curriculum with state standards in schools is problematic to the successful implementation of SEL programs. Historically, schools across the United States have implemented high-stakes testing for student-level evaluations. Standardized testing has a great impact on ELLs, ranging from state mandated exams between each grade level, high school exit exams (HSEE) and college admission exams like the SAT, affecting their current and postsecondary educational opportunities. Despite educators' most recent efforts advocating for

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standardized testing to dissipate, Education Department officials have continued to mandate statewide assessments for the upcoming 2021 academic school year. Curriculum is narrowed as a result of teachers spending too much time on test preparation and not enough time to authentically incorporate SEL programs and skill building. The exam creators who study tests for obvious bias often miss underlying biases that have damaging effects for the ELLs and students of color who are taking the tests. According to Rosales (2021), schools with high Latinx and Black populations are penalized due to the lower rating and therefore receive less resources, making standardized testing only beneficial for affluent White students standardized testing is used to determine school success which have an effect on schools and property value. Therefore, students' low performance scores from high-stakes testing has illuminated a negative pattern between available resources and academic achievement.

Standardized testing are instruments for racism and bias. On average, students of color score lower on college admission tests, therefore denied entrance or access to scholarships which contributes to the racial gap in college enrollment and completion. There are also noticeable racial disparities in students' participation in Advanced Placement (AP) programs, which is a popular program which allows students to earn college credits while in high school. AP courses has become the largest mechanism through which high school students earn college credit due to more than 2.6 million exam takers in the academic year of 2015-2015 (College Board, 2017). An empirical study examines information available from a national census of AP participation among U.S. high school students in the 2015-2016 school year illustrating an analysis of White-Black and White-Hispanic enrollment gaps in AP programs within thousands of school districts in the U.S. (Fink et al., 2021). ELLs that come from low-income families score lower than their non-ELLs affluent White peers, inhibiting their ability to pass graduation tests or AP exams,

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which is a subtractive element of standardized testing for ELLs. The average AP participation rates was averaged from binary outcomes where students either participated or did not participate in AP programs. The results of the district racial gaps in AP participation were presented on choropleth maps. The 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of racial gaps are higher than zero in most states, stating that majority of school districts nationwide have racial equity gaps in AP participation. Although AP courses are meant to be equitable, providing students with the opportunity to take college credits early on in high school, they have the opposite effect by further contributing to the achievement gap when ELLs and POC have low enrollment in said courses. According to the choropleth map, extreme cases show school districts have White-Black and White-Hispanic AP program enrollment gaps that are greater than 50%. AP programs serve as an example of systematic racism because of the significantly lower number of ELLs and POC enrolled in AP programs that are designed to enhance college and life success. Standardized testing and AP programs perpetuate racial inequality through the emotional and psychological power of the exams over the test takers due to the high stakes.

There is a history of researchers questioning the validity of high stakes testing for ELLs and minority students. A major negative impact of mandated standardized testing on minority students is the increase in at-risk student dropouts. There a reduction in students' authentic learning experiences where mandated testing stands as a barrier to learn critical thinking skills which minimizes the opportunity for ELLs to become more literate. The increased stakes and pressure associated with testing does not bring improvements of instruction. An empirical study examined the impact of mandated standardized testing on curriculum and instruction in mathematics and science for minority students through a survey, addressing aspects of testing and estimates of the percentage of students who belong to minority groups, where 2,229 out of

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4,950 teachers responded. After selection, at least two schools at both primary and secondary levels were selected for teacher participation in interviews, where a total of 199 teachers were randomly chosen on the basis of content area taught, grade level, number of average and below average students (Harmon et al., 2015). According to the study, teachers expressed their concerns about the rigid deadlines standardized testing creates and the negative consequences, for teachers and students, if the test scores do not score to a certain benchmark. Therefore, there is an importance placed within academic curriculum and little room for SEL. Blaise (2015) also found the lack of instruction of critical thinking skills due to content stressed testing. The study further examined these findings during a three-year ethnographic study in a Boston Public school on the performance of Haitian students with limited English proficiency (LEP) on a Massachusetts state exam. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is a mandated exam required for students to graduate high school, which can have a lasting impact on students, especially students with LEP who are at an enormous disadvantage due to the language barrier. The study collected data from 13 Haitian students, one teacher, and an assistant principal from 2009-2011 through a series of interviews to determine attitudes and readiness for taking the state exam. The study found that students expressed feelings of worry surrounding such high-stake testing in obtaining their diploma, challenging language and content curriculum and with access to limited resources aiding with test preparation. MCAS test results showed that the number of LEP Haitian students performing at both advanced and proficient levels remained below 5%, which had negative socioemotional effects on the LEP students.

For ELLs and minority students, performing below the “standard” for standardized testing is problematic for their emotional well-being where “failures” are internalized, therefore negatively affecting students’ self-esteem and confidence. The feelings of anxiety and pressure

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high-stakes testing creates for students and educators proves the crucial integration of SEL programs. Both studies further show that standardized testing is not effective in preventing students from falling behind academically. They do not help teachers become better teachers due to the pressures to produce exceptional test scores. The content focused for standardized testing is a barrier from teaching critical thinking and socioemotional skills, which reduces the exposure to authentic learning where students become more literate and better citizens. The negative effects of standardized testing on minority groups, LEP students and ELLs facilitate racism, segregation and contributes to the academic achievement gap.

### **Racial Disparities in School Discipline**

The racial disparities in school discipline contribute to the academic achievement gap due to students missing crucial class time. Minority students, Latinx and Black youth, are significantly more likely than other students to be referred to school administrators for discipline problems and receive detention or in-school suspension (Carrero et al., 2018). These disciplinary measures are not only damaging for students socially and emotionally, but they also contribute to racial inequalities that call for more preventative SEL programs in schools. Latinx youth are one of the fastest growing groups of U.S. population, but also face the most academic hurdles such as disproportionate discipline in schools as well as the increased risk for dropping out of public school (Bondy et al., 2016). Therefore, federal and state discipline reforms focus on the reduction of suspension with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) enacted to decrease the amount of exclusionary practices, in-school suspension and detention, that remove students from the classroom (Fergus, 2017). The SEL skills students learn through SEL programs and in alternate disciplinary practices like restorative justice, serve as the fair and equitable discipline policies needed to create a healthy and productive school environment that supports minority

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students' needs to learn and grow from their mistakes, rather than miss crucial class time learning these beneficial life skills.

Latinx ELLs are considered to be at high risk for poor social emotional outcomes in school contexts due to the language barrier that contributes to feelings of not belonging in school culture, which is why harsh disciplinary measures may deeper contribute to feelings of isolation among ELLs. A study was conducted to compare student dropout rates and overall school feelings of fairness among Latinx and White peers (Bondy et al., 2016). The participants were 1,800 Latinx students and 6,300 White Students in 580 public schools with an analysis of data set out to address the relationship between procedural justice, punishment, and the likelihood of dropping out of high school for Latinx students compared to White students. For Latinx students, the results showed an increase in dropout events due to a lack of school fairness within discipline, as well as an increased number of Latinx students who were punished at a higher percentage. Also, a lower level of achievement among Latinx students as well as lower family socioeconomic status and less family involvement and support than their White peers. Further research conducted by Fergus and Gregory studied the discipline reforms of three U.S. school districts: Syracuse City School District, Denver Public Schools, and the Cleveland Metropolitan School District; where reforms in all three school districts focus on increasing social and emotional literacy as preventative practices and early detection of behavioral challenges. Each district revised their code of conducts to and adopted SEL practices to promote positive school behavior in developing self-discipline and socioemotional efficacy through dealing with student misconduct through restorative measures, where students assume responsibility for their actions by correcting their own behaviors, solving the problem, and learn new behaviors. To conclude all three districts arrived at a common theme where SEL practices were beneficial in reducing



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suspension rates of minority students as well as decreasing disobedient behaviors like fighting, violence, harassment and disruption. In another study conducted, researchers collected and compared qualitative data from interviews with faculty and staff at three small public schools in the same urban school district, comprised of 43% Latinx students, where restorative practices were enforced (Greene-Rooks et al., 2020). The data from this study is from observations and interviews pertaining to community-building circles guided during an advisory period where students have adequate time to participate in SEL skill-building by participants who are a majority of non-White and low-income students and majority of White teachers. The overall findings after data analysis were that noticed increased benefits of using community-building circles, however, both teachers and students expressed mixed feelings between comfort and discomfort within opening up to their teachers and peers about sensitive topics. Findings suggest that the benefits of implementing SEL practices serve as an opportunity for participants to learn about one another through shared learning that creates emotional and social growth.

Furthermore, it has been shown Latinx students are at higher risk for internalizing problems compared to children of other ethnic groups where ELLs might have experienced emotional trauma related with immigration, discrimination, alienation, possible separation from family members or friends, discrimination, social rejection, poverty, anxiety, educational stress, and low-self-worth (Garner et al., 2014). In order to prevent Latinx students internalizing their perceived negative behaviors and increased school punishments, schools across the U.S. must adopt preventative programs such as restorative practices and SEL skill building. Preventative practices, including restorative practices and SEL programs, reduce the need for damaging disciplinary practices like classroom removal and suspension which results in an increased number of school dropouts. Restorative practices in place of traditional school punishment can

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establish trust and community within students and staff that create antiracist and culturally responsive school atmospheres. It is crucial schools adopt restorative justice and SEL programs to prevent further internalization of negative feelings. SEL programs have many benefits for ELLs due to activities that focus on establishing and building trusting relationships between teacher-and-student and student-and-student in the classroom. Teachers must educate themselves on the topics that may be trigger-inducing for their students, so they are aware, ready and willing to respond accordingly through professional development opportunities and collaboration with colleagues. It is also important for educators to eliminate their personal bias remind students they are in a safe space to express themselves while providing them with the necessary tools, the social and emotional competencies, to combat their socioemotional distress.

### **Effective Teacher Preparation**

New initiatives implemented in the classroom depend on the teachers to take action. Although teachers play an important role in supporting social and emotional competencies for students, educators have reported a lack of confidence in knowing how to teach these skills (Main, 2018). This is especially true when it comes to the implementation of SEL programs, where teachers are responsible for teaching, modeling and monitoring their students' use and progress of the social and emotional competencies. Martinez (2016) outlined the conditions that enhance teachers' development of practices that incorporate and address the whole child with SEL implementation through research (Martinez, 2016). The method of research was through a practitioner-driven methodology, action research (AR) with its participants at a charter school in a high-needs, at-risk community in a large urban area in California. In Martinez's study, the charter school's population consisted of 400 students in grades kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> where almost 90% of the school's student population were Latinx and 60% were ELLs. The study was

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conducted in four stages, where the initial stage had educators identifying their students' cognitive, social and emotional needs. The second stage had educators designing a plan of action to improve instructional practice to meet student needs. The third stage had educators implement the action plan. The final stage had teachers participate in self-reflection of what worked well, what challenges they encountered and the impact of their action plan on students and their instructional practices.

Although collectively teachers agreed upon the need to develop students' social and emotional competencies for academic achievement, they also identified the lack of time and a lack of consistency between behavior expectations at school and at home. Martinez goes onto explain that teachers identified a lack of explicit instruction and lack of professional development in order to combat said obstacles within implementing SEL practices and what prevailed at the forefront of instructional needs due to pressures mandated by state-standards was the priority in reaching academic standards for high-stakes testing. There is a need for professional development opportunities among teachers where they can collaborate/brainstorm implementation ideas, share best practices, and observe colleagues teaching some of the SEL standards in order to successfully incorporate SEL practices in instruction. If educators have an increased knowledge of social and emotional development, then they can form positive classroom environments, developing positive student-teacher relationships, which will foster pro-social student development (Main, 2018). Incorporating successful SEL programs begins at the school level with professional development opportunities and support by administration, continues at the classroom level with isolated or embedded SEL competencies, and finally through family and community partnerships aligning with competencies stressed at school. Based on Martinez's study, educators need to be aware of the best techniques on how to conduct

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SEL practices authentically in instruction and would greatly benefit from training models, such as coaching, self-reflecting, observing and receiving feedback, within their own practices for SEL skill-building among students to succeed.

### Effective SEL Programs

Teacher social and emotional competence is key for both pre-service and in-service teachers to effectively provide SEL content to students. According to CASEL's (2021) five emotional and cognitive competency domains, SEL programming highlights ELLs capacity to incorporate cognition, affect and behavior to build skills to effectively interact with daily challenges and tasks. Within the CASEL (2021) specified SEL program approach, there is an inclusion of knowledge, skills and positive attitude building that is constructed around intrapersonal, interpersonal and cognitive competence. The social and emotional skills that need to be introduced and expanded upon for ELL youth are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making due to the academic achievement gap and challenges ELL face inside and outside the classroom. SEL programs explore ways to incorporate students' background experiences while fostering a growth mindset within scaffolding content, discourse and literacy practices designed to facilitate both content and academic language development for all students in the classroom (Swanson et al., 2019).

Since the majority of the ELL population in schools are Spanish speakers, SEL programs that must be adopted must be targeted to meet the sociocultural competent practices of the diverse learner. The SEL program *Jóvenes Fuertes*, needs to be advocated for the ENL classroom since it is a culturally adapted version of the Strong Teens SEL program, highly beneficial for Latinx ELLs as seen through a study that evaluated the effects of the program on the social and emotional outcomes of Latinx ELLs. The quasi-experimental design was

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conducted through randomly assigned classrooms with samples of 102 Spanish-dominant Latinx ELLs enrolled in middle or high school (Castro-Olivo, 2014). The findings in the study measured the effectiveness of culturally responsive SEL programs in school settings through a nine-item questionnaire which used a 6-point scale ranging from 1—strongly disagree, to 6—strongly agree, to assess ELLs’ satisfaction with the current SEL program. The results showed that the program was effective in improving students’ social-emotional resiliency and knowledge and application of social emotional skills due to the high levels of students who selected “strongly agree” to the accessibility to the program. This program needs to be taught in schools across the country with high Latinx ELL student population because the ELLs in the study also reported high levels of social validity, where this program not only improved students’ social emotional outcomes, because it is culturally relevant, responsive and competent. The only critique within this program is that it is adapted for grades 6-12, which excludes the elementary grades.

The next program, the 4Rs Program (Reading, Writing, Respect and Resolution) is a SEL program that engages the creativity of students in grades PreK-8 to help develop the critical social emotional skills of empathy, community building, and conflict resolution, where there are also translated materials within the program available in Spanish, well-adapted for the Latinx ENL classroom. This program not only features strategies and education within SEL for students, but it also includes adult training opportunities, which is in need to successfully implement SEL programs. The evidence of effectiveness of this particular SEL program adapted for ELLs, was in a study within a three year timeframe in a randomized controlled trial (RCT) in 2014 where the evaluation included 942 students in grade 3 (comprised of 46% Latinx ethnicity) and found that students who participated in the program showed a decrease in self-reported depressive symptoms and teacher-reported aggression (CASEL, 2021).

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Another SEL program that has shown effectiveness for Latinx ELLs due to its sociocultural competency is the Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) organizational approach to SEL for grades K-12 offering a translated program in Spanish. This program is grounded in recognizing, understanding and working with bias for educators to first and foremost understand their diverse students and then adjust their instruction accordingly, then the program reaches to educate Latinx ELLs the fundamentals of social emotional skills. In a randomized control trial (RCT) evaluation conducted over three consecutive academic school years (2014-2017), with a sample of 4,000 students in grade 9 predominately White, non-ELLs (37%) and Latinx, ELLs (52%) that resulted in students participating within the program to have higher academic achievement within their GPA, passing core subject courses, and higher scores within testing with a greater school engagement and an increase in positive student-teacher relationships (CASEL, 2021). This program provides teachers and students with the tools needed to work together in developing the successful social emotional skills needed to thrive inside and outside the classroom for both ELLs and non-ELLs. This is a very effective program because of its ability to reach all targeted areas for success (providing sufficient knowledge for the educators and both ELLs and non-ELLs) adapted for all content and ability-specific materials to fit all grade levels as well.

More states and districts are developing strategies and systematic supports to help schools and teachers implement SEL programs into practice. According to SEL empirical findings highlighted by researchers, since 2012 there has been an increase in efforts to enact SEL programs into practice (Carr et al., 2017). District and school SEL programming is currently at a major area of growth, where CASEL has carried out most of the comprehensive work in leading the organizing and implementation of SEL programs. It was concluded that policymakers who

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want to learn more about SEL program initiatives can do so by mandating the integration of SEL into their academic state-standards. Some states have begun to align their SEL standards across grade level and have even aligned these SEL program skill building within realms of communication, cooperation and problem solving (Carr et al., 2017). At the school level, support for integrating SEL into performance evaluation systems for both teachers and administrators is gaining more recognition, where they are receiving tools, supports and the resources needed to foster adequate SEL programs for the ENL and non-ENL classroom.

### **Solutions**

There are various methods used to alleviate the struggles of historically disadvantaged students. It has also been discovered that children from low-income families are not as socially and emotionally competent as their peers who descent from affluent families nearly 60% of ELLs nationwide are from low-income families in which parents have “disproportionately” limited levels of education (Breiseth, 2015). ELLs need to be supported through culturally adapted SEL preventative programs and restorative justice in place of traditional discipline practices. Breiseth also explains since 2014, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has detained more than 62,000 unaccompanied children crossing the Mexico-U.S. border, where Latinx immigrants are motivated to flee due to the increase in drug trafficking and gang violence present in Central America that many ELLs are escaping from. Due to the fact that ELL, specifically Latinx ELLs, are facing mentally taxing challenges outside of school, it is ever more crucial to have adapted SEL programs in place in the ENL classroom. Incorporating successful SEL programs begins at the school level with professional development opportunities and support by administration, continues at the classroom level with isolated or embedded SEL competencies, and finally through family and community partnerships aligning with

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competencies stressed at school. Advocates, teachers, administration, parents also need to fight for less standardized testing in schools. High-stakes testing is detrimental to ELLs mental health and has lasting negative effects on their future because these tests are not designed for students with LEP. Overall, outcomes of high-stakes testing are damaging for everyone involved, the ELL students, the teachers and administration, due to the pressures and inauthentic education they produce. If there was less pressure for teachers to “teach for the test” then there would be more time to authentically teach important social and emotional skills through incorporating SEL competencies throughout academic curriculum.

One SEL program that should be emphasized since it meets the sociocultural competence needs for Latinx ELLs is the SEL program, *Jóvenes Fuertes*, which is a culturally adapted version of the Strong Teens SEL program for ELLs. The sociocultural competencies that this program meets for ELLs encompass topics of celebrating ethnic pride through recognizing strong Latinx roots along with understanding feelings, empathy training and ways to deal with anger and identification of triggers. This program also instills the power of positive thinking with examples related to English Proficiency as well as feelings related to culture in home and school settings, by reducing stress with relaxation training due to acculturative stress, and the emphasis on the use of skills to reduce acculturative stress within conflicts at school and at home within cultural identity. Culturally adapted SEL programs in accordance with school discipline practices that use restorative methods will have positive outcomes for Latinx ELLs. Cultural artifacts and language are considered significant determiners of learning, thinking, and actions, where these determinants must be considered when implementing SEL programs for ELLs. Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse are the most in need of mental health supports and social emotional skill building in order to achieve in academia and later in life.



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SEL must be a crucial focus to incorporate in the ENL classroom because not only are educators responsible for teaching language and content demands, but educators must also teach students prosocial behaviors to become a positive and contributing citizens beyond schooling years. This is vital in the ENL classroom setting because not only is it important to teach both cognitive and academic skills but because of the additional factor ENL students face: they are immigrants to a new country where the social constructs are new and may differ than what they've previously experienced. The main goal of an educator of ELLs is to not only ensure that all students attain mastery in academic subjects, but also become culturally literate, intellectually reflective, and to be able to use these skills to transform into lifelong learners beyond the classroom. The problem is not within SEL programs, but the problem lies within the lack thereof, or when SEL is incorporated in instruction, it is not incorporated in instruction in authentic ways. There is also a vital need for culturally responsive SEL programs that are implemented to the ELLs in the ENL classroom. There needs to be support at the federal, state, district, and school level where policymakers, administrators, educators and school staff continue to advocate for ELLs and ENL programs which successfully and authentically incorporate SEL programs for positive effects on ELL's mental health, their academic school performance, which transcends into success in life entering society as a whole.

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### Chapter 3: Product and Tools

Over the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the amount of ELLs enrollment in schools across the United States. ELLs, who are often times immigrant students, have unique learning needs not only linguistically, but also academically, socially, culturally, and emotionally. Often times, when an ELL or immigrant student comes to the United States, they are unfamiliar with the cultural and social norms inside and outside the classroom, especially with a new language barrier increasing the difficulty in transitioning to a new country. This adjustment not only adds to ELLs' feelings of stress, anxiety, and isolation, but also the fact that ELLs are more susceptible to experience other taxing experiences (Rivers & Ross, 2018; Sung, 2014) like being motivated to flee their country due to negative societal impacts such as increasing gang violence and oppressive government. Although there is the need for an increase in SEL in the ENL classroom (CASEL, 2021), there is not necessarily enough time due to increased standardized testing, rigid state standards, and basic language and content curriculum that needs to be met within the short school year (Rivers & Ross, 2018; Sung, 2014).

As research reviewed in Chapter 2 shows, there is also a lack in teacher and administration education in order to successfully and authentically implement these SEL intervention programs in the classroom. Therefore, in this chapter I describe a professional development program to first advocate for ELLs by providing teachers information for them to fully understand the increased struggles ELLs experience and what troubling emotions this can cause and understand the benefits of incorporating SEL. Secondly, for educators to learn effective instructional practices to seamlessly incorporate SEL throughout academic curriculum in order to continue to meet the social, emotional, and cultural needs of students while meeting the school curriculum goals. Indeed, SEL for ELLs is crucial because it can ease immigrant and

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culturally diverse students' transition into schools and later, in communities. Implementing SEL for ELLs fosters opportunities for strong relationships with peers and educators (Aperture Education, 2021), as well as eliminating the feeling of isolation, stress and anxiety (Garner et al., 2014), while also alleviating the challenges of adjusting to new cultural and societal norms (Breiseth, 2015). SEL programs in the ENL authentically support students' communication skills by nurturing cooperation skills, modeling clear communication of emotions/thoughts, as well as supporting tactics for conflict resolution and recognizing/avoiding peer pressure (Carr et al., 2017; CASEL, 2021).

### **Description of the Professional Development**

The participants of this professional development are administration, principals, and educators, ENL teachers in all subject areas, in a culturally diverse school district, which includes 41 transitional bilingual classrooms for Spanish speaking students. There is also the AIS program (Academic Intervention Services) which is an extra class added to a student's schedule in either ELA, Social Studies, Science or Math, for a student who needs extra support in that subject area. The demographics of the high school are 74% Hispanic or Latino, 16% Black or African American, 9% White and 1% Asian/Native Island/Pacific Islander (New York State Education Department, 2020). The high school's priorities are student emotional and social well-being (early intervention; shared vision of student expectations; enrichment and intervention programs after school; meditation room; Random Acts of Kindness program), Adoption/implementation of character education program and behavior management plan, early intervention for students in danger of failing (building leaders meeting with students failing at progress report and report card time; offering after school programs for ELA, Math, & ENL).

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The high school staff in need of the professional development program is located in a high needs area, where there are multiple families with immigrant backgrounds, most likely students who are ELL will be immigrants from El Salvador and other Spanish speaking countries from Central America. The school is immersed within a bilingual neighborhood with a very diverse community. Many immigrant families come from these countries seeking better opportunities for their children and themselves to build a better life, however, some immigrants also come to this neighborhood to escape the gripping gang violence and influence in the community. However, gangs have also migrated to the area as immigrants themselves, making it hard for the adolescents to escape the enthrallment. Educators are aware of the challenges their students face. This is why the SEL program is so crucial to implement in this district, so students do not succumb to the peer pressure or submitting to high-risk behaviors. Each student is entitled and qualifies for free breakfast and lunch, which supports the needs of the whole student, once their basic needs are met, then this allows for the opportunity to incorporate SEL opportunities within academic curriculum.

### ***Agenda of Events***

This professional development will be conducted in three sessions during the second month of the academic school year, it is important for the professional development to happen in the beginning of the year so that teachers can implement the techniques learned authentically through their instruction throughout the year. The second month of school is the optimal time since the information learned will not be too overwhelming as teachers are adjusting back to their work schedules, but also soon enough to be able to weave into instruction. It is important to incorporate authentic professional learning opportunities rooted in the administration and educators' day-to-day work routines by engaging participants in SEL training that is accessible,

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so each session will be conducted directly after the workday in the high school cafeteria or through a webinar for participants that cannot stay after. The professional development training sessions will be located in the cafeteria, because there are long tables that lend teachers and administrators the opportunity to sit together, collaborate and engage in reflective discussions throughout each training. Educators and administrators need to work together within the program because administration and teachers are what constitutes school leadership. Forming a school community with strong leadership will have a positive impact for everyone involved (Price, 2012). School leaders can create effective professional development by building a supportive school climate, creating structures for learning, communication, and collaboration, providing clear roles and expectations, and offering a space for input on decisions with all participants involved (Price, 2012).

The three sessions will be implemented as follows: first I will introduce what SEL programs are, why they are important, and their positive effects on students through an informational meeting. Second, I will have participants engage in SEL practices themselves, in order to identify and experience positive social and emotional skills to have a strong foundation. Next, the participants will learn how to authentically incorporate SEL programs and skill building embedded in academic curriculum throughout the school year to benefit students in a group setting to collaborate and work with peers.

### ***Activities***

In the first 30 minute session, I will be thirty minutes, to introduce what SEL is, and what programs are specifically beneficial to ELLs in the ENL classroom, and the positive impact of SEL programs for students to effectively learn. The activity during this session will be an informational conference along with engaging self-reflective questions at the end of the session:

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“how do you feel SEL will benefit your students?, what are the steps you can take to improve your own socioemotional well-being?, how will you include SEL in the classroom?” along with time for questions and answers at the end for anyone in need of clarification or to express concerns. According to Garner et al. (2014), it is important to understand that Latinx ELLs (the majority of the student population at our school) are considered to be at high risk for poor social emotional outcomes in school contexts due to the language barrier that inhibits the positive social interactions with peers and teachers which creates feelings of not belonging in school culture. Another problematic factor within the Latinx ELL community is that Latinx American children were shown to be at higher risk for internalizing problems compared to children of other ethnic groups where ELLs might have experienced emotional trauma related with immigration, discrimination, alienation, possible separation from family members or friends, discrimination, social rejection, poverty, anxiety, educational stress, and low-self-worth (Garner et al., 2014), even more of a reason to implement successful and authentic SEL practices in the classroom. Brieseth (2015) found that children from low-income families are not as socially and emotionally competent as their peers who descent from affluent families, which is directly related to the ELL students who are of Latinx ethnicity because “nearly 60% of ELLs nationwide are from low-income families in which parents have ‘disproportionately’ limited levels of education” (p. 5), which is another reason participants should advocate for their ELLs by creating and incorporating culturally adapted SEL practices in their instruction.

The second session will be 45 minutes. This session focuses on the educators’ and administrators’ mental health. I will ask the participants to identify present stress in their lives and receive stress-management techniques. Participants will identify reasons to be proud in order to acknowledge their accomplishments on a small or large scale in order to enhance self-

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awareness. I will finally ask participants are asked to connect with a co-worker who will be their accountability buddy to support their SEL practices at work in order to build positive relationship skills. Participants will become the “students” in the SEL program. It is crucial to ensure that the leadership of the building has sound mental health and ways to cope with stress, as well as ways to create positive relationships with themselves, their coworkers and their students (Aperture Education, 2021). Positive relationships between teachers and administrators will promote a supportive working environment and have a beneficial effect on the students, improving instructional quality and building trust within relationships (Ferguson, 2006; Price, 2012). If the educators and administrators first learn what SEL is by demonstrating these practices with their own experiences and social and emotional well-being, then they will understand how to successfully and authentically implement these practices in the classroom as well (Ferguson, 2006; Price, 2012). Once participants can recognize their own feelings of isolation, negative emotions, and stress, through implementation of SEL practices and skills, then they will be able to change their outlook with more motivation, emotional resilience, more self-efficacy and less isolation, which will improve the quality of student learning and performance (Ferguson, 2006; Price, 2012).

The first 15 minutes there will be a lecture to discuss stress, causes of stress, and then have participants identify their stresses, and then provide participants with ways to combat and manage stress. Then, for the next 15 minutes, participants will be asked to identify reasons to be grateful/proud of themselves in their lives, in order to foster a positive mindset grounded in self-reflection. Finally, the remaining 15 minutes, participants will be paired at random, to receive an accountability buddy, where coworkers will be encouraged to play an icebreaker question game and get to know someone new, as well as be their SEL accountability buddy which means that

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whenever they need extra encouragement or instructional support/guidance when implementing SEL in their classroom, they have someone to be there for and be there for them. Bandura (1977) asserts students are surrounded by many influential individuals including their parents, teachers, administrators, and peers. It is crucial for participants to experience authentic techniques to support their own SEL so that these individuals provide students with examples of observable behaviors that can be imitated in a healthy and positive school community for all participants involved. Because of the fact that students are impressionable through observational learning, role models (i.e. teachers/administrators) must be modeling ideal behavior (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2021) in order to foster authentic SEL practices for students to follow in the classroom.

The third 45 minute session will focus on techniques and instructional practices that are best for the ENL classroom. There will be a presentation detailing five ways for participants to implement SEL techniques in the classroom: build trust, ways to teach stress management, incorporating SEL visual aids, build student self-confidence with self-reflective activities, and finally instructing students to set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable, time bound) goals (Aperture Education, 2021). The activity during the first 15 minutes will be for participants to listen to a presentation about the five different techniques to incorporate SEL in instruction. The final 15 minutes will ask participants to form groups, where they are asked to collaborate with their coworkers to think of creative and authentic ways to incorporate the five SEL techniques into their classroom instruction. The final 15 minutes will be a whole group discussion where each group shares their ideas, while other groups actively listen and take notes on the varying instructional ideas to implement in their classroom.



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The SMART goals relate to Durlak et al.'s (2015) five interrelated domains of cognitive and behavior competencies, where the self-awareness competency stresses an understanding and involvement of one's emotions, personal goals and values which includes implementation of SEL program that incorporates classroom activities that will provide ELLs an opportunity to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, having positive mindsets, and possessing a well-rounded sense of self-efficacy, optimism and agency. This session connects with the leading principles of Humanistic Learning Theory for the classroom, where educators focus on teaching the whole student. The expected outcome is for educators to come up with activities that include are student choice, fostering engaging lessons for self-motivation, incorporating self-reflective opportunities with self-evaluation, acknowledging feelings and knowledge are both vital to the learning process, and finally, establishing a safe learning environment for students to be able to thrive and succeed academically. It is important to conduct a whole group discussion about authentic ways to incorporate SEL programs with ELLs by incorporate students' background experiences while fostering a growth mindset within scaffolding content, discourse and literacy practices designed to facilitate both content and academic language development for all students in the classroom (Swanson et al., 2019).

This three-session professional development is so important to implement in school districts with large Latinx ELL populations because teachers and administrators must be students' number one advocates for their right to an equitable education which encompasses educating the whole student, ensuring their needs are met mentally, physically, and academically. Educators and administrators must rally together by continuing their education on the most relevant educational practices to ensure that students are exposed to the most successful programs possible. There needs to be an awareness of SEL in education as well as a deep

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understanding with how to authentically implement these instruction practices in the classroom, so that the positive teaching narrative continues keeping the students' all-around success at the center. It is important that educators not only know the benefits of SEL in the classroom but also understand techniques to incorporate SEL practices in order for SEL programs to be successful. Educators and administrators' jobs are also to build relationships with the students, help the students academically and socially/emotionally, in order to see them thrive in school and in life. Educators and administrators learning about SEL practices is a form of advocacy for their students, which is a crucial aspect of being a school leader, advocating for the social, emotional and academic well-being of the students in order to learn deeply how to be an intelligent individual and an empathetic individual to be a positive contributing member of society.

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### Chapter 4: Conclusion

This capstone project has discussed the experience of ELLs with emotional trauma as a result of immigration, discrimination, alienation, possible separation from family members or friends, discrimination, social rejection, poverty, anxiety, and educational stress (Breiseth, 2015; Garner, et al., 2014). The multilayered issue within education is the lack of authentically incorporated SEL programs due to standardized testing, racial disparities in discipline, and the lack of teacher preparation (Carrero et al., 2018; Martinez, 2016). In this Chapter, I will first summarize the major findings from research reviewed in Chapter 2 and the intended outcomes of the professional development plan I proposed in Chapter 3. Next I will present implications for teaching and learning and conclude with recommendations for future research.

#### Summary

Through research, major findings such as standardized testing, racial disparities in discipline, the lack of teacher preparation, and culturally adapted SEL programs serve as barriers for the inadequate SEL instruction in ENL classrooms. Standardized testing has a subtractive effect, where curriculum is narrowed as a result of teachers spending too much time on test preparation and not enough time to authentically incorporate SEL programs and skill building. The racial disparities in discipline contribute to the achievement gap where ELLs and POC are losing class time and exposure to the SEL programs put in place to prevent said disciplinary problems. Latinx ELLs are considered to be at the highest risk for poor social emotional outcomes in school contexts with the language barrier that obstructs the positive social interactions and the most disciplinary issues which contributes to an increased number of school dropouts. Restorative practices in place of traditional school punishment can establish trust and community within students and staff that create antiracist and culturally responsive school

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atmospheres. It is crucial schools adopt restorative justice and SEL programs to prevent further internalization of negative feelings. This means that participants and school leaders must listen to their students in order to incorporate personalized and authentic teaching strategies. Teachers must be well-equipped and knowledgeable in teaching SEL and administrators must be well-equipped and knowledgeable in incorporating restorative justice disciplinary practices so that all students benefit. The lack of SEL programs negatively effects students' mental health which has a negative impact on students' academic performance and contributes to the existing achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs. Since the majority of the ELL population in schools are Spanish speakers, SEL programs that must be adopted must be targeted to meet the sociocultural competent practices of the diverse learner. Culturally adapted and effective SEL programs include *Jóvenes Fuertes*, the 4Rs Program (Reading, Writing, Respect and Resolution), and the Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) organizational approach. Educators prepared to instruct culturally adapted SEL programs in accordance with a decrease in high stakes testing and school discipline practices that use restorative methods will have positive outcomes for Latinx ELLs. The main goal of an educator of ELLs is to not only ensure that all students attain mastery in academic subjects, but also become culturally literate, intellectually reflective, and to be able to use these skills to transform into lifelong learners beyond the classroom.

Because students spend most of their days at school, schools have a significant influence on social, emotional, and academic development, which is why there must be significant time, effort and dedication for school leaders to invest in learning their SEL practices and preparation. Therefore, the intended outcome of the professional development plan I outlined is to adequately prepare educators and administrators to authentically apply SEL practices to their teaching and disciplinary methods regarding the ELL student. If educators understand the rationale behind

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teaching the SEL competencies to ELL youth along with learning the instructional techniques to incorporate SEL practices in the classroom, then they will comply with urgency. Not only is it important to incorporate SEL practices in the classroom with the cooperation from teachers, but it is also vital to educate administrators on the importance of incorporating restorative practices within the discipline of the school. The professional development plan is meant to show participants that there is not one “quick fix” for all struggles that encompass ELLs lives through SEL programs and that SEL is about creating a meaningful systematic change within education. It is important for there to be an establishment of school-wide efforts that provide the training and support educators and school leaders need with promoting the development of long-term professional development plans to provide staff education of implementation, adopting cultural-specific SEL programs, and adopting restorative justice programs instead of traditional disciplinary actions. Preventative practices, including restorative practices and SEL programs, reduce the need for damaging disciplinary practices like classroom removal and suspension which results in an increased number of school dropouts. Professional development opportunities are crucial to the implementation of SEL programs in schools because they establish expectations and provide the tools necessary for successful incorporation in the classroom. There needs to be proper education of implementing SEL practices and restorative practices for school leaders so that a positive school climate is maintained preserving students’ success at the center.

It is crucial for educators to first recognize and understand their own cultural learning and how that may align or differ from their students’ cultural beliefs, emotional learning, and behaviors so they can incorporate SEL practices that teach about the competencies in ways that are appropriate and differentiated for their ELL students’ unique cultural background. Although SEL programs promote students to recognize and identify their emotions and successfully apply

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the social-emotional competencies, it is important for educators and administrators to realize that every culture interprets emotional experiences in different ways. In fact, most emotional experiences and expressions are strongly influenced by society and culture. Educators must be aware of each cultural practices their ELL students identify with and understand the differences within the way their culture tends to label and share emotions, so they then can understand the emotion they are trying to convey to offer the appropriate techniques for support. Because of the increased socioemotional stress ELLs experience, educators and administrators must create a tolerant enriched school environment where they first understand the depth of their ELL students' socioemotional stress and advocate for culturally specific SEL programs that will incorporate authentic socioemotional skill building. It is crucial for educators and administrators to exercise warmth, patience, and understanding to ELL's and immigrant children in order to provide emotional support and a general feeling of safety, acceptance, and protection.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Although research has demonstrated the importance and the effectiveness of providing SEL for students in public schools, there has been little research available on how SEL is taught specifically to ELL students to promote their SEL skills and research on the effects specifically for ELLs. According to CASEL, one of the most prominent organization in SEL, the research is based off of the general education classroom, where there is no research that is specifically proven successful for ELLs. SEL is very much needed for the well-being of ELLs, however, there are little to no specialized instructional practices for ELLs to successfully learn SEL competencies in their lives. Further research can improve the quality of instruction within SEL for ELLs because then there can be more specialized SEL programs for immigrant students that

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are tailored to their direct needs and areas of support for an increase in successful programs in the future.

### **Final Thoughts**

SEL is a must in both the ELL and non-ELL classroom. Practices within SEL must be culturally specialized and appropriate for the diverse students involved. There needs to be explicit instruction, integration with curriculum, integration within instructional pedagogy, and implementation and support beyond the classroom. The advocacy for incorporating culturally designed SEL programs begins school-wide with professional development opportunities for school leaders and staff. Then, increase awareness among educators of the increased challenges and socioemotional stressors of ELLs and ways to authentically incorporate differentiated SEL instruction with academic curriculum. SEL is crucial to not only ELLs' academic success, but life success. SEL programs and restorative practices have an additive effect on students' academic and personal lives which will make the world a better place when providing students with the tools to establish and maintain positive communities for all.

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**Appendix A**

**Professional Development Presentation Link**

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