Ashley Homme

University of Cincinnati

How Does Social Emotional Leaning Improve Instructional Time?

April 11<sup>th</sup> 2020

Doctor Wells

## Table Contents

**Abstract**

How does social emotional learning affect instructional time? How/ in what ways do PATHS interventions change: Student social- emotional learning? Teacher instruction? How do disparity in perspectives about social emotional learning, Differ in teacher's views and social workers views? There was one formal face to face interview and a survey with similar question sent to two teachers and I received one survey back due to the COVID-19 pandemic this did not surprise me. The data I collect will be analyzed by the pre and post test at the school in which PATHS was implemented last school year. I will also be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the PATHS Curriculum by conducting face to face interviews with teachers and social workers that have had PATHS taught in their classrooms. In review of my research prior to conducting my own I was expecting more teacher to be every excited for PATHS because it is a time that the student can learn how to recognize their emotions and how to deal with them in a proper way. While conducting my own research it appeared that there was a lot of confusion of what was expected from the Social worker and the teachers.

**Introduction**

**Statement of the Problem**

In the US., most states require between 175 and 180 days of school and between 900 and 1,000 hours of instructional time per year for students. With children spending more time that much time or more depending on before and after school activities on school campuses those campuses

should be a safe, non-violent, and crime free place for kids. There are many approaches that schools and districts can employ to do this, but a comprehensive framework of strategies for creating this kind of school environment is formally organized under the movement known as social and emotional learning (SEL) (Maughan, 2018). This post- diagnosis approach, although clearly needed, Social emotional learning is one way to address protective issues pro-actively (Dobia et al, n.d.). When finding programs that will benefit student's academic achievement and impact instructional time there must be consideration of teacher and student out comes. This study aims to identify how social emotional learning impact instructional time.

**Scope of the Problem**

The rate in which children are expelled from public preschools may be as high as three times the national K-12 rate (Das et al, 2019). In elementary school samples, children who have been expelled are more likely to drop out of high school and have contact with the juvenile justice system. Scholars and policymakers are concerned that the recently identified high rates of expulsion in preschool may be initiating the so-called 'school-to-prison pipeline', The decision to expel a child from preschool may be a result of multiple factors, including: the child's behavior, administrative support, classroom resources, and a teacher's capability to manage problem behavior (Das et al, 2019).

**Justification of the Study**

 The purpose for this study is to identify the effectiveness of social emotional learning and determine the relationship to instructional time. Students not only deserve a safe space to come for school and other activities, they also deserve understand how to express themselves, how to build healthy relationships, how to control one's self, learn how to solve problems and also how

to build their self-esteem, which are the core competencies of any social emotional learning program. Beginning in early childhood, these competencies are acquired through interactions with teachers, peers, and parents. Age appropriate competencies set children up for greater success in the realms of social and cognitive development, pre-academic achievement, school readiness and adjustment; all factors which can contribute to school retention. Three-quarters of teachers believe a larger focus on SEL will be a major benefit to students because of the positive effect on workforce readiness (87%), school attendance and graduation (80%), life success (87%), college preparation (78%), and academic success (75%) (Maughan, 2018). Individuals or small group social skills training with targeted students may lead to an increase in skills (Dobia et al., n.d.). Dobia states that the contextualized approach to SEL of Circle Solutions provided structured opportunities for teachers and students to build positive and productive connection along with skills.

**Why this is important to social work?**

This is important for social workers because when talking to students they can better communicate with us about how they may be feeling that day. This helps social workers better understand each student they work with because they have a stronger bond with them since teaching the student SEL and PATHS.

**What are the implications for practice?**

Implications for Social emotional learning is not having the support form administration or the teachers in the schools. Often school social workers had a different supervisor than principals at the schools, their supervisor may be at the board of education, and therefore, the supervisor might not understand the conflict and lack of support the social worker may feel.

**Background of the Problem**

All major stakeholders involved in education started to make pressure in order to identify efficient strategies for making children more competent, the system more functional. Hundreds of courses were delivered for improving/developing teaching strategies, class management, curriculum structure, teachers' knowledge of pedagogical principles and new educational systems. Generations who are not used to be obedient, to see teachers as authority, children who are facing substance abuse problems, emotional and behavioral problems, school dropout, poverty, family problems, parents living their children at home with relatives in order to find a job. A series of studies have shown that SEL plays an extremely important role in physical development, mental health, moral judgement, academic performance and active citizenship (Buzgar and Giurgiuman, 2019). In addition, the study found that school-based programs are most effectively conducted by school staff, indicating that they can be incorporated into routine educational practice (Fleischer, 2010).

**Who is Affected by the Problem?**

SEL is based on a national principal survey on how SEL can prepare children and transform schools, there is data to support the importance of embedding social and emotional development in schools. The report cites a 2011 meta-analysis that found that students who receive high-quality SEL instruction have achievement scores on average of 11 percentile points higher than students who did not receive SEL instruction (Brotto, 2018). The magnitude and scope of these benefits suggest that SEL programs are among the most successful youth-development programs offered to school-age youth (Fleischer, n.d.). Developing these core life abilities through social and emotional learning (SEL) is critical to a child's development, as it directly correlates to

success and happiness as an adult. The survey findings state that while a majority of principals

(97 percent) believe teaching SEL skills in school will improve student behavior, learning and

development, only 35 percent report their school has developed a plan for teaching students

social and emotional skills (Brotto, 2018).

## Significance of the Study

Mental health proposals are largely focused on individual support for those diagnosed with

difficulties rather than the promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing. Of critical benefit,

both for supporting those experiencing mental health difficulties and reducing mental health risk

factors, are universal interventions that develop an emotionally supportive school climate and

positive relationships at all levels. In this study the positive perceptions as reported by staff and

students who participated in Circle Solutions would suggest that there is potential for this

approach to address significant protective factors for student's mental health. These include

cultivating positive Student-teacher relationships, fostering inclusiveness and enhancing

engagement in learning (Dobia et al, n.d.).

## Underlying Assumptions

Social emotional learning has been proven to improve children's academics and also improving

their own self-awareness. Some underlying assumptions of social emotional learning are that

smart people should have good social skills. Behavior problems occur because people do not

care about others and intentionally choose not to comply. Lastly many assume that children can

learn social skills based on modeling. With mental illness and substance abuse rising many

parents are checked out of their child(ren)'s life and are not able to model appropriate social

skills.

**What are your assumptions, beliefs about the problem?**

I believe that that social emotional learning can indeed improve academics, when students get social emotional learning it can limit behavior outburst because children can better explain their feeling and what made them feel that way, lastly, I believe that social emotional learning can reduce teachers stress levels.

**Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of the research study is to identify the effectiveness of social emotional learning and if it does indeed impact instructional time. Meaning reducing student behaviors, lessening teachers needs to redirect students and also reduce teachers sending student to the Alternative Learning Center (ALC). An improvement would involve comparing teachers and social workers pre and posttests.

**What is it you propose to study?**

I plan on studying the effects of PATHS and SEL on instructional time. Throughout the literature, the greater time student's loss of instructional time, the greater risk they have of dropping out of school and possibly entering the criminal justice system as juveniles or adults. This study will raise awareness of how desperately children today need Social Emotional Learning.

**Identify Qualitative or Quantitative**

For the purpose of this study it will take a qualitative approach. I will compare the data from the pre and post test to the remarks I get from the teachers and social workers have had PATHS intervention in the previous year.

**Definition of Terms**

*PATHS:* Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies: comprehensive program for promoting emotional and social competencies and reducing aggression and behavior problems in elementary school-aged children while simultaneously enhancing the educational process in the classroom. (The PATHS Curriculum. n.d. retrieved from pathstraining.com)

*Social Emotional Learning:* the process through which children and adults acquire and apply knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, and positive goals, feel and show empathy for others and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions. (What is SEL. n.d. Educating Hearts. Inspiring Minds. Retrieved from casel.org)

*Academic achievement:* is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals. (Your Dictionary. n.d. retrieved from yourdictionary.com)

*Instructional time:* is time during which a school is responsible for a student and the student is required or expected to be actively engaged in a learning activity. (Definition of Instructional time. n.d. Law Insider. Retrieved from lawinsider.com)

*Self-Control:* Students raise their hand and wait to be called on, students keep hands and feel to themselves, and students stay in their assigned areas. (Mt. Airy Pre Test)

*Emotional Understanding:* Students use emotional vocabulary to describe their feelings, students show an understanding of how their actions affect others, and students recognize non-verbal cues in peers and adults. (Mt. Airy Pre Test)

*Positive Self- Esteem:* Students participate in discussions and are willing to make mistakes, and students demonstrate a willingness to help others, and students show an understanding of their strengths and are accepting of their challenges. (Mt. Airy Pre Test)

*Relationships*: Students use "I"-statements, students are observed positively interacting with 1 or more friends, students initiate and maintain age appropriate conversations with peers and adult. (Mt. Airy Pre Test)

*Interpersonal Problem-Solving Skills:* Students identify a problem or conflict, students identify a reasonable solution to the problem or conflict, and students are accepting of consequences. (Mt. Airy Pre Test)

## Literature Review

**Reasons for social emotional learning**

Buzgar and Giurgiuman (2019) state that social emotional learning plays and extremely important role in physical development, mental health, moral judgment, academic performance and active citizenship. Social emotional skills are more crucial during adolescence than any other stage of life because it lays the foundation for functioning during adulthood (Jennings, Patricia; Kim, Helyn; Ross Katherine; Tolan, Patrick, 2019). Social emotional learning is based around

five main competencies that help children and adults, acquire the skills they need: to understand themselves and each other on an emotional level, as well, as set and achieve positive goals, feel and demonstrate empathy, and make responsible decisions (Maughan, 2018). Social emotional learning (SEL) is the process which children and adults acquire and apply knowledge, attitudes and abilities for; understanding and controlling emotions, for setting and achieving personal goals, for setting and maintaining positive relationships with others and for taking responsible decisions (Buzgar, Romona & Giurgiuman, Tunde, 2019). Buzgar and Giurgiuman also state that social emotional learning plays and extremely important role in physical development, mental health, moral judgment, academic performance and active citizenship.

**Self-Control/ Management**

Self- control is having the ability to regulate thoughts, emotions and behaviors in various situations and even the ability to manage stress, self-motivate, and set and achieve goals. An adolescent must learn to regulate a rapidly changing body and mind while also navigating changes and increased demand in school and social settings. Self-manage involves the coordination of the limbic system and prefrontal cortex (Jennings et al. 2019).

**Emotional Understanding**

Social Emotional Learning is seen to improve students' social emotional skills, attitudes about their self and others, connections to school, and positive social behavior; and reduces conduct problems and emotional distress (Fleischer, n.d.).

**Self-esteem/ Awareness**

The ability to understand and accurately appraise your thoughts emotions, strengths, limitations and behaviors. Developmental psychology research has evidence that

awareness of self and others rises in adolescence and seems to peak immediately after puberty. During this time, individuals are more keenly aware of others' perspectives and particularly others' observations of them, this leads to an integration of others' evaluations of them during self-appraisal and an overall increase in peer comparison (Jennings et al., 2019).

**Relationship Skills**

The ability to develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships through communication, correlation, conflict resolution, and compassion. There are two components of relationship skills creating relationship skills which are necessary as adolescence shift from isolation view of identity to the cooperation others in their sense of self, and relationship quality skills supportive relationships in adolescence are one of the best predictors of adult well-being and life satisfaction (Jennings et al. 2019).

**Problem Solving and decision making**

Defined as the ability to consider ethics, safety, culture, and consequences to make healthy choices about behaviors and relationships. While in adolescence risky decision-making increases with age. There is less evidence on adolescence development of positive or healthy decision-making skills. Studies have suggested that adolescence decision making is biased on favoring short term gains over long term gains and are heavily by social interactions. Meaning adolescence are more likely to make risky decisions in the presence of peers (Jennings et al. 2019).

## Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies

PATHS is a research-based and proven-effective social and emotional learning (SEL) curricula for children in preschool through grade 6. Schools have who have implemented PATHS reported

medium- or high- level implementation Promoting alternative thinking strategies discipline incidents decreased significantly in the categories of disobedient/disruptive behavior, fighting/violence, harassment/ intimidation and serious bodily injury (Fergus,2017).

**Changes of Students After Social Emotional Learning**

About 5 to 7.5 million school children are chronically absent, missing more than 15 days per school year. This can be associated with poor performance and high dropout rates and is a predictor of lower income adulthood and poor life time health. Children with behavioral problems were more likely to chronically miss school than other children (Chen, John; Choi, So; Davis, James; & Lim, Eunjung, 2019). Since the implementation of Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies (PATHS) discipline incidents decreased significantly in the categories of disobedient/destructive behavior, fighting /violence, harassment/ intimidation and serious bodily injury. Suspensions have dropped by 60 percent in three years (Fergus, Edward & Gregory Anne, 2017). Individual or small group social skills training with targeted students may lead to an increase in skills. The contextualized approach to SEL of Circle Solutions provided structured opportunities for teachers and students to build positive and productive connections alongside skills (Dobia, Brenda; Parada, Roberto; Smith, Madelaine; & Roffey, Sue, n.d.).

**Changes for Teaches After Social Emotional Learning**

Teachers clearly indicated that they felt more confident and comfortable teaching social emotional learning skills and endorsed the need for all teachers to receive training in SEL. The strongest positive change observed was in student- teacher relationships. One teacher wanted more guidance on dealing with behavioral issues, and another was interested in how they could ensure that a school prioritized social emotional learning. Teachers Reponses indicated that they

felt that Circles had impacted positively on teacher- Student relationships and enhanced student

engagement in learning (Dobia, Brenda; Parada, Roberto; Smith, Madelaine; & Roffey, Sue).

Teachers us the same amount of SEL activities or programs regardless of the age of children

(Buzgar, Romona & Giurgiuman, Tunde, 2019). Job- related stress may undermine a teacher's

ability to provide consistent and emotionally supportive classroom environments. Teachers who

report experiencing higher levels of stress in the classroom have been observed to provide less

emotionally supportive reactions to children (Das, Vinoadharen; Silver, Callie; Zinsser,

Katherine; Zulauf, Courtney, 2017).

## Methodology

### Rational of Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify if there is a relationship between the Social

Emotional Learning programs and improved instructional time and what ways SEL changes

instructional time. This study will use pre and post test from Woodford Elementary school and in

person interviews with teachers and social workers in the Woodford school who have had

PATHS last school year. The implications for the study are that I have a small population of

professionals to work with, only one school, and the low sample size.

### Type of Study

This is a descriptive study that examines the relationships between implementing social

emotional programs and the impact of instructional time. This descriptive qualitative study will

utilize pre and post test and interviews to clarify the results of those tests.

**Research Questions**

1.) How/ in what ways do PATHS interventions change:

    a.   Student social- emotional learning?

    b.   Teacher instruction?

2.) How do disparity in perspectives about social emotional learning, Differ in teacher's views and social workers views?

**Variables of Interest**

Since this study is based on qualitative research, I would not need to use dependent or independent variables. However, there are many things that may affect a student's instructional time and if I was using these variables these are what I would use, dependent variable would be instructional time because it would be changed based on the quality of the social emotional program being taught. This study independent variable would be the social emotion learning programs that is implemented.

**Operational definitions of variables and units of analysis**

Variables will be measured through in person interviews with the teachers and social workers along with the pre and post test from Woodward Elementary School.

**Measurement Instruments**

Pre and post test include five core competencies that are taught through out the school year in the PATHS program these competencies include self- control, emotional understanding, positive self-esteem, relationship skills, and interpersonal problem-solving skills. The in-person interviews will help clarify the scores given on the pre and posttest.

**Validity & Reliability of Instruments**

Dependent variable would be instructional time because it would be changed based on the quality of the social emotional program being taught. This study independent variable would be the social emotion learning programs that is implemented.

**Hypothesis**

I believe that social emotional learning will impact instructional time in a positive way. I expect that the social worker and teacher will have different answers in the interview because the teachers are with their students everyday where the social workers may only see a handful of student for particular reasons such as behavior issues, breakdowns during class, and helping students who are in foster care getting the resources that they need to succeed. Social workers will also only see the class as a whole when they are teaching PATHS once or twice a week for 20 to 30 minutes.

**The Setting**

This study will take place at Woodford Elementary School in Kennedy Hights, Cincinnati Ohio. In the school district of Cincinnati Public Schools. The student demographics include 92.3% African American, 5.4% Multiracial, 1.5% Caucasian .4% Hispanic or Latino and .4% Asian

students. Woodford provides many services such as; food services, transportation, project connect, for those experiencing homelessness, and technology tools.

## The Sample Method

The sample is non- probability, I will interview at least five teachers from a snowball sample. I got this contact information from the Social worker from Woodford school who I have met through my field supervisor and at various trainings. I will also interview one or two social workers form Woodford school and Roll hill elementary school.

## The Sample

My sample is between five and eight teachers who have had PATHS taught in their classrooms last school year (2018-2019). I will also the social worker at Woodford who implemented the PATHS intervention. I will also interview a social worker is first-year teaching PATHS is this school year (2019-2020) at Roll Hill Elementary.

## Protection of Human Subjects

All teachers and social workers will be identified by their classroom numbers or the school they work at, names will not be given for confidentiality reasons.

## Human Diversity Issues

The current school in the study is Woodford Elementary School a school of 388 students. Three hundred and thirty-three of those students are on free lunch services and 21 are on reduced lunch services. This school is primarily African American Students at 92.3%, multiracial at 5.4%, and a small portion of Caucasian students at 1.5%.

**Data Collection Procedures**

During this qualitative study I will recruit people for this study via email and conduct face to face interviews. I will administer the interview in person and if a teacher or social worker is unavailable for an interview an email will be sent with an invitation to complete a survey or a phone call.

**Data Collection Schedule**

 Staring in December, I will send the social worker an email that has my finalized Data collection survey, in January, I will recruit both teachers and social workers to be interviewed. I will then conduct my interviews in February and March. In April I will analysis and disseminate these results.

**Data Analysis**

The data I collect will be analyzed by the pre and post test at the school in which PATHS was implemented last school year. I will also be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the PATHS Curriculum by conducting face to face interviews with teachers and social workers that have had PATHS taught in their classrooms

**Limitations of the Study**

The implications for the study are that I have a small population of professionals to work with, only one school, and the low sample size. Working with a small population of professional can be problematic because it only allows me to look at how the intervention of social emotional learning and PATHS affect one school verse many other schools and school districts. Examining

only one school gives me more control and flexibility but it does not show me a broader scope of the intervention.

**Findings**

The study sample that I have studied was pre and post test from Woodford Elementary School in the Cincinnati Public Schools school district. I also conducted one interview and sent out interview questions to all other teachers of first and second grade due to the COVID-19 pandemic that we have been faced with. Due to not being able to visit the school and conducted the interviews I only got one survey response back.

Since PATHS was implemented has there been a reduction in loss instructional time? (fewer behaviors etc.…). The main consistence I received was sometimes. The feedback I received is that it takes up more time to set up for PATHS therefore taking away from some of the instruction throughout the day and that instructional time has not improved with PATHS alone.

Has the student's problem solving and communication skills improved since PATHS? PATHS has given teacher more interventions to put in place to limit the amount of problems that they have seen in the classroom.

What are things that you enjoyed about PATHS and what you do to change PATHS? If it is something that benefits the student's teachers are all for it, teacher also valued that PATHS focuses on the positives more than other programs. Things that would have been a smoother of a transition for teachers and social workers would have been the roll out and training for PATHS. Others have said it would have been easier for PATHS to be its own class of 25 minutes with a separate instructor.

**Discussion**

My personal values definitely impacted my research selection because I wanted to be sure I was looking out for the students I was working with and their education. I think that this personal value of mine helped me not only conduct my research but it also helps me teach my lessons with my classes during my internship at Cincinnati Public Schools.

The structure definitely affected my research, especially when collecting the data because I was working with a social worker placed in a different school than where I was placed via email for the entire two semesters collecting data and research.

Setting PATHS up caused more instructional time to be lost than reducing the lost instructional time. The teachers enjoyed that PATHS was positive based but could have used more guidance when rolling out PATHS.

In review of my research prior to conducting my own I was expecting more teacher to be every excited for PATHS because it is a time that the student can learn how to recognize their emotions and how to deal with them in a proper way. While conducting my own research it appeared that there was a lot of confusion of what was expected from the Social worker and the teachers.

- Practice: Often school social workers had a different supervisor than principals at the schools, their supervisor may be at the board of education, and therefore, the supervisor might not understand the conflict and lack of support the social worker may feel.

- Policy: In my time at CPS policy for PATHS and Social Emotional Learning was not necessarily brought to my attention or talked about. There are many trainings that are

involved when rolling out a new social emotional learning program like PATHS. Per school district policy it was required that the school social to conduct the first year of PATHS after that each classroom teacher would conduct PATHS the following year in their own classrooms.

- Research: If I could suggest an improvement to PATHS it would be to have a clearer and more organized roll out and trainings. I have sat in on many trainings getting ready for PATHS to start and I was always very confusing. I would lastly keep having the Social Workers at the school conduct the PATHS lessons as they are more educated to work with students of different backgrounds and challenges.

The implications for the study are that I have a small population of professionals to work with, only one school, and the low sample size. Working with a small population of professional can be problematic because it only allows me to look at how the intervention of social emotional learning and PATHS affect one school verse many other schools and school districts. Examining only one school gives me more control and flexibility but it does not show me a broader scope of the intervention.

This research was so important to me because I was able learn so much about the importance of social emotional learning and the many benefits is has on our students. The best part of this research topic was getting different outlooks form different professionals in the school setting.

**Appendices**

| Class | Grade | Pre-Test Social Worker **Interpersonal Problem-Solving Skills** | Post-Test Social Worker **Interpersonal Problem-Solving Skills** | Δ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0001 | K | 47% | 67% | +20% |

| 0002 | K | 67% | 87% | +20% |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 0101 | 1st | 47% | 87% | +40% |
| 0102 | 1st | 53% | 80% | +27% |
| 0201 | 2nd | 53% | 87% | +34% |
| 0202 | 2nd | 53% | 67% | +14% |
| 0301 | 3rd | 53% | 80% | +27% |
| 0302 | 3rd | 53% | 87% | +34% |
| Average | | | | **+27%** |

**PATHS Survey**

**Do you believe that the PATHS Improved students' focus while in class?**

**Since PATHS Has been implemented do students communicate better with teachers or peers?**

**Has PATHS improved the instructional time during the school day? (ex. Fewer behaviors, fewer students being sent to alc/iss, etc…)**

**On a scale of 1 to 5 would you recommend PATHS to other school districts who don't have this program or a similar one?**

**What are some things you enjoyed about PATHS and what are things that could use improvements? Explain.**

## References

Brotto, Giancarlo. (June, 14th 2018). The Future of Education Depends on Social Emotional

Learning: Here's Why.

Buzgar, Romona and Giurgiuman. (January, 2019). Teaching Social and Emotional

Competencies: A Pilot Survey on Social and Emotional Learning Programs Implemented
in Romania.

Chen, John; Choi, So; Davis, James; Lim, Eunjung. (April, 2019). Effect of Sociodemographic,

Health Related Problems, and Family Structure on Chronic Absenteeism Among
Children.

Das, Vinoadharen, Silver, Callie, Zinsser, Katherine & Zulauf Courtney. (2017). Utilizing

social- emotional learning supports to address teacher stress and preschool expulsion.

Dobia, Brenda; Parada, Roberto; Roffey, Sue; Smith, Madelaine. (n.d.) Social and Emotional

Learning: From Individual Skills to Class Cohesion.

Fergus, Edward and Gregory, Anne. (2017). Social and Emotional Learning and Equity in

School Discipline.

Fleischer, Leonard. (n.d.). Developing Emotional Literacy: Transition Planning for Youth At

Risk.

Jennings, Patricia; Kim, Helyn; Ross, Katherine; and Tolan, Patrick. (02, 04, 2019). An

Exploration of Normative Social and Emotional Skill Growth Trajectories During

Adolescence.

Maughan, Shannon. (2018). The Power of Social Emotional Learning.