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**Social Emotional Learning: Presence and Prevalence in Early Care and Education  
Programs and Effects on Teacher Self-Efficacy**

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the ETSU Midway Honors Program

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## **Abstract**

A large pool of reviewed literature and studies suggest that Social Emotional Learning (SEL) provides a multitude of developmental benefits to early childhood-aged children. The focus of this study was to assess whether SEL techniques were utilized within early care and education programs throughout the East Tennessee region and to investigate the relationship between SEL techniques and teacher self-efficacy. Sixteen early childhood teachers in the East Tennessee region completed a survey that gauged both their exposure and usage of SEL techniques in the classroom and their teacher self-efficacy. Findings showed that teachers primarily implemented self-studied SEL techniques in the classroom with the majority having not received any professional training. This project also found that teachers had high teacher self-efficacy, relating to their willingness and ability to efficiently implement SEL techniques. Results support the hypothesis that early childhood teachers are knowledgeable and capable of implementing SEL techniques within the classroom. However, a lack of professional training and direct SEL program implementation may affect the guarantee of efficiency and effectiveness within the implementation to students.

*Keywords:* social emotional learning (SEL), teacher self-efficacy, early childhood, development

## **Introduction**

During early childhood, children experience a series of cognitive developmental changes (Campbell et al., 2016). These stages of development are easily influenced and altered in relation to their surroundings and impact emotional well-being (Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016). Approximately 12 million American infants, toddlers, and preschoolers—more than half of children in this age group—are enrolled in early care and education programs. In 2018, students

in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and economies received an average of 7,533 hours of compulsory instruction during their primary and lower secondary education (OECD, 2018). Numbers rise annually as children spend more time in early care and education programs. A large amount of student's day-to-day lives are spent with their teachers. This suggests that classroom structure and teachers' influence are becoming increasingly more important to child development as students spend more time in the classroom (White & Walker, 2018).

As younger children spend more of their formative years in the classroom. Teachers are presented with the role of providing a lot of direction and counsel students receive. Teachers are a vital influence in preparing students for success both academically, socially, and emotionally. It is pertinent that teachers are professionally trained. Professional training helps equip teachers with tools needed to best meet the needs of their students through the various developmental stages during their time in the classroom (White & Walker, 2018).

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and the techniques within the classroom are a primary focus throughout this study. SEL distinctly targets positive developmental goals within early childhood-aged students while also providing teachers comfortability with the implementation of these techniques (Bowles et al., 2017; Connors-Burrow et al., 2016; Spidell Rusher et al., 1992).

SEL is known as the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions; as well as set and achieve positive goals, feel, and show empathy for others. SEL also assists in forming positive relationships and making responsible decisions (Yoder, 2014a.). SEL can be implemented in curriculum and classroom structure but requires professional training for faculty and staff to be done effectively. Educators can increase their influence over the social and

emotional development of students by professionally implementing SEL techniques within the classroom.

Teachers are expected to provide a positive learning environment for enhancing student success; having high teacher self-efficacy can assist them in doing so. Teacher self-efficacy is the level of confidence teachers have in their ability to guide students to success (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). High teacher self-efficacy can relate to helping students learn, building effective programs for students, and effectively changing student learning (Gkolia et al., 2014). If teachers have high self-efficacy it can help them feel confident in their abilities to implement SEL within the classroom. Gauging teachers' self-efficacy in relation to the implementation of SEL techniques provides teacher-support and recognition to additional training that may be needed. This benefit both the teacher as well as their students.

### **Purpose Statement**

Multiple studies were reviewed with the focus on benefits provided through SEL-based curriculum to students and teachers. The studies reviewed addressed the reoccurring theme of SEL being commonly used within schooling districts that are labeled "at-risk" (C.S. Bailey et al., 2016; Gunter et al., 2012; Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016). However, SEL provides benefits to students from various backgrounds (Blewitt et al., 2018; Bowles et al., 2017; Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016; Durlak et al., 2011). SEL techniques target developmental needs of young children and has proven to be beneficial within the classroom countless times (Ashdown & Bernard, 2011; D.B. Bailey, 2002; Durlak et al., 2011; Gueldner et al., 2020). SEL techniques are most efficient when teachers obtain professional training in SEL techniques (Dixon et al., 2014; Epstein & Willhite, 2015; Spidell Rusher et al., 1992). This study had two purposes: (a) to assess whether SEL techniques were utilized in early care and education programs throughout

the East Tennessee region and (b) to investigate the relationship between SEL technique and teacher self-efficacy. To do this, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How present and prevalent are SEL techniques in East Tennessee's early childhood classrooms?
2. Are East Tennessee early childhood teachers knowledgeable about SEL practices and how they are being trained to implement them within their classroom?
3. How is teacher self-efficacy influencing their ability to implement these techniques efficiently or effectively?

The research presented is both a quantitative and qualitative study of the presence and prevalence of SEL in early care and education programs. The study reviewed early care and education programs websites along with teachers who participated in a survey to gauge the promotion, training, and use of SEL within the classroom. The aim of this study was to explore the influence of SEL implementation within early care and education programs paired with teacher self-efficacy.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is defined as the as the process through which students develop the skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions, build relationships, solve interpersonal problems, and make effective and ethical decisions (Yoder, 2014a). SEL programs and their benefits have been studied from as early as the 1980s (Bowles et al., 2017). The emergence of social and emotional skills begins at birth and early experiences influence how children begin to understand the world and themselves (Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016). Social and emotional competencies are increasingly recognized as critical for children's success in

school and in later phases of life. As children start to develop social and emotional skills, they gain the confidence and competence needed to build relationships, problem solve, and cope with emotions (Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016; Dusenbury et al., 2019).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) website promotes high-quality early learning for young children, birth through age 8. This age range is used for the age bracket of “early childhood” within the study. It is vital for children in this age bracket to receive exposure to SEL methods. The duration of childhood formative years initiates the start of understanding and regulating emotions, attention, and behavior (Denham et al., 2012). Developing self-regulation tools enhanced by SEL techniques equip children in forming prosocial relationships and engaging in learning as they progress through formal education (Blewitt et al., 2018). SEL is an essential aspect of pre-k-12 education as it assists in children’s development of social competence that include a child’s temperament, self-regulatory skills, emotional understanding, social information processing, and communication skills (Campbell et al., 2016). SEL curricula in preschools assist in preventing emotional and behavioral problems as young children begin to develop language skills, as well as capacities to regulate their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Gunter et al., 2012).

In early childhood, key tasks of social-emotional development involve learning to engage with others in positive ways and manage emotions while entering a world of peers (Connors-Burrow et al., 2016). Infants' and toddlers’ social competence become increasingly important as they transition into older childhood years. Social competence provides a critical foundation for the mastery range of skills necessary in successful academic behaviors and achievement (Campbell et al., 2016). The ability to control potentially interfering thought processes and actions develops rapidly in the preschool period. Children three years of age have difficulty with



tasks that require inhibitory control of attention and motor responses, such as suppressing a dominant response in accordance with rules (Carlson & Wang, 2007). It is in areas such as these that the importance of social competence goals become crucial in cognitive development. Cognitive development during early childhood relates to the advancement of the child (Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016).

Cognitive regulation is thought of as the basic cognitive skills required to direct behavior toward the attainment of a goal (Carlson & Wang, 2007). The cognitive skills of children and youth that are enhanced through SEL include attention control, inhibitory control, working memory/planning, and cognitive flexibility (McLeod et al., 2017). Early care and education programs play a significant role in preparing all students for academic and life success. Early care and education programs level of focus on competencies that help students be more self-aware, make better decisions, set goals, solve problems, and have sustaining positive relationships with others relate to academic success of students (Stillman et al., 2018). The promotion of SEL skills is associated with positive outcomes for students such as academic engagement, positive behavioral outcomes, and attachment to school (Eklund et al., 2018).

Developing social and emotional skills is especially critical for students living in under resourced areas, both urban and rural. Students in areas that are under resources are surrounded by added stressors that can make it difficult for them to learn (Yoder, 2014b; Yudron et al., 2014). SEL tactics teach students how to seek help when needed, manage their emotions, and problem-solve in difficult situations (Yoder, 2014a). SEL has been said to work best for children who need it most. However, SEL benefits are presented for all students, even in areas not considered “at-risk” (Gunter et al., 2012). Findings from a meta-analysis of SEL studies (Durlak et al., 2011) showed that both prosocial behaviors and academic achievement increases

significantly, while antisocial behaviors decreased following SEL interventions in young childhood aged children.

The positive benefits provided by SEL programs for student success are ever-present and particularly important. How it is being presented to teachers is equally as important. By asking, what does it look like for the teachers implementing these strategies in their classrooms? What difficulties are they facing internally relating to teacher self-efficacy, and how does this affect the implementation of SEL to their students? Effective SEL interventions provide training and professional development for early childhood teachers while building their SEL skills. However, many early childhood teachers state they are not receiving enough training to effectively implement SEL techniques in the classroom (Collie et al., 2012; Larsen & Samdal, 2011; McClelland et al., 2017).

Conners (2016), in a preliminary Evaluation of Realizing Excellence for ALL Children (REACH), found that only about 20% of Early Childhood Educator (ECE) providers have received recent training on supporting children's social and emotional growth while 80% of young children are spending much of their day in nonparental early care. Early care and education program teachers are being placed with the responsibility of shaping children's social and emotional development. Teachers' roles in understanding the characteristics of student learning and using the knowledge in adapting lessons are paramount to success in the complex process (Dixon et al., 2014).

Teacher efficacy is the belief teachers have in their ability to affect student learning. Efficacy includes teacher confidence in instructional, management and collaboration skills (Epstein & Willhite, 2015). Teachers' perceived efficacy influences both the kind of environment that they create for their students as well as their judgements about different teaching tasks they

perform to enhance student learning (Sharma et al., 2011). Training influences teacher's pivotal role in enhancing students SEL skills (Collie et al., 2012; Conner-Burrow et al., 2016). SEL teachers provide a safe teaching and learning environment for cultivating and expressing emotions, modeling, and developing empathic behaviors, encouraging, and facilitating productive coping, problem-solving skills, shaping effective communication behaviors through positive reinforcement, and lastly, weaving SEL into the school day while embodying SEL concepts moment-by-moment (Deans et al., 2017).

Teacher support is helpful for children struggling to regulate their emotions and become better adjusted at school (Bailey et al., 2016). Teachers' perceived efficacy is important in establishing better working relationships in primary and secondary schools. Teacher efficacy is linked to their responses and complexity of interactions with others. Teachers with high efficacy deal more constructively with negative situations involving students than do their colleagues who possess low levels of efficacy (Poulou, 2017). Teachers with low efficacy struggle implementing inclusive practices and consider that there is very little they can do to include a student with special learning needs in a regular classroom, and thus they may be disinclined to try (Sharma et al., 2011).

Dixon (2014) notes that a greater number of professional development hours in differentiation of instruction was positively associated with both teacher efficacy and the teacher's sense of efficacy beliefs. Hanson-Peterson et al., (2016) found that for classrooms hosting emotion-focused SEL programs, it was important for teachers to have high emotional beliefs and emotional socialization practices. Their emotional beliefs and socialization practices are related to programs' structured activities. This also supported teachers' sense of efficacy and

motivation to deliberately carry out direct emotion socialization practices aimed at promoting their students' emotional competence (Hanson-Peterson et al., 2016).

Programs that had implemented more supports for children's SEL resulted in the teachers feeling more satisfied with their jobs, feeling more supported in managing challenging behavior, and viewed the workplace climate of their program as more positive (Zinsser et al., 2016). To model and encourage positive student interactions, teachers need high teacher efficacy along with the social emotional skills required to effectively communicate with students while handling stressful situations that occur in classrooms (Li Mao, & Petrides 2018; Spidell Rusher et al., 1992).

SEL techniques teach children useful skills that surpass their time in early care and education programs (Ashdown & Bernard, 2011; D.B. Bailey, 2002). Studies show positive results for adolescence and teens when integrating SEL styled curricula throughout their early childhood years as it establishes the framework of success. SEL benefits children's developmental goals needed to progress through life as high functioning, academically successful individuals. Evidence shows that addressing SEL needs has a significant effect on adolescents' future and helps them be better prepared for transitions into adulthood (Ashdown & Bernard, 2011; Gueldner et al., 2020).

Transitioning into high school involves rich socio-emotional experiences resulting in social-self and identity development (Hamedani & Darling-Churchill, 2015). The profound effects of social-emotional learning need on students' academic achievements and behavioral outcomes intensifies during their high school freshman year (Gueldner et al., 2020; Undercoffer, 2016). As socio-emotional needs are heightened in early high school years, it is important that SEL programs are introduced to students at an early age since SEL programs have a lower

success rate among youth aged 14 to 17 years compared to younger populations (Yeager, 2017; Yang et al., 2018). Identifying and addressing students' SEL needs early can yield rich dividends in their academic future, such as improved graduation rates and reduced problem behaviors (Roderick et al., 2014; Roderick, 2003; Durlak, 2011). These studies support the claim that providing initial SEL instruction into curricula is most influential when children are at a younger age due to cognitive-behavioral and emotional development being at its peak.

The reviewed literature discussed and highlighted academic benefits that SEL implementation provides to students. It also focused on the importance of the teachers incorporating SEL techniques effectively within the classroom. The information presented by the reviewed literature assisted in the structure of the research. The study aimed to address if early care and education programs in the region are promoting SEL techniques while also gauging teacher's efficacy compared to any training received over SEL implementation. This research differs from past studies focused on SEL intervention as this study focused on regional findings paired with the impact of teacher efficacy.

## **Methods**

### *Participants*

Participants in the study were early childhood teachers employed within the East Tennessee region. Participants took part in a survey that addressed various categories covering both their social emotional learning practices and training, along with their teacher self-efficacy. Approximately 30 teachers from early care and education programs across the region were invited to participate in the study. The total number of participants who completed the survey were 16, resulting in a 51% response rate from the initial pool of contacts.

Of the 16 participants, all were female. The ethnicities of the participants included one American Indian/Alaskan Native, two Black/African American, and 13 White. Their ages ranged from four 20-30 years, four 30-40 years, four 40-50 years, and four 50+ years. Participants were also asked to select all the early childhood grade levels they have taught throughout their employment as teachers in the East Tennessee region. Nine participants identified they had experience teaching 3-year-olds or younger, nine selected Pre-Kindergarten, eight selected Kindergarten, four selected 1<sup>st</sup> grade, six selected 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and five selected 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Participants also indicated how many total years they have been teaching. Six participants selected 0-5 years, three selected 5-10 years, two selected 10-15 years, two selected 15-20 years, and three selected 21+ years. The range of demographics in participants assisted in the study, receiving a variety of opinions and experiences expressed by the participants.

#### *Measurement Instruments*

Each participant received a self-report survey that was returned via email. The survey was a modification of Yoder's (2014a.) *Self-Assessing Social and Emotional Instruction and Competencies* survey, public use of this survey was provided as resource through the authors initial publication of the self-assessment. The original survey by Yoder (2014a.), the Great Teachers and leaders (GTL Center) described how the teaching practices identified throughout the survey can facilitate the development of social, emotional, and academic skills. The original survey provided teachers taking the self-assessment chart at the end that allowed them to calculate their scores and self-reflect over the different sections relating to their scores.

The modified survey began with a participant consent form that was then followed by a brief demographic questionnaire. The first half of the survey addressed the participants' SEL techniques used in the classroom. Participants were prompted to respond to questions formatted

in Microsoft Forms. Participants answered each question by selecting their level of application of SEL technique from a 1-5 scale. 1 being, “*This practice doesn’t apply to me*” to 5 being “*I implement this practice often.*” After completing each section, participants had the option to add additional commentary pertaining to the previously answered questions. (refer to Appendix A for visual of survey structure.)

The second half of the survey addressed the participants’ social emotional competencies and self-efficacy. Participants were prompted to indicate their level of agreement within a 5-point Likert scale, starting with 1= “*strongly disagree*” up to 4= “*strongly agree*” (refer to Appendix A for visual of survey structure). Once participants completed this section of the survey, they again had the opportunity to add any additional commentary on the questions and topics addressed throughout the survey. The survey took approximately 15 minutes for participants to complete.

### *Research Design*

The study provided both quantitative and qualitative research methods. One quantitative element provided was the amount of early care and education program websites and what percentage of them advertised SEL programs within their curricula. Once the graphs and charts were analyzed the researcher used said information to assist in addressing answers to the research questions.

The qualitative elements of the research were provided through the researcher’s development of the modified survey. The first half of the survey was developed to ask questions targeting the participants’ knowledge, training, and use of SEL techniques within their classroom currently. This first half of questioning provided insights and understanding of their experiences. The second half of the modified research survey focused on gauging the participants perceived

teacher self-efficacy. Qualitative information gathered through the participants' written responses assisted in making informed suggestions to further the development of SEL techniques within schools. Information from the modified survey also aided in understanding the barriers and facilitators of the successful implementation of SEL within the classroom.

### *Procedures*

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) certification was obtained for this study to review and discuss teacher survey results (refer to Appendix B). Initial contact was established by email requesting recipients' participation in the survey. The email also provided recipients an outline as to what the survey addressed, when it would be sent to them, and the approximated amount of time it would take to complete (see Appendix C). After initial contact was made via email, the researcher then sent out the survey two weeks after. Once the recipients had received access to the survey for a week a follow-up email was sent out as a reminder and last effort to receive any additional surveys completed. Once all the surveys completed were reviewed the researcher was then able to analyze the findings.

The researcher also collected data about the promotion of SEL in early care and education programs by reviewing regional early care and education programs websites. The researcher reviewed the websites in search for promoted SEL programs and techniques that related to enhancing child development, i.e., child temperament, self-regulatory skills, emotional understanding, social information processing, and communication skills (Yoder, 2014b). Reviewing the websites assisted in constructing data analysis that assisted in understanding the region more efficiently. The survey paired with the reviewed data analysis assisted in the targeted research questions of the study.



## Data Analysis

A content analysis of the early care and education program websites provided initial information for data analysis. The content analysis was developed by first locating the top 20 most populated cities in East Tennessee and then reviewing early care and education program websites advertised for each city. A total of 40 websites were reviewed to identify the presence of SEL programs and techniques being promoted within the programs' mission statements or curriculum structures. The criterion for the SEL techniques searched for through programs included development practices pertaining to child's temperament, self-regulatory skills, emotional understanding, social information processing, and communication skills.

The other portion of the data analysis consisted of analyzing the results of the survey. The survey results were analyzed in multiple ways. Participants' answers to the survey were reviewed by graphs constructed from the data. This provided the researcher with both visuals and percentages of the answers chosen from the participant pool. The percentages from the graphs assisted in understanding how participants were implementing SEL techniques currently along with their perceived teacher self-efficacy. An additional source of data that was analyzed was the written responses taken from the participants that regarded their SEL techniques, training, etc. The qualitative data examined allowed the researcher to gain insight into the participants' thoughts and feelings over the study topics within the survey. Once the results were analyzed through graphs and written responses, the researcher also compared them to previous literature and findings that had been reviewed throughout the study.

## Findings

In this section the research questions are answered from the analysis of data from the survey and content analysis of the website reviews. Question one, "*How present and prevalent is*

*SEL techniques in East Tennessee's early childhood classrooms?"* This first question is answered by the participant response throughout the survey paired with website findings.

Answers to the second question, *"Are East Tennessee early childhood teachers knowledgeable about SEL practices and how are they being trained to implement them within their classroom?"* is addressed throughout the survey. Lastly, the answer to the third question, *"How is teacher self-efficacy influencing their ability to implement these techniques effectively or effectively?"* is taken from the participants' written responses provided in the survey.

*Research Question 1: How present and prevalent are SEL techniques in East Tennessee's early childhood classrooms?*

The survey suggests that many teachers were implementing SEL techniques within their early childhood classrooms. From the 16 participants, 90% selected answers that were consistent with implementing SEL techniques within the classroom. However, <20% of the early childhood websites reviewed lacked mission statements or an outlined curriculum that explicitly stated having a SEL program integration or evidence of SEL techniques within the program structure. From the gathered data, the researcher would conclude that SEL techniques are being attempted by teachers within various early care and education programs in the East Tennessee region.

However, most early care and education program websites reviewed did not advertise having a SEL program integrated into their structure i.e., The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), COPE-R, etc. Early care and education programs often lacked promotion of SEL programs within their school structure. Because of this, the researcher was unable to assure the SEL techniques were prevalent. Due to the difference in SEL presence found between the survey and the website review, this study reveals that teachers are

implementing SEL techniques from their own knowledge and self-studying over SEL methods rather than SEL being integrated within the school's structure.

*Research Question 2:* Are East Tennessee early childhood teachers knowledgeable about SEL practices and how they are being trained to implement them within their classroom?

The qualitative data examined from participant responses , all showed a high positive response rate, revealing that teachers were using SEL techniques within their classroom, Participants seemed to be implementing a variety of techniques with students that are related to SEL. However, after reviewing the qualitative data, it was revealed that they desired more training in SEL techniques. Frequent written responses from participants also showed that they believed SEL techniques were beneficial to learning. Additionally, the written responses pointed to the belief that SEL assists in their own teaching strategies and the progress of their students. With the information provided from the survey and written responses concluded that teachers are implementing SEL techniques they are self-taught and studied rather than receiving any professional training as to how to implement these techniques most efficiently.

*Research Question 3:* “How is teacher self-efficacy influencing their ability to implement these techniques efficiently or effectively?”

The second part of the survey was developed in order gauge the participants' perceived teacher self-efficacy. The survey charts presented that all participants held a high teacher self-efficacy. This meant that the participants of this study had a lot of confidence in themselves and their ability to instruct their students effectively. High teacher self-efficacy relates to a more positive and effective learning environment for students. Most participants have not received professional training in implementing SEL. However, it is concluded that if they did receive

professional training, paired with their high efficacy, it would result in a more effective implementation of SEL.

Teachers' written responses revealed that they were excited to see more SEL techniques integrated in the classroom and found that it necessary for student development. There were also participant responses which said that due to the lack of SEL training they had received, they felt it would negatively affect them in teaching students to their best ability. Ultimately, the data showed that teachers within the region primarily have a high teacher self-efficacy. High self-efficacy assists participants in effectively implementing new developmental techniques, such as SEL, within the classroom. The data also suggest that although teachers are excited and willing to learn more about SEL, the lack of training many have received plants worry in relation to their effectiveness teaching and providing students with professional SEL instruction.

### **Discussion**

After analyzing findings revealed by the survey and content analysis, the researcher was able to address the research questions targeted throughout this study. It was concluded that SEL is primarily present throughout early care and education programs within the East Tennessee region. Teachers are often implementing SEL techniques provided by their own knowledge and personal study of the techniques. Many of the participants within the study responded positively to the survey's questions over their beliefs that SEL provides important techniques regarding class structure and student development. Teachers were also found to have high teacher self-efficacy which would assist in them implementing new developmental techniques effectively within their classrooms, given that professional training is provided to them. Participants ultimately desired more training for implementing SEL techniques within their class and some

also stated that without professional training they felt as though they would not be able to provide their students with the tools, they need to be academically successful.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher” (Creswell, 2015). The focus of this study was to assess whether SEL techniques were utilized within early care and education programs throughout the East Tennessee region and to investigate the relationship between SEL technique and teacher efficacy.

The primary limitation this study faced was the small participant pool for the survey. Due to the small participant pool, it was difficult to calculate the validity of responses to the survey. Meaning, the size of the participant pool provided a limitation within drawing conclusions about the presence and prevalence of SEL in the East Tennessee region. However, survey answers provided data which allowed both graphs and charts to be created, ultimately, assisting the researcher in making informed conclusions and takeaways from the study.

The survey responses provided the data that was then used to address the research questions of the study. The focus was primarily on early childhood teachers. Other stakeholders (children, parents, board of education, and upper-level teachers) were not surveyed. Teachers who participated in this study were employed throughout the East Tennessee region. The current pandemic and overall events of 2020 provided additional unexpected limitations. The focus on social distancing and sheltering in place influenced the study to not attempt any in-person study or interviews. Teachers also were faced with a variety of challenges and restrictions within their normal teaching strategies which, understandably, required much of their time and focus to be on changes that had to be developed within their educational and classroom structure. The added stresses placed on teachers during this time resulted in the inability for many to

participate in the study. Although these limitations were present throughout the research, the data collected provided enough information that assisted in formulating recommendations that addressed areas needing improvement.

### **Conclusion**

Prior to conducting this study, the researcher believed that SEL techniques would be present within early care and education programs, however, prevalence and professional training would be lacking. The researcher also believed that teachers would not realize that some of the techniques being implemented in the classroom would relate to SEL. Findings from the study showed that many teachers were knowledgeable about SEL but had not been given professional training. Teachers showed a high self-efficacy which is believed to assist in successful SEL implementation. The researcher felt that if teachers were provided with professional training in SEL that the benefits of SEL techniques among students may be more likely.

Given the study results, the researcher developed recommendations to better improve SEL implementation and assistance in continuing teacher's high self-efficacy. To begin, early care and education programs, both private and public should begin requiring professional training for teachers over SEL implementation techniques within the classroom. This can benefit teachers by instilling correct professional SEL implementation for their classrooms. Additionally, annual meetings and workshops should be provided by early care and education programs for both teachers and parents to stay up to date and allow refreshers about SEL techniques. This can assist in providing a firm foundation for students by educating both teachers and parents, which will ultimately assist in bettering their social-emotional development. With parents and teachers both being educated in proper SEL techniques it can reinforce the beneficial techniques for students' development both at home and in the classroom. Lastly, leadership in

early care and education programs need to implement workshops addressing areas of strengthening teachers' self-efficacy throughout the year. If a teacher's self-efficacy is kept high, their anxiety levels pertaining to effective teaching may lessen, resulting in a better learning environment for students.

As the face of education continuously changes, new challenges and stressors will always be present among teachers and students. SEL is a tool that consistently benefits students and teachers in tackling the stressful challenges they inevitably face throughout their educational careers. Implementing professional training in SEL allows teachers to instruct their students better and equip them with the tools needed to successfully progress through school. Teachers are at the forefront of preparing kids for academic success. Social Emotional Learning is proven to enhance the characteristics and traits children need to reach academic goals. It starts with properly and professional training our educators, not only so this can be done successfully, but so they can feel confident in doing so.

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## Appendix A

# Early Childhood Educator Social Emotional Learning Survey

My name is Gabrielle Humble, I am a senior at East Tennessee State University working on my honor's thesis. I am interested in learning how prevalent Social Emotional Learning strategies and tactics are in early childhood centers in the East Tennessee region. This survey is an adaptation of Nicholas Yoder's 2014 "Self-Assessing Social and Emotional Instruction and Competencies: A Tool for Teachers." The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study will provide valuable information that will assist in gauging the presence and training given over SEL within our school systems and aid in bettering the classroom and learning environment to both you the instructor and your students. Thank you

### Section 2: Demographic Survey

Section 3-9: Think about how often you implement a variety of practices that influence students' social, emotional, and academic skills. Think about how often you implement teaching practices that focus on positive social interactions. Using a scale of 1 to 5, rate how often and how well you use these practices.

Section 3-9 Key :

- 1 = This practice doesn't apply to me
- 2 = I do not implement this practice
- 3 = I occasionally implement this practice
- 4 = I implement this practice often

Section 10-16: Think about your own social and emotional competencies and how those competencies influence your ability to implement instructional interaction teaching practices. Please use the scoring guide below to rate how your SEL skills influence your instructional interaction teaching practices with your students. Consider each statement and score yourself according to where each statement holds true for you

Section 10-16 Key:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree. I am not strong in this area. I am unable to use these skills when I am implementing the instructional practices.
- 2 = Disagree. I have a difficult time with this practice. I know I do some of the things mentioned, but I do not necessarily find them relevant to my teaching.
- 3 = Neutral. I demonstrate some of these skills with my students. I think with more practice and/or more support, I could demonstrate these skills more to improve implementation of this practice
- 4 = Agree. I am strong in this area. I know I do a good job modeling these skills for my students. I use these skills most of the time when I implement the instructional practices.
- 5 = Strongly Agree. I am very strong in this area. I am able to use these skills when I am implementing the instructional practices.

## Demographic Questionnaire

### 2. What is your gender? \*

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

### 3. What is your age range? \*

- 20-30 years
- 30-40 years
- 40-50 years
- 50+ years

### 4. How would you classify your race? \*

- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Black/African American
- White
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander
- Other



5. What grade levels have you taught during your teaching experience? Check all that apply. \*

- 3 or younger
- Pre-Kindergarten
- Kindergarten
- 1st
- 2nd
- 3rd

6. How many students do you have in your current class? \*

7. How many years have you been teaching? \*

- 0-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15-20 years
- 21+ years

8. What is your highest degree of education? (Certificate/ Degree with indicated major)  
Ex. "Bachelor's degree in Early Care and Education" \*

## Student Centered Discipline- SEL Practices

9.

	This practice doesn't apply to me	I do not implement this practice	I occasionally Implement this practice	I implement this practice often
I have discussed with my students about how and why classroom procedures are implemented.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I implement consequences that are logical to the rule that is broken.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I respond to misbehavior by considering pupil-specific, effective, cognitive, and/or environmental factors that is associated with occurrence of the behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Use this space to further expand on this sections questions along with any specific strategies and/or tactics you use in the classroom and your experience with it or lack thereof.

## Teacher Language & Responsibility and Choice

11.

	This practice doesn't apply to me	I do not implement this practice	I occasionally Implement this practice	I implement this practice often
<p>I promote positive behaviors by encouraging my students when they display good work habits (e.g., acknowledge positive actions or steps to improve)</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I make sure students make the connection between their choices and potential consequences.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Use this space to further expand on this sections questions along with any specific strategies and/or tactics you use in the classroom and your experience with it or lack thereof.

## Warmth and Support

13.

	This practice doesn't apply to me	I do not implement this practice	I occasionally implement this practice	I implement this practice often
I demonstrate to each student that I appreciate him or her as an individual (e.g., appropriate eye-contact, greeting each child by name).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I let my students know that it is okay to get answers wrong or think outside of the box (e.g., modeling, praising attempts with "good thinking").	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I create structures in the classroom where my students feel included and appreciated (e.g., morning meetings, small moments, whole-class share outs).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Use this space to further expand on this sections questions along with any specific strategies and/or tactics you use in the classroom and your experience with it or lack thereof.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to provide detailed answers to the question above. It occupies the central portion of the page.

## Cooperative Learning/Group Learning

15.

	This practice doesn't apply to me	I do not implement this practice	I occasionally implement this practice	I implement this practice often
I create learning experiences in which my students depend on each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I create learning experiences in which my students must apply positive social skills to be successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I give students feedback on how they interact with and learn from others during cooperative learning experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Use this space to further expand on this sections questions along with any specific strategies and/or tactics you use in the classroom and your experience with it or lack thereof.

## Classroom Discussions

17.

	This practice doesn't apply to me	I do not implement this practice	I occasionally implement this practice	I implement this practice often
I help students learn how to respond to and learn from their peers' contributions during a discussion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I help my students learn how to effectively communicate their points of view (e.g., elaborate on their thinking).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I ask my students to listen to and think about their peers' opinions and whether they agree with them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Use this space to further expand on this sections questions along with any specific strategies and/or tactics you use in the classroom and your experience with it or lack thereof.

## Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection

19.

	This practice doesn't apply to me	I do not implement this practice	I occasionally Implement this practice	I implement this practice often
I help my students develop strategies to make sure they meet their learning goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I provide my students strategies to analyze their work (e.g., using performance rubrics, peer reviews).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tell my students the learning goals for each lesson	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Use this space to further expand on this sections questions along with any specific strategies and/or tactics you use in the classroom and your experience with it or lack thereof.



## Balanced Instruction

21.

	This practice doesn't apply to me	I do not implement this practice	I occasionally Implement this practice	I implement this practice often
I use an appropriate balance between providing students opportunities to directly learn new information, as well as actively engage in the material.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use multiple instructional strategies to keep my students engaged in learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make sure that my activities are not just fun, but represent one of the best ways for students to learn the content.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. Use this space to further expand on this sections questions along with any specific strategies and/or tactics you use in the classroom and your experience with it or lack thereof.

## Self-Awareness

23.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can effectively implement social teaching practices with my students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I understand how student responses (positive and negative) affect my emotions and my behaviors during social teaching practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of social teaching practices that I need to improve upon and grow professionally.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am usually aware of how my emotions, culturally grounded beliefs, and background are precursors to my emotional reactions, and I understand how they impact my social teaching practices with my students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Social Awareness

24.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I usually understand the perspectives of my students and can pay attention to their emotional cues during classroom interactions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to understand why my students are or are not actively participating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Relationship/ Social Skills

25.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

I clearly communicate behavioral and academic expectations in a manner that addresses students' individual needs and strengths when implementing social teaching practices.

                      

I use social teaching practices to help cultivate my students' SEL skills, and I am usually successful at building their SEL skills.

## Self-Management/ Emotional Regulation

26.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I continuously refine my personal goals about how I will best implement instructional teaching practices with my students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I manage my emotions (e.g., use of stress reduction techniques), to better implement instructional teaching practices and to develop a positive learning environment that is free from bias and prejudice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I model behaviors (e.g., form guidelines, set boundaries) to help students learn to regulate emotions during instructional practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Social Awareness

27.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I address the commonalities and differences (e.g., racial, ethnic, cultural) that exist among students when I implement instructional teaching practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I usually understand the perspectives of my students and can pay attention to their emotional cues during classroom interactions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I successfully support positive emotions and respond to negative emotions during instructional teaching practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Relationship/Social Skills

28.

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree

I clearly communicate behavioral and academic expectations in a manner that addresses students' individual needs and strengths when implementing instructional teaching practices.

                      

I use instructional teaching practices to help form meaningful relationships with my students and cultivate their SEL skills.

## Responsible Decision Making

29.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am effective at balancing the needs and the behaviors of my entire class, while implementing instructional teaching practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I stay focused and consistent when I implement instructional teaching practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I implement the instructional teaching practices, I balance awareness of students' emotional needs and academic needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30. At the completion of this survey please use this space to reflect on any SEL training and/or tactics you were/have been trained to implement in your classroom. If you have prior SEL training, how has it effected your relationship with students and overall classroom structure? If you have not had any prior SEL training, how do you believe it could effect your teaching strategy and classroom structure in the future?



## Appendix B



Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects • Box 70565 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707  
Phone: (423) 439-6053

### Initial Exempt Determination Letter 2018 Common Rule

October 21, 2020

Gabrielle Humble  
College of Education

RE: Teachers Self Efficacy and its Effect on students Social Emotional Development  
IRB#: c1020.13e  
Sponsor: None \*

The ETSU IRB has approved this submission. However, please note that the research must be conducted in accordance with ETSU policies and with appropriate safety precautions in place to protect both the subjects and the research team. More information about the ETSU Research Re-start Plan is available [here](#).

On **October 19, 2020**, an exempt determination was granted in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). It is understood this project will be conducted in full compliance with all applicable sections of the ETSU IRB Policies. No continuing review is required. **However, an annual administrative check-in must be submitted for this study by October 18, 2021.**

The exempt determination will be reported to the convened board on the next agenda. The following items were reviewed and approved:

- New Protocol Submission xform, PI CV, Recruitment Email, Consent Form, Survey

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others (UPIRTSOs) must be reported to the IRB (and VA R&D if applicable) within 10 working days.

Proposed changes in approved research cannot be initiated without IRB review and approval. The only exception is that a change can be made prior to IRB approval when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research subjects [45 CFR 46.108(3)(iii), 21 CFR 56.108(a)(4)]. In such a case, the IRB must be informed of the change within 10 working days following its implementation using xForm 109. The IRB will review the change to determine that it is consistent with ensuring the subjects' continued welfare.

Sincerely,  
ETSU Campus IRB

Cc:



Accredited since December 2005

## Appendix C

Hello and Good Morning!

My name is Gabrielle Humble, I'm a Senior at ETSU currently conducting my undergraduate honors thesis. In short, the thesis is over Early Childhood teachers/instructor's self-efficacy and how that affects early childhood aged students/kids' social emotional development. I have conducted a short survey that I hope to send out to 20-30+ participants in early October. The survey will consist of a brief demographic questionnaire and then followed by 14 short charted sections that will require the participant to simply check the box they identify most with the question at hand- there will be space for additional commentary if the participant desires. I am also hoping to conduct a small handful of semi-structured zoom meetings, however, no participant is required to take part in if they don't want to!

If you or any of your colleagues would be willing to assist in this all I need is the preferred email of the participant for the survey to be sent to, i.e work or personal. sent to my school email:  
humble@etsu.edu

If there are any questions you may have concerning the study or anything else, please feel free to reach out and I will do my best to address any questions/concerns.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Best, Gabrielle Humble