

ABSTRACT

The Implementation of Social Emotional Learning through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Low Socioeconomic Schools: A Phenomenological-Case Study at Jones Elementary

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Each year economically disadvantaged students fall further behind in the achievement and opportunity gap. Studies show that ethnically diverse students do not enter school with social skills supporting success in traditional school settings (Jagers et al., 2019). One approach to solving this problem is incorporating cultural background knowledge to teach and apply social skills. The most appropriate character education program for diverse learners focuses on social-emotional learning (SEL) as the significant gaps in behavior and social skills prevent students from achieving academic success. SEL competencies support educators' efforts in helping children process their environment and become better students and contributing members of society (CASEL, 2020). SEL programming in low socioeconomic schools with various ethnic groups loses effectiveness unless it starts with connecting cultural backgrounds that allow educators to understand and incorporate cultural exclusivity and differences to support high academic achievement (Torres, 2019). Therefore, there is an impending need to connect culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) to SEL to further gains in academic

achievement, instructional practices, and implementation strategies in low socioeconomic status (SES) schools.

In this phenomenological case study, I explored a way to support and provide the skills for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools to decrease educational achievement and opportunity gaps. SEL in connection with CRP can provide an advantage to students from historically marginalized races and socioeconomic groups to realize their full potential in an ethnically diverse society. In-depth data collection and analysis from participants through questionnaires, a semi-structured focus group interview, observations with artifacts, and one-on-one follow-up interviews allowed me to understand teachers' lived experiences relating CRP to SEL implementation. Five teachers at Jones Elementary with a range of experience and expertise participated in this research.

I examined cultural connections that support ethnically diverse learners towards academic and behavioral success by relating CRP to SEL implementation through self-efficacy, positive relationships among all stakeholders, and beneficial classroom and campus environments. This phenomenological case study provides an example of what success can look like when teachers can connect CRP to SEL implementation to support ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools.

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The Implementation of Social Emotional Learning through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
in Low Socioeconomic Schools: A Phenomenological-Case Study at Jones Elementary

by

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A Dissertation

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Education

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May 2022

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I thank God for giving me the strength, courage, and wisdom to endure this most arduous work. Proverbs 3:5–6 resonated with me throughout this process as it was indeed my faith and trust in God that directed my path to complete this journey. I want to thank Dr. Julia Collier Earl for her encouragement and support throughout my doctoral journey. You believed we could, and we did. I am truly honored to be one of Earl’s Pearls. I want to thank my immediate family, my sorority sisters of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and close friends. Your patience and dedication to supporting my journey are more valuable than you know. Thanks for your prayers, encouragement, and listening ears through this process. Many thanks to my Jones Elementary family and the teachers who made this study possible. Because of the work and dedication to our students, you have created a beautiful story of success. Several Cohort 3 members have made this journey bearable and worthwhile even in times of uncertainty, life mishaps, and tragedies; we pushed each other to greatness. I am forever grateful to each of you who personally reached out and supported me over the last few years. Special thanks to my Peer Writing Group: Rebekah Adderley, Tamesha Armstead, Anna Piccolo, and Kazanda Wills. I could not have completed this journey without your daily encouragement. I pray that each of you has continued success and blessings on the other side of this remarkable journey. To all the professors in this program, I thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to ensure that we succeeded. Your hard work does not go unnoticed.

To my participants, I am forever indebted to each of you and the work that you all did and continue to do to support this research. You answered the call without hesitation because you believe and invest in this work each day. You have helped build a campus culture of success over the years and have proved that all students truly can learn if given the right resources and support. Your intentionality and dedication to student growth will carry this research to the masses in due time. I am so proud of each of you. Thank you for believing in me to lead the way. The love I have for each of you is unmeasurable.

DEDICATION

To my mother, Barbara Renee` Johnson, I dedicate this work to you.
You taught me so many life lessons in the short time that you were here on Earth.
As early as I can remember, you told me I could achieve anything I wanted.
I still carry that notion to this day.

Your spirit and those lessons continue to guide me through every celebration
and obstacle in life.

I will continue to make you proud of the legacy you have left behind.
You will always be my greatest inspiration.

Continue to Rest in Peace,
knowing your only baby girl is living the life you dreamed for her and so much more.
God provides.

CHAPTER ONE

Background and Needs Assessment

Introduction

Each year economically disadvantaged students fall further behind in the achievement and opportunity gap. Studies show that ethnically diverse students do not enter school with social skills supporting success in traditional school settings (Jagers et al., 2019). How can students overcome incoming deficits upon immediately entering school?

One approach to solving this problem is incorporating cultural background knowledge to teach and apply the social skills needed to achieve academic success to decrease the achievement and opportunity gap. Regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, culture, or social class, prioritizing equitable educational opportunities for school-aged children that live in impoverished communities is needed to close the achievement and opportunity gap (Jagers et al., 2019). Ethnically diverse learners must have the instilled confidence to believe that they can succeed despite the varying obstacles encountered. The influence of social-emotional learning (SEL) benefits students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds and helps them realize their value and worth as contributing members of society (Jagers et al., 2019). Self-efficacy provides the motivation and change in behavior needed for student success. Although educators cannot change a child's economic situation, educators can foster a mindset that communicates success and provides skills needed to create equity and inclusion for

academic success among ethnically diverse learners (Wings for Kids, 2021).

Implementing appropriate education systems and structures related to teaching styles and pedagogy to intentionally accommodate diverse learners can close the achievement and opportunity gaps.

SEL encompasses skills that support self-efficacy and social development. Research shows that SEL is critical for success, well-being in life, and teaches self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). Research shows SEL is critical for success and well-being in life, and people who acquire SEL competencies have a sense of well-being in their personal lives, contribute to their community, have meaningful relationships, demonstrate compassion for others, and perform better academically (Minasian, 2018). As a result of schools' deficiencies in social development, a focus on SEL can improve academic achievement, cultivate instructional practices, and develop promising implementation strategies in low-SES schools.

An SEL intervention program alone does not resolve the widening academic achievement gap in low-SES schools. Students in low-SES schools identify in varying ethnically diverse groups and subpopulations, so cultural background consideration is essential in teaching social and behavior skills associated with SEL. Educators can support ethnically diverse learners through culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) in teaching these social and behavior skills. Understanding the variances between teachers and students and the learning environment and attending to culturally diverse students' needs increases academic achievement, motivation, and ability to apply new learning (Gay, 2002).

An SEL intervention program can provide a roadmap with strategies to help teachers implement social, emotional, and behavioral expectations. However, to better connect with ethnically diverse learners, the association of CRP with SEL can provide cultural references to help learners connect and relate to social and behavioral norms expected in traditional classroom settings.

Effective school educators and administrators recognize and implement ways to ensure success in school and real-life settings despite all the challenges facing education and accountability. Some school administrators have discovered the correlation between social-emotional competence and academic achievement (Durlak, 2015). A study investigating CRP relating to SEL implementation in low-SES schools deems necessary to extend this research. Jones Elementary explored the phenomenon of implementing SEL competencies through components of CRP. This qualitative phenomenological case study explored teachers' lived experiences and described how connecting ethnically diverse students' cultures to implement social skills development contributes to student success.

Statement of the Problem

According to the Texas Education Agency (2020), school districts may implement character education programs for students and identify a Character Plus Program's criteria. Under Texas Education Code §29.906, character education programs emphasize positive character traits, implement integrated teaching strategies, and age-appropriateness (Texas Education Agency, 2020). Districts' requirements also include collaborating with parents, educators, and community members, including community leaders. The most appropriate character education program for diverse learners focuses

on SEL as significant gaps in behavior and social skills prevent students from achieving academic success. SEL competencies support educators' efforts in helping children process their environment and become better students and contributing members of society (CASEL, 2020). However, SEL programming in low-SES schools with various ethnic groups loses effectiveness unless it starts with connecting cultural backgrounds that allow educators to understand and incorporate cultural exclusivity and differences to support high academic achievement (Torres, 2019). Therefore, there is an impending need to connect CRP to SEL to achieve further gains in academic achievement, instructional practices, and implementation strategies in low-SES schools.

From 2015 through 2017, according to the Texas Education Agency (2019), Jones Elementary was an "improvement required" school with an uptrend of low academic performance and increased behavioral issues. With the teacher turnover rate at least 30%, frequent change in leadership, and the ever-growing trend of non-continuously enrolled students, widening achievement gaps persistently placed specified groups of students at risk. According to the Texas Education Agency (2019), academic accountability measures caused the campus to continue to encounter the possibility of an unacceptable rating. The necessity to implement an SEL program as a guide for educators to support ethnically diverse learners, specifically in low-SES settings, seemed evident. Incorporating state educational requirements for character education through a research-based school-wide program and connecting culturally responsive teaching (CRT) to ensure equity and relevancy seemed essential for student success. The need for an identified character education program and an avenue to provide resources and

intervention for academic achievement led to the implementation of SEL to support ethnically diverse learners at Jones Elementary.

Finding culturally responsive ways to support students' learning of social-emotional competencies currently remains a challenge for educators. CRP allows a student-centered approach to learning, incorporating students' cultural strengths to address any social barriers between the teacher and the student. SEL uses students' lived experiences and backgrounds to reinforce and teach SEL competencies. Therefore, CRP can support the implementation of SEL in low-SES schools among ethnically diverse learners. With this study, I helped fill the gap of the limited research by understanding and describing the lived experiences educators used to connect CRP to support SEL implementation in one school with a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse community (Barnes & McCallops, 2019). This research also served as a tool to help Tyler Independent School District (ISD) identify practices to support ethnically diverse learners attain academic success by implementing feasible social and behavioral strategies in a traditional classroom setting.

Literature Review

This literature review introduces the development and research on SEL and CRP and the implementation and impact on student learning. The goal of this literature review was to provide a framework for establishing the importance of the research and providing a standard for comparing results with other findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The following literature review argues the need for SEL through CRP for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools. The subsequent argument unfolds in the following steps. First, this literature review explores the research regarding the needs of ethnically diverse

learners and low-SES schools concerning the implementation and impact on student learning with SEL and CRP. Second, this literature review provides the historical content of sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) related to SEL and CRP. Third, in this literature review, I analyzed the competencies and principles of SEL and CRP. Finally, this literature review concluded with mining the significant implications of exploring teacher perceptions from previous studies that implemented SEL and CRP.

I located literature for this review using the following strategies: (a) online journal search using keywords and phrases, (b) books and relevant book chapters, (c) published manuscripts and book reviews, and (d) websites. Key terms and phrases used consisted of social emotional learning, low socioeconomic status, culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching, and ethnically diverse learners. A combination of the following words consisted of the achievement gap, teacher perceptions, student perceptions, and academic success to disclose journal titles on CRP that support SEL in low-SES schools to determine relevant research topics further. Online databases such as EBSCO, SAGE, and ERIC provided articles related to the research. Bibliographies from books or specific chapters, the findings from journal articles, and information from websites allowed the synthesizing of the discovery on related topics to compare results and connect to past and present research. In this qualitative study, I addressed the limited number of recent studies relating CRP in implementing SEL.

Ethnically Diverse Learners

The limited progress of students of color remains an area of focus as the evaluation of teachers and schools determines the measure of success for academic achievement. For this research, the definition of an ethnically diverse learner is a student

coming from a home environment with cultural values and background other than mainstream culture, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, language, or economic status (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). More than one-third of the students in traditional public schools come from ethnically diverse backgrounds (Ukpokodu, 2003). Knowing this, the need to find ways to support ethnically diverse learners in traditional schools proves more evident as the achievement and opportunity gaps continue to widen among students of color, low-income families, and English language learners. According to Ladson-Billings (2009), “African American students remain significantly behind their White counterparts on all standard achievement measures” (p. 1). According to Hodgkinson (1989), an advocate of preschool education, the youngest children make up 40% of the United States’ most diverse population.

The difference between the subpopulations referenced above is location. Typically, African Americans and Hispanics reside in densely populated urban areas, but in contrast, White people living in poverty live in rural areas in substandard housing (Walker Tileston, 2011). Ten percent of non-Hispanic White people live in poverty (Saravia-Shore, 2008). Some ethnically diverse learners between the ages of 5 to 17 years old speak a language other than English at home, and about one-third of Black and Hispanic children live in poverty (Hodgkinson, 1989). All students must have equitable and exceptional learning opportunities to increase student success to close achievement gaps. Over time, many factors have been considered, such as curriculum, student and family interests, or lack of viable resources. Callins (2006) stated, “One major factor that needs consideration is instructional practices that address culture and language issues and hold the most significant promise for helping diverse learners reach academic success”

(p. 62). Education systems must find ways to meet the emergent needs of ethnically diverse learners living in poverty to ensure student success.

Research suggested students from diverse backgrounds often come from community-oriented cultures with active lifestyles; ethnically diverse learners require teaching strategies that entail opportunities for movement and collaboration (Ukpokodu, 2003). Traditional classrooms tend to focus on individualized instruction, competitiveness, and a quiet learning environment. Ethnically diverse learners need a curriculum that allows scaffolded content with culturally relevant materials, visual examples, illustrations, language accommodations, and the integration of prior experiences to acquire new learning (Ukpokodu, 2003). Teachers must find ways to support ethnically diverse learners through the reflection and evaluation of current teaching practices and make the conscious effort to ensure ways to provide necessary changes and accommodations. Teachers' attention to acquiring the knowledge, willingness to accept and embrace cultural differences, and obtaining skills to make their classrooms optimal learning environments for all students indicates a commitment to ensuring academic success for ethnically diverse learners (Saravia-Shore, 2008). The needs of ethnically diverse learners reflect many variances from the norms of instructional practices in traditional public schools. To close the achievement gap, ethnically diverse learners must receive opportunities to support their learning to ensure academic success.

Low Socioeconomic Status Schools

From the perspective of some educational professionals, children raised in poverty face several disadvantages that result in low academic achievement (Bernstein et

al., 2014). Upon entering kindergarten, a child's readiness for school determines future academic success as children in poverty are almost a year behind in foundational literacy skills compared with their more affluent peers (Bernstein et al., 2014). Risk load factors such as emotional and social challenges, unfavorable living conditions at home, and cognitive lags lead to a continued spiral of dynamics that prevent low-SES students from academic success throughout school (Jensen, 2009). The credits and signs of low monetary students further expand the achievement and opportunity opening among students and their wealthy peers.

Students from poor families are behind in their school readiness, and they often exhibit health, behavioral, and emotional issues. As a result, these students often score lower on tests (ChildFund, 2021; Hochschild, 2003; Shonkoff & Garner, 2012; Zhang, 2003). Children who live in poverty often continue to have challenges throughout their school years. These challenges manifest as poor academic performance and behavioral issues (Hochschild, 2003; Purcell-Gates et al., 1995; Reardon, 2013; Shonkoff & Garner, 2012; Zhang, 2003). Growing confirmation backs the association between lower-SES students and brings about schools in view of immature training and scholarly capacities (DeCarlo Santiago et al., 2011). Much of the previous literature on low-SES schools examined hardships concerning various risk load factors as possible causes for achievement gaps in K–12 schools (Hochschild, 2003; Purcell-Gates et al., 1995; Reardon, 2013; Shonkoff & Garner, 2012; Zhang, 2003). However, another factor to consider is teacher experience, and the capacity to support students from low-income households in providing the support students need for success. Low-SES students do not have equal access regarding teacher quality, capacity, and stability as often teachers, and

teachers in low-SES schools lack the credentials and certifications for classroom teaching (Walker Tileston, 2011). Low-SES students need teachers who have the content knowledge to teach content explicitly in the required curriculum. New teachers obtain first-year jobs in low-SES schools. These teachers lack the experience and skills to accommodate the ongoing academic, emotional, and behavioral needs of students living in poverty. Low-SES schools have a higher turnover rate, and essentially teachers do not build the rapport needed with students in poverty. Because relationships are essential to students in poverty, teacher awareness of the importance of relationship-building yields the best results with students in poverty as they instill trust and a safe environment in the classroom (Walker Tileston, 2011). According to Jensen (2009), “Kids raised in poverty need caring, dependable adults in their lives, and often it’s teachers to whom children look for support” (p. 11). Quality teaching matters the most to close the achievement and opportunity gap in low-SES schools.

Sociocultural Learning Theory

To understand how social skills and academics intersect with student achievement for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools, one must examine sociocultural theory further. Sociocultural theory connects the relationship between human mental functioning and cultural, historical, and institutional settings in understanding how learning develops (Thorne, 2005). Socialization and cultural acknowledgment immensely contribute to the learning and the success of ethnically diverse students in low-SES schools.

The historical context surrounding the ideas and concepts of SEL and CRP exemplify characteristics in the sociocultural theory of human learning (Thorne, 2005). Kurt (2020) cited the seminal research of Vygotsky to expound on the components of the

sociocultural theory. Vygotsky, a pioneer in learning in social contexts, first examined how social interactions influence cognitive growth (Kurt, 2020). This theory concludes that learning occurs through social interaction and plays a fundamental role in cognition development. In terms of learning in the school setting, Vygotsky concluded teachers facilitated several aspects of learning such as tasks, behaviors, and communicative responses, and encouraged collaboration to build cognitive development (Kurt, 2020). Vygotsky also believed culture was a primary way to attain knowledge and that children learn from their culture's beliefs and attitudes (Kurt, 2020).

Sociocultural theory ideas affirm that traditional schools in the United States derive from the Anglo-European model for middle and upper-class students. Individual work is encouraged to receive individual achievement (Walker Tileston, 2011). The achievement gap widens concerning ethnically diverse learners as the focus on personal achievement rests within high-stakes testing, competitive grading systems, and instructional priority on delivering knowledge first and relationship building second (Walker Tileston, 2011). The sociocultural theory encourages social interactions with teachers, peers, and communities to develop cognitive growth.

SEL and CRP further align with sociocultural theory and worldwide beliefs of collaborative learning and the value of sharing information (Walker Tileston, 2011). Worldwide culture values interdependence rather than the Anglo-European values of individual work and solo recognition (Walker Tileston, 2011). Education systems face the challenge of recognizing the importance of cultural norms to support ethnically diverse learners. Understanding that ways to obtain knowledge and new learning do not fit traditional school settings based on European views ultimately decreases the

achievement gap (Walker Tileston, 2011). Education systems must eliminate a one-size-fits-all approach to educating ethnically diverse learners by understanding the needs differ vastly from traditional public schools. Teacher preparation programs can then evolve to build teacher capacity to support the cognitive growth and social skills needed for school success.

Social-Emotional Learning

SEL offers a chance for children to comprehend pathways of verbal and nonverbal correspondence and socialization, using the abilities essential to comprehend and oversee feelings (CASEL, 2020). SEL engages students to build up and accomplish uplifting objectives, feel and show sympathy, make and support good connections, and settle on capable choices (Waterford.org, 2018). As was once accepted, a child's prosperity or disappointment is not just dictated by intellectual abilities based on recent ideas in research that influenced the change in how instructors and child advancement experts considered students' abilities to prevail in school and life (Philibert, 2016). SEL skills also contribute to student achievement. As a result, educators have discovered a growing need to help students develop socially and emotionally before seeing academic gains, specifically in low-SES schools. Health and wellness and the ability to focus and work collaboratively in the classroom contribute to academic success (Philibert, 2016). Philibert (2016) also recognized how critical it is to create a culture within a school system that addresses mindfulness with consistency and intentionality such as code-switching of consequences or rules.

SEL consists of five core competencies taught in many ways across many settings including (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, (c) social awareness, (d) relationship

skills, and (e) responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). The influence of SEL significantly benefits ethnically diverse learners from low-SES groups to recognize their full potential as contributing members of their learning community (Jagers et al., 2019). Research shows that SEL is critical for success and well-being in life (Philibert, 2016). People that possess these competencies have a sense of well-being in their personal lives, contribute to their community, have meaningful relationships, demonstrate compassion for others, and do better in academics (Minasian, 2018). SEL teaches life-long skills that children and adults need to handle themselves effectively, employ positive relationships with others, and work in an ethical manner (CASEL, 2020).

Increased evidence continues to show a great need in supporting ethnically diverse learners with social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes in traditional K-12 classrooms (Becker & Luthar, 2002). Although some states have adopted SEL as a part of the curriculum, other states expect teachers to implement appropriate social skills and meet state accountability standards in core subjects (Eklund et al., 2018). In either case, education systems can provide practical resources and professional development for SEL in traditional classrooms. Educators need research-based ways to support the behavior and emotional needs of ethnically diverse students in low-SES schools. School-based SEL intervention programs for students with challenging behaviors support the prevention and development of internal and external actions that prevent academic and relational achievement in schools (Durlak et al., 2011). Relational achievement in schools consists of social and emotional development that ethnically diverse learners lack, which causes academic growth barriers.

SEL interventions effectively reduce internal and external behaviors providing students with the necessary tools and resources to successfully engage socially and emotionally in traditional school settings (Durlak et al., 2011). As ethnically diverse learners acquire appropriate ways to interact with adults and their peers, opportunities for academic learning occur at a faster rate. Additionally, participation in SEL intervention programs increases academic achievement, improves classroom behaviors, and promotes positive attitudes towards self and peers, while alleviating stress and feelings of inadequacy (Durlak et al., 2011; Payton et al., 2008). Therefore, students gain confidence and self-efficacy through various interventions in learning and understanding SEL competencies. As research continues to prove SEL implementation's effectiveness as an intervention for academics and behavior concerns, translating the theory of research-to-practice in the school and classroom setting remains (Barnes & McCallops, 2019). Thus, educators need the knowledge and skills to overcome social, behavioral, and academic challenges with the support of SEL implementation in low-SES schools, specifically with ethnically diverse learners.

SEL programs provide the skills needed for students to interact with others, communicate, think critically, and contribute innovation to society. The four steps to building a successful SEL program include (a) change in climate and culture, (b) explicit instruction, (c) academic integration, and (d) reflection and refinement (Fink, 2016). The implementation of SEL necessitates a mind-shift from all stakeholders to ensure the program's ongoing effectiveness or continued intervention. An overall commitment and change in attitudes, beliefs, and actions lead to a positive climate and culture in a school. Educational leaders can utilize various outside resources such as social workers and

professional development to implement SEL programs. Explicit and direct instruction through SEL helps students understand stressors and responses from their bodies and brains (Fink, 2016). Teachers, counselors, and social workers utilize direct instruction of SEL implementation through role-playing to help students learn other approaches to acting and reacting to curb negative behaviors. Interweaving SEL and academic education support students' ongoing learning and developing competencies in everyday life (Fink, 2016).

To determine an SEL intervention's effectiveness, schools develop protocols to consistently assess students' social-emotional development by monitoring attendance, discipline referrals, and grades (Fink, 2016). Based on the outcomes of monitoring, schools adjust to ensure the effectiveness of the program. Developing SEL skills and competencies, a central feature of an elementary school, provide many benefits. Children who master SEL skills collaborate better with others, perform better in school, obtain better jobs, and possess better mental and physical health as adults (Jones et al., 2017). A great deal of previous research examines ways to close the achievement and opportunity gap focused on academic and curriculum needs (Carter & Welner, 2013; Tienken & Zhao, 2013). The research on SEL attests that providing necessary social skills proves foundational for academic learning in traditional classroom settings with diverse learners (CASEL, 2020).

Elements of Culture

The identification and perspective in which one understands culture are essential to implementing CRT. In doing so, the intersectionality of culture and race must be acknowledged in teaching and implementing SEL with ethnically diverse learners.

Culture is critical to how others think, live, and see the world as humans. SEL cannot occur without a culturally relevant beginning. Educators must understand students culturally before learning new social skills and behaviors (Torres, 2019). When teaching SEL, educators must recognize children's previously taught skills, some intentionally and some via inference, to be mindful of how the social world perceives them. Culture is an undeniable measure of everything humans do, and SEL is a powerful platform for sharing values and norms with students (Torres, 2019).

Cultural influences include how people live, their values, customs, behaviors, belief systems, communication styles, and generational shared and passed traditions. According to Walker Tileston (2011), "Culture is the lens through which individuals view the world" and influences how people approach learning and communication (p. 44). Understanding culture helps to provide adequate social and academic needs to ethnically diverse learners.

Elements of culture at school consist of existing culture, the culture others bring, and the created culture (Hall, 1976). The iceberg principle suggests that others cannot see or detect the specifics of a problem or situation. According to Hall (1976), the iceberg theory of culture described social norms as visible or understood on the surface, hidden rules, and under the surface. Comparing the iceberg principle and iceberg theory of culture suggests that culture is like an iceberg in that both have visible and invisible parts. Food, dress, music, language, and celebrations represent surface culture. Deep culture or unspoken rules include facial expressions, body language, rules of conduct, notions of modesty, child-raising, motivation to work, religion, and personal space. Unconscious or under the surface rules such as the concept of "self," time, and space and problem-solving

roles concerning age, sex, class, and occupation require more in-depth study and understanding of a culture.

Misreading cultural communication and unspoken rules can lead to behavior issues, lack of social engagement among peers, and incorrect feedback about learning among ethnically diverse learners. Therefore, openly understanding cultural variations or having cultural competence requires the willingness to learn from one's experiences and actions (Hanley, 1999). Thus far, several studies have confirmed the effectiveness and importance of cultural communication in supporting the needs of ethnically diverse learners in traditional classroom settings (Hall, 1976; Hanley, 1999; Torres, 2019; Walker Tileston, 2011). Understanding the elements of culture and cultural communication provides the foundation for providing CRP and CRT to educate ethnically diverse learners better in traditional classroom settings.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching

CRP recognizes and validates the cultural and personal identification of all students. Ladson-Billings' (2009) research of CRP, in combination with the study from Gay (2002), known as CRT, builds durable theoretical construction to close the achievement gap for ethnically diverse learners. The intersectionality of CRP and CRT allows the teacher to support ethnically diverse learners' needs for success in a traditional classroom. According to Ladson-Billings (2009), "Culturally relevant pedagogy empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by utilizing cultural referents to convey knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 20). However, CRP and CRT differ from multicultural education. Multicultural education provides instruction to students in the classroom from the same culture with content presented that represents

various cultural perspectives. While CRP is a strategic approach to cultures present in the classroom, connecting new information to students' background knowledge and presenting the information in ways that respond to students' preferred learning styles can be challenging for educators (Rychl & Graves, 2012). Educators must understand the differences between multicultural education and CRP to support ethnically diverse learners adequately. Attention to the like terms of cultural responsiveness, cultural compatibility, cultural appropriateness, and cultural congruency offer methods for teachers to connect home and community cultures of ethnically diverse students who have not experienced academic success in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Understanding CRP provides a lens through which teachers perceive children and their learning.

CRP is a framework and practice where educators focus on the cultural and diverse contexts in which learning occurs (Lopez, 2011). The discontinuities of cultural differences among school norms, teachers, and the community interfere with students' academic achievement, motivation to learn, and acquiring new learning (Gay, 2000). Recognizing cultural differences allows teachers to deliver content knowledge to students in meaningful ways with awareness and consideration to the cultural frame of reference through which each student merges knowledge. When teachers connect new information to the student's prior knowledge and experiences, they activate their interests and curiosity and convey instruction with a sense of purpose (Presseisen, 1995).

Ladson-Billings (2009) explored how excellent teaching practices can profoundly affect how African American students perceive the required curriculum content through culturally relevant teaching. Social relationships in the classroom were additional critical

aspects of CRP. Teachers acknowledge social interactions and the importance of building community and family connections inside and outside school (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

One may ask how teacher preparation programs can build efficacy to support new teachers as they enter the profession in low-SES schools with ethnically diverse learners? Since CRP translates differently based on fluctuating environmental dynamics of each school, a prescribed set of teacher behaviors to guide teacher preparation programs does not exist (Escudero, 2019). Therefore, teachers must provide frequent opportunities to build relationships with ethnically diverse students to accommodate their needs and produce successful student outcomes.

Gay (2000) developed a program for low-SES students' success and educators' development with low performing ethnically diverse learners called CRT. Properly training teachers in pre-service education and CRT impacts schools' success (Gay, 2002). Gay stated, "The meaning of culturally responsive teaching [CRT] related to these findings describes the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as channels for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). Gay discussed five essential elements of CRT: (a) developing a cultural diversity knowledge base, (b) designing culturally relevant curricula, (c) demonstrating caring, (d) building a learning community with ethnically diverse students, and (e) responding to ethnic diversity in delivering instruction. CRT makes learning more appealing to ethnically diverse students when teachers extend their knowledge of cultural diversity to make learning relatable and meaningful (Gay, 2002). Teachers promote critical thinking when constructing the classroom rules to make them culturally sensitive and explicit. Students then have the opportunity to compare classroom rules within and among other cultures. In turn,

students develop cross-cultural skills in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms (Saravia-Shore, 2008). Along with CRP, student motivation, acknowledgment of culture, and a sense of global community support, ethnically diverse learners are achieving success in traditional school settings (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

As standards for learning increase, teacher expectations are increasing to accommodate diverse learners' needs. Teachers with ethnically diverse learners must know how students learn and pay special attention to cultural differences, interests, and learning approaches. This awareness allows teachers to make well-informed, sound decisions to provide the knowledge and skills essential to diverse learners (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Diversity, equity, and inclusion are frequent terms used to ensure a quality education for all. Teachers must ensure that the curriculum, content, and pedagogy are relevant to the lives and experiences of ethnically diverse learners, specifically in low-SES schools where many cultural experiences outside of their own are nonexistent at home.

Another critical aspect of CRT is the development of social relationships. Teachers in Ladson-Billings' (2009) study acknowledged social interactions and the importance of building a sense of community and family inside and outside the classroom. These teachers recognized a need for instilling a sense of family in how they structured their classrooms for open discussion and dialogue and the social interactions outside of the classroom such as eating lunch with students, inviting students into their homes, and whole-group celebrations.

Ladson-Billings (2009) studied successful teachers of African American students and examined the political and practical pedagogical views in each of the teachers'

classrooms. Ladson-Billings aimed to determine how and why CRT helped students succeed academically and in what manner this kind of education reinforced and encouraged students to use prior knowledge to think critically. Ladson-Billings also asked if “African American students need separate schools” to address implementing CRT as a possible solution to inequalities, racism, and educational disparities (p. 149). Literature supports this statement for all ethnically diverse learners as the needs are the same. Ethnically diverse learners need better schools with CRT practices as an integral part of their education to support social-emotional and academic success. According to Ladson-Billings, “Teachers must have some responsibility and power through addressing the possible ideological blinders prospective teachers may have and restructuring the teacher preparation process” (p. 143).

Providing CRT and understanding the fundamentals of traditional classroom subject matter knowledge challenge the success for ethnically diverse students. Therefore, educators should design a curriculum in formal instructional plans, symbolic curriculum, and societal curriculum to present several opportunities for teaching cultural diversity (Gay, 2002). Along with the instructional practices, teacher capacity in delivering appropriate and effective instruction needs consideration. According to Gay (2002), “Teacher preparation programs must include culturally responsive pedagogy to support ethnic diversity in K-12 classrooms” (p. 114). Therefore, teacher preparation programs must shift the requirements and focus of support that will allow teachers to immediately and adequately meet the needs of ethnically diverse learners upon entering the profession.

Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

CRP has evolved over the last two decades, and greater awareness surrounding the topic has developed. Ladson-Billings (1995b) identified seven principles of CRP: (a) communication of high expectations, (b) active learning and teaching methods, (c) identifying and nurturing student strengths, (d) the inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse teaching strategies, (e) cultural sensitivity, (f) providing a supportive learning environment reflecting the cultures of all children, and (g) small-group instruction. According to Rychl and Graves (2012), “Students learn best when they are engaged in their environments and with the information to be learned. This engagement happens when students feel validated as members of the learning community and when the information presented is accessible to them” (p. 45). The principles of CRP support methods that present ethnically diverse learners with opportunities to thrive in traditional school settings.

The communication of high expectations supports ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools by establishing a growth mindset that does not allow failure or lack of effort in their classrooms. Students with academic and opportunity gaps need to understand the benefits of accountability and take on learning responsibility. Teachers must believe in the capabilities of all students as they strive for academic success (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Teachers can facilitate this belief of excellence and a growth mindset by utilizing visuals for data and including whole class data while also requiring students to set personal goals for improvement.

Active learning and teaching methods consist of various manipulatives, hands-on activities, centers, and workshop modalities of instruction. Visual representation to build background knowledge provides a foundation to learning for ethnically diverse learners.

Instructors fuse dynamic learning by utilizing powerful, encouraging techniques to assist students with the understanding that information is not static. Instructors should continually present and convey the material enthusiastically to connect all students (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Effective teaching begins with establishing positive relationships. Therefore, culturally responsive teachers must identify and nurture students' strengths such as recognizing academic and out-of-class excellence, providing leadership roles, peer nominations, and positive affirmations (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Culturally responsive teachers build relationships with students outside of the classroom to bridge school culture with community culture by attending community functions or inviting members of the students' community in the classroom environment to relate learning to their home environment. Ethnically diverse learners appreciate positive affirmations through frequent and ongoing feedback from the teacher and their peers using callouts and total physical response applauses. A culturally responsive teacher provides a warm, inviting, and nurturing environment to provide daily encouragement to students to increase academic achievement.

The inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse teaching strategies differs from how teachers communicate with ethnically diverse learners. To better understand the implementation of culturally diverse teaching strategies, teachers make the "conscious decisions to be a part of the community from which their students come" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 479). Visiting their students' neighborhoods, in-depth communication with parents, participating in community-related events, and researching cultural backgrounds to make content accessible in the classroom in developing

instructional strategies are ways teachers can immerse themselves in improving instructional practices.

Ethnically diverse learners better relate to content when opportunities exist that support references to their culture and community. Cultural sensitivity includes recognizing and using students' real-life experiences as part of the official curriculum to build background and critical thinking skills (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Teachers can interweave personal stories in the curriculum to allow students to share experiences relatable to home life to better connect to the provided curriculum or standards. As shared by Brown-Jeff and Cooper (2011), "Culturally relevant pedagogy [CRP] is a way school administrators and staff acknowledge the home community culture of the students, and through sensitivity to cultural nuances integrate these cultural experiences, values, and understandings into the teaching and learning environment" (p. 67). Teachers must develop, understand, and model cultural competence to relate to students' real-life experiences fully and support curriculum needs to ensure academic success. Promoting academic excellence while maintaining the cultural identity of ethnically diverse learners supports cultural sensitivity and acknowledgment of all students.

To provide a supportive learning environment reflecting the cultures of all children, culturally responsive teachers "encourage a community of learners rather than competitive, individual achievement and "encourage the students to learn collaboratively, teach each other, and be responsible for the academic success of others" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 480). To further reflect the cultures of all children, classroom instruction may include opportunities for cultural celebrations allowing students to bring items from home as visual representations and to facilitate whole-class discussions.

Literature provided to build background reflective of varying cultures, customs, and experiences also supports a culturally responsive classroom environment. Honor and respect for ethnically diverse students' home cultures are evident in the classroom through discussion and recognition of varying cultural contributions that influence society today (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Students from diverse backgrounds often experience communal and multi-generational home environments. Engagement with cooperative group learning structures and peer instruction aligns well with the collective cultural systems of ethnically diverse learners (Gay, 2002). Therefore, culturally relevant teachers utilize small-group instruction to support the needs of their students. Small group instruction provides more comprehensive, intensive, and explicit instruction specifically to students who need intervention to decrease the achievement gap among their peers.

Conclusion

SEL through CRP in low-SES schools serves as a vital way to close the achievement gap for ethnically diverse learners. The research implies that children of color are significantly behind their White counterparts due to a lack of literacy and cognitive skills early on as they enter school (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Due to a lack of language acquisition skills, fine motor skills, cognition, and motivation, teachers must build their instructional capacity by discovering the various ways in which ethnically diverse students learn and understand their culture. Research also states that learning is a social interaction wherein cognitive development increases by frequent actions (Walker Tileston, 2011). In examining SEL, the competencies support life-long skills needed to handle varying real-life situations (CASEL, 2020). Therefore, school administrators have

made the correlation between incorporating SEL intervention programs to support student achievement. SEL implementation improves the climate and culture, supporting explicit instruction, academic integration, and reflection among teachers and students, providing the overall success (Fink, 2016). Many SEL intervention programs exist for academic and behavior support. However, many SEL programs do very little to include CRP to support ethnically diverse learners and build teacher capacity to increase social skills needed for academic success.

In conclusion, incorporating SEL and CRP concepts speaks directly to ethnically diverse learners' needs in low-SES schools to close the achievement and opportunity gap. Jones Elementary is a school that has worked towards accomplishing SEL implementation through CRP for their ethnically diverse learners. With this study, I attempted to understand student success factors resulting from teachers' experiences and perspectives connecting CRP through implementing SEL.

Theoretical Framework

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) served as theoretical frameworks that informed the primary and secondary research questions of this phenomenological case study including data collection and data analysis. With this study, I explored how SEL in relation to CRP supports ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools to achieve academic and behavioral success in traditional classroom settings.

Social-Emotional Learning and the CASEL's Theory of Action Framework

A transformation in climate and culture, explicit instruction, academic integration, and reflection builds an effective and successful SEL program in a school (Fink, 2016).

The goal of the CASEL (2020) organization is to provide high-quality, researched-based SEL support for Kindergarten through Grade 12 educators to support students. CASEL’s theory of action best reflects these ideas and the research questions and methodology for this qualitative study (see Figure 1.1).

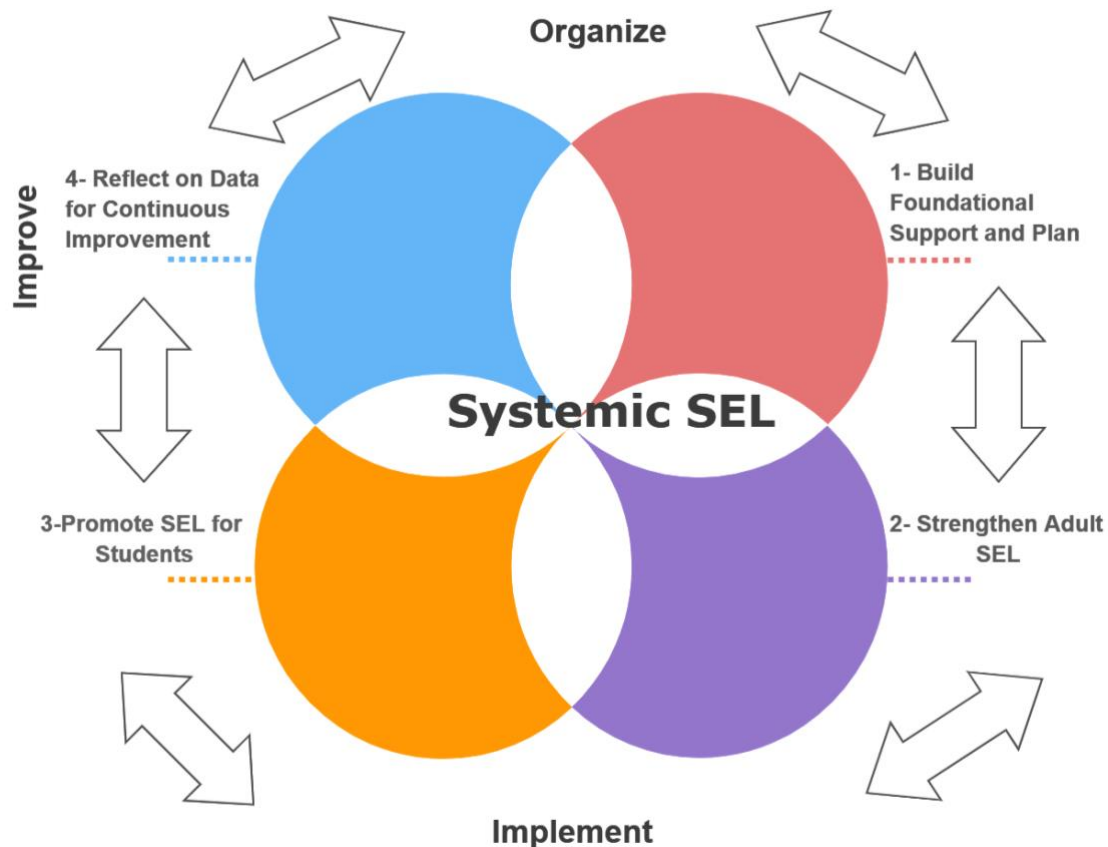


Figure 1.1. CASEL’s theory of action framework.

Note. Adapted from *State Theory of Action: Systemic Social and Emotional Learning for States*, by N. Yoder, T. Martinez-Black, C. Dermody, D. Godek, and L. Dusenbery, 2021, p. 6. (<https://casel.org/systemic-social-and-emotional-learning-for-states/>). Reprinted with permission.

This theory’s framework consists of three components with four key elements that support quality SEL implementation. Organization, implementation, and improvement

outline the ongoing continuous improvement cycle (Yoder et al., 2020). The four key elements consist of (a) building a foundation for support and planning, (b) strengthening adult SEL competencies, (c) promoting SEL implementation for students, and (d) continuous improvement by monitoring and reflecting on data (Yoder et al., 2021). CASEL's (2020) framework mirrors these elements and provides a "systemic approach emphasizing the importance of establishing equitable learning environments and coordinating practices across key settings of classrooms, schools, families, and communities to enhance all students' social, emotional, and academic learning" (Key Settings, para. 1). The following information explains CASEL's theory of action and outlines the three components and four elements of a systematic approach to implementing a viable SEL program.

Organize. The ongoing continuous improvement cycle of CASEL's theory of action framework begins with organizing to ensure the sustainability of the SEL program implementation (Yoder et al., 2021). The element of organization starts with building foundational support and planning. Support and planning for the implementation of an SEL program includes (a) identifying SEL needs and resources, articulating and sharing a plan with a vision statement, short- and long-term goals, data collection and measures, roles and responsibilities, and a timeline to continuous implementation and improvement; (b) a communication plan to all stakeholders; and (c) recruitment, hiring, support, and funding of the SEL program (Yoder et al., 2021). The purpose of the organization and planning is to ensure the foundational support is evident to begin an SEL program that will sustain over time and meet the needs of the stakeholders.

Implement. The second component of the framework involves implementation. The implementation elements include the work of adults and students by actively cultivating their own social and emotional competencies (CASEL, 2020). Professional development, training, practicing, and modeling with adults is the first step of SEL implementation. Adult SEL provides opportunities for adults to collaborate effectively with colleagues, youth, families, and communities they serve (building supportive and trusting relationships), as well as modeling their competencies with others (Yoder et al., 2021). The adults must be familiar with the competencies of SEL before implementing them with the students. To strengthen adult SEL competencies and capacity implementation includes collaborative working groups, developing and communicating a shared vision with all stakeholders, and promotion of SEL in the workplace and community (Yoder et al., 2021).

Promoting SEL for students is the second element in the implementation component. The goal of promoting SEL for students is to “support students’ social, emotional, and academic development that prepares them for success in school, work, and life” (Yoder et al., 2021, p. 17). Promoting SEL for students includes the following components for a viable SEL program: (a) develop and support SEL competencies, standards, and learning goals; (b) review and select evidence-based SEL programs and practices to ensure implementation along with data collection protocols for monitoring; (c) integration of SEL program with standards, curriculum, and other programs or initiatives; develop staff-family-student relationships on SEL-related work; and (d) include community partnership opportunities to support SEL implementation (Yoder et al., 2021). The implementation process is the most crucial element of the CASEL theory

of action framework to support the ongoing implementation with fidelity and sustainability of the program.

Improve. The third component of improvement drives high-quality implementation and helps to achieve goals. Continuous improvement includes collecting, reflecting on, and sharing actionable data (CASEL, 2020). The importance of collecting, analyzing, and reflecting on process data helps educators understand the progress on SEL implementation. Elements of continuous improvement include developing policies, tools, and resources to evaluate the program; developing a protocol to report and reflect on data to determine the next steps; and developing actions plans or revising components of the current plan (Yoder et al., 2021). The continuous improvement cycle entails combining all components and elements to work succinctly to ensure the SEL program's implementation operates effectively and includes all stakeholders.

Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

CRP centers around the theoretical context that academic knowledge and skills emerge from the lived experiences and learners' backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). New skills and learning are personally meaningful, appeal to a higher level of interest, and are efficiently and thoroughly acquired. Students attain new understanding with ease when they have prior knowledge related to their particular background or culture. According to Ladson-Billings (1995a), the three criteria for CRP include academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. The illustration in Figure 1.2 exhibits the three criteria for culturally responsive pedagogy and the connection between student achievement for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES according to the works of Ladson-Billings (1995a) and Gay (2002).

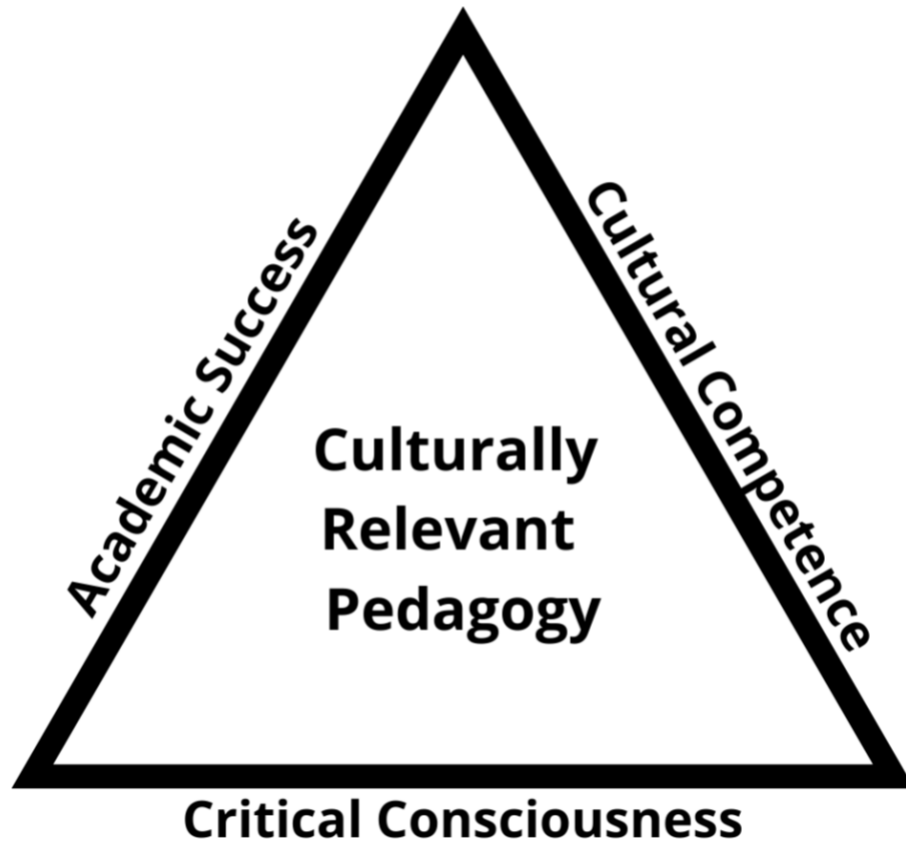


Figure 1.2. Criteria for culturally relevant pedagogy.

Academic success. Students must experience academic success in some way to support culturally responsive pedagogy in all contents (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). The teacher's role is to support the students' own belief that they can achieve academic success by understanding varying student levels and finding the appropriate avenues that place students in a position to desire academic success. Culturally relevant teachers hold students to high academic expectations, support a growth mindset, and use data to inform the next learning steps. They have the content knowledge and understand the required curriculum. Culturally relevant teachers understand data, content, and standards and make the learner's content accessible (Escudero, 2019). The evidence presented in this

section suggests that teachers are essential to providing motivation and instilling the belief in ethnically diverse learners that academic achievement is possible.

Cultural competence. Cultural competence means that instructors give students a chance to safeguard their social reality while achieving scholarly achievement. Therefore, educators should step up to the plate and find out about their students' way of life and local area to consolidate and identify with new learning. Culturally responsive teachers look at their own social personalities, inclinations, and advantages to reflect and reinforce their educational ability to identify with ethnically varied students (Escudero, 2019). Culturally competent teachers explore students' cultures as an avenue for learning. They include cultural relevance in the curriculum to maintain student interest and transcend any adverse effects on the dominant culture (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Teachers in ethnically diverse schools need a cultural reference for the students, families, and communities they serve to understand cultural competence. Bringing culture in the classroom to support background knowledge in learning also allows student expression based on their cultural experiences. The teacher utilizes their students' culture as the foundation to guide students' knowledge, acknowledging their own cultural beliefs and norms to apply new learning (Escudero, 2019). Cultural relevance included in the curriculum provides ethnically diverse learners opportunities to connect background knowledge to build connections for further learning.

Critical consciousness. An aspect of CRP supports the development of active citizenship, which critically analyzes various modes of society. CRT requires students the ability to develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that provides them the

opportunity to critique current and past cultural norms, values, traditions, behaviors, and institutions that build and maintain social inequities (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Teachers who implore critical consciousness question “the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society” and turn their critiques into “action by challenging the system” to support ethnically diverse learners better (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 140). Students who have developed critical consciousness can think and act in ways that challenge implicit and explicit biases regarding culture, inequality among people, communities, and society (Escudero, 2019). Considering the idea and implementation of critical consciousness to support ethnically diverse learners, curriculum changes and instructional practices need to occur that allow teachers and students the freedom to challenge ideas in conventional settings with society.

The Intersection of SEL and CRP

CASEL’s (2020) theory of action framework provides the guidelines and contexts for implementing a SEL program in schools. In comparison, CRP criteria explain how teachers support learners to acquire these social skills that promote academic success. The continuous cycle of CASEL’s theory of action framework allows frequent progress monitoring to determine the program’s effectiveness for educators and learners (Yoder et al., 2021). The intersectionality of SEL and CRP frameworks indicates the improvement of ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools within CRP, as shown in Figure 1.3 according to the theoretical frameworks of CASEL (2020), Ladson-Billings (1995a), and Gay (2002). Building background knowledge to teach social skills and behaviors through cultural experiences supports acquiring academic success skills.

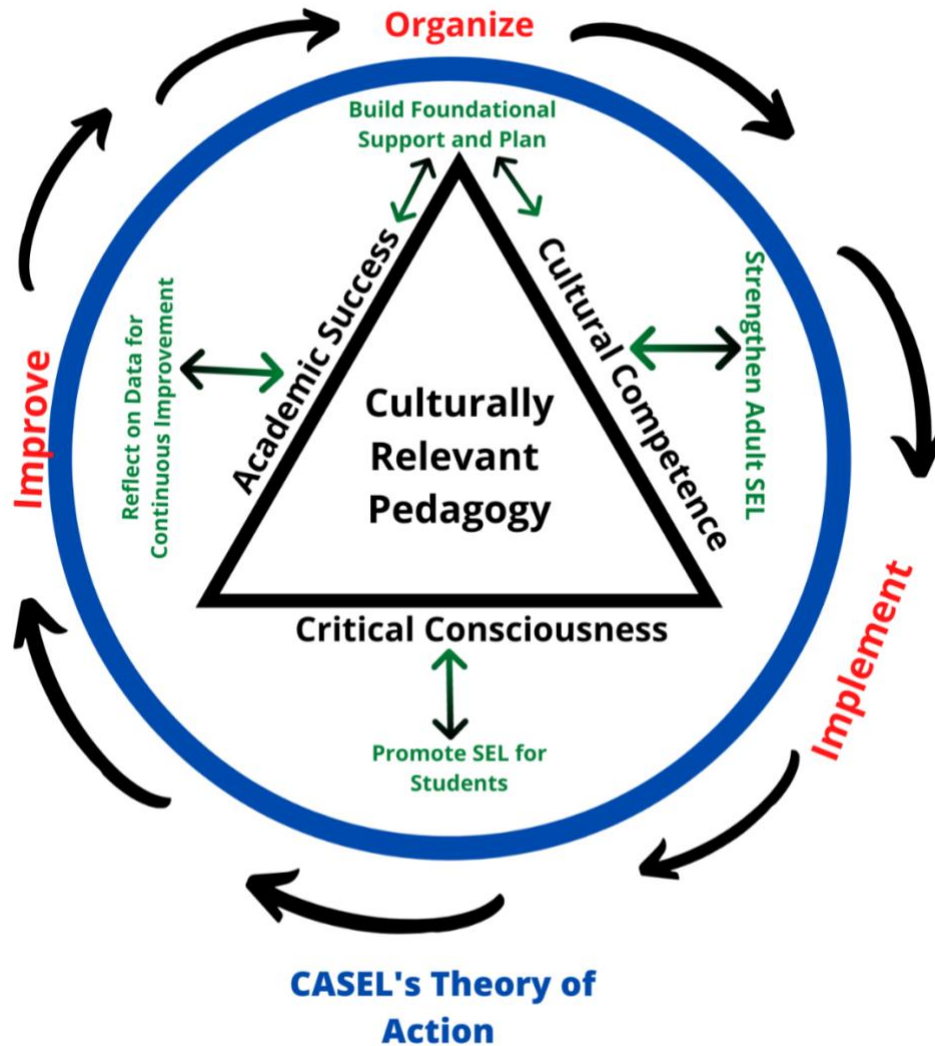


Figure 1.3. Intersection of social emotional learning and culturally relevant pedagogy frameworks.

Conclusion: Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to explore and describe the experiences of teachers relating culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) to support social emotional learning (SEL) implementation at Jones Elementary. At this stage in the research, the definition of SEL articulates as “the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible

decisions” (CASEL, 2020, Social & Emotional Learning, para. 1). In this research, I examined how relating CRP with SEL implementation made a difference in school culture and school achievement at Jones Elementary. The intersectionality of CRP through SEL provides a framework to analyze ways to close the achievement and opportunity gap in low-SES schools, specifically at Jones Elementary. The research question sought to understand teachers’ experiences and perceptions connecting CRP to support SEL implementation. The study results could inform educators who work in low-SES schools with ethnically diverse learners a specific way to close the achievement and opportunity gap by addressing the social and behavioral aspects that result in student growth. Chapter Two details the phenomenological-case study research design and methodology used to answer the research questions for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

Introduction: Research Questions

Considering many challenges faced by ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools, including the widening achievement gap, the implementation of SEL recognizes a need for an intervention that provides behavioral support in teaching social skills needed for academic success. This problem of practice focused on the need to connect CRP to implement SEL to improve academic achievement in a low-SES school. This qualitative phenomenological case study documented teachers' lived experiences who connect CRP to the SEL implementation to meet ethnically diverse learners' needs.

This study focused on understanding and describing the lived experiences of educators who used CRP to support SEL implementation in diverse student populations in one school with a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse community—Jones Elementary (Barnes & McCallops, 2019). The following primary research question guided this study: What are teachers' experiences and perceptions connecting culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) to support social emotional learning (SEL) implementation at Jones Elementary, a low socioeconomic status school? Secondary research questions further guided the research:

- SQ1. What SEL competencies do teachers feel best allow the implementation of CRP?
- SQ2. What language and behaviors of CRP are used in correlation to SEL?

SQ3. What attributes to the student successes based on the implementation of SEL by incorporating CRP?

The results of this study support researchers and educators in understanding effective ways to close the achievement gap for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools by implementing SEL through CRP.

Researcher Perspective and Positionality

As this research was a phenomenological-case study, the philosophical assumptions chosen reflected the research method selected. I approached this research from an axiological assumption based on the value brought to this study as a school principal (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The philosophical worldview aligned with a transformative approach as a participatory action researcher. The transformative practice focuses on a specific group's needs from experiencing any form of marginalization in their society, such as ethnically diverse learners (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Another characteristic of the transformative approach utilizes a program theory of beliefs about how a program works and why the problems of oppression may exist (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I wanted to understand teachers' perceptions of implementing a SEL intervention or program by utilizing specific principles of CRP. The location for data collection was Jones Elementary. As the school leader, axiological assumptions centered around personal and past experiences and knowledge in this research. Outside of my interpretation, I also attempted to gain participants' perspectives regarding social and emotional learning experiences and observations of implementation among and across gender, social class, race, and ethnicity.

As an African American woman, I understand the academic and social challenges of ethnically diverse learners. I also relate to Jones Elementary students' family

backgrounds, consisting of single-parent, multi-generational, and poverty-stricken households. School administrators labeled me an at-risk student with the same demographics and risk factors that could have prevented my academic success, including post-secondary education opportunities. I grew up with a single parent living with my grandparents and uncles for most of my childhood. We lived below the poverty income level depending on employment in the household.

With 18 years of experience in education and specifically in traditional elementary and secondary public schools in three school districts, I observed that ethnically diverse learners' needs were very similar among the three districts. Implicit and explicit biases were based on the trends of working at low-SES campuses with ethnically diverse learners with increased achievement gaps and limited opportunities for students. As an educator, my dedication to improving academic performance and overall success for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools guides my research.

As the principal of Jones Elementary, the needs assessments provided ongoing trends that further limited achievement opportunities with the given trajectory over the last 5 to 7 years. The following school year, I conducted one-on-one conferences to gain teachers' perspectives about the campus, the students, and individual growth goals to understand and evaluate the school climate and culture of continued low performance. I asked questions to determine each teacher's and grade level's emerging propensities from identifying needs and support for individual students. Teachers identified the following trends: (a) behavior concerns not associated with teacher capacity, (b) classroom structure or management, (c) resources to teach and support the behaviors of students of ethnically diverse backgrounds and low-SES homes, and (d) teacher training needed to support

CRT to building background knowledge as a way to close achievement gaps. The work from this research is one way to provide an opportunity for support to change the trajectory to many of the trends in low-SES schools.

Theoretical Framework Application

As discussed in the previous chapter, this study's theoretical framework was CASEL's theory of action framework for SEL and CRP (Yoder et al., 2021). The chosen theoretical framework intersected with elements and characteristics present in SEL and CRP, respectively, as the two frameworks provide instructional and pedagogical implications. SEL and CRP were appropriate for the study because they allowed the concrete collection of data and analysis. In this study, I used an a priori theoretical framework to recognize the importance of teachers' lived experiences that connect CRP to implement SEL. I collected and analyzed data by combining two theories: CASEL's theory of action framework for SEL (CASEL, 2020) and CRP (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

Implementing SEL through CRP informed and shaped the primary and secondary questions to understand teachers' experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon of ethnically diverse learners at Jones Elementary, a low-SES school. As this study was a phenomenological case study, the primary and secondary research questions allowed me to describe the essence of teachers' experiences bound by a 3-year time frame of implementation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The data collection process supported the research questions with a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and observations with teachers at Jones Elementary. The interview questions applied both SEL and CRP frameworks to understand the essence of

teachers' lived experiences while implementing SEL through relating CRP. The interview questions (see Appendixes A, B, and C), process, and observations were developed as a protocol for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools to close the achievement gap.

Data analysis determined how the research questions evolved into themes and categories based on the application of both SEL and CRP frameworks. Successively, these themes and categories gathered qualitative data that answered the qualitative research study questions and compared them with the lived experiences and literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Elements of SEL and CRP theoretical frameworks indicated how the intersectionality contributes to teacher perceptions and experiences of relating CRP to implement SEL at Jones Elementary.

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative phenomenological case study was the research method that best addressed this central phenomenon. This method allowed the development of a detailed description and analysis of a single case, Jones Elementary, by comparing the dynamics of teacher participants. The research focused on a low-SES school with ethnically diverse learners (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenology research focus seeks to “understand the essence of the experience from several individuals who shared the same experience with a description of the essence of a lived phenomenon” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 163). Specifically, a phenomenological case study is used to explore “the common meaning of experiences of a phenomenon (or topic or concept) for several individuals” (p. 125). I focused on teachers who implemented SEL with a connection to CRP. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a case study research focus “develops an in-

depth description and analysis of a case or multiple case studying an event, program, or an activity among a group” specified or bounded with certain parameters (p. 164). The use of a single case study allowed me to focus intensely on the complexities and interactions of a particular context—teachers at a low-SES school—describing the phenomenon of connecting CRP through SEL implementation. This qualitative approach is interpretive and supports the belief that reality is experienced individually (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I described teachers’ perceptions at Jones Elementary who have implemented an SEL program for 1–3 or more school years. I collected multiple data sources to gather information, including a questionnaire, classroom observations, teacher interviews, classroom documentation, and artifacts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological case study design allowed the opportunity to explain and analyze all intersecting factors of connecting CRP to SEL implementation concerning student achievement bounded among teachers at Jones Elementary. As this study addressed SEL implementation through CRP, a qualitative research design allowed the collection of data assessing teachers’ lived experiences implementing SEL. A phenomenological case study was appropriate as I described teachers’ lived experiences through an in-depth analysis of SEL and CRP bounded by a specific setting and timeframe. Analyzing teachers’ perceptions of SEL through CRP in a low-SES school also allowed me to suggest definitive ways to close achievement gaps in low-performing schools with the same dynamics as Jones Elementary in this phenomenological case study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the type of qualitative case study chosen reflects the analysis of one individual, several individuals, a group, and an entire program or an activity. The

qualitative research was a single case study of relating CRP to SEL implementation as data collection and analysis from five teachers' perspectives at Jones Elementary. The phenomenological case study research design allowed participants to share their SEL implementation experiences and explain how incorporating CRP shaped the experience.

Site Selection and Participant Sampling

The site for this phenomenological case study was Jones Elementary. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated, "the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help understand the problem and the research question" (p. 185). Jones Elementary is a Pre-kindergarten through Grade 5 campus within Tyler ISD that qualifies as a Title I campus. Students received free breakfast and lunch at Jones Elementary due to the high percentage of low-income families at an average of 88% to 93% over the last 3 years. Title I funding supports the purposes of instruction in the areas including but not limited to outside consultation, parent education, intervention, and classroom resources.

Site of Data Collection

Jones Elementary is an ethnically diverse campus with approximately 380 students enrolled during the research and data collection timeframe. The ethnicity makeup included the following subpopulations: (a) 52% African American, (b) 48% Hispanic, (c) 9% White, and (d) 1% other. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students was 88%, and the at-risk population was 58%. Special programs at Jones Elementary included (a) special education at 17%, 504 education at 5%, bilingual education at 10%, ELL services at 1%, dyslexia at 3%, and the gifted and talented program at 4%. The male population of students was 52%, and the female

population was 48%. Jones Elementary is a campus that has been “improvement required” for several years before becoming a “met standard” campus over the last three years. The state of Texas academic accountability rating identifies campuses and districts in the categories of “improvement required” or “met standard” to determine student achievement in closing the achievement gap (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Some significant achievement gaps addressed several ways to ensure successful student outcomes by implementing a relatable program to support behavior and social development to see student academic achievement.

I looked explicitly at five core teachers at Jones Elementary. In a phenomenology study, all individuals have “experienced the phenomenon explored and can articulate their lived experiences” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 218). As with a case study, the researcher selects individuals, programs, or events at a specific site to study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As subunits in a phenomenological single case study at Jones Elementary, the participants’ individual stories provide insight into the lived experiences to understand the essence of the phenomenon of relating CRP to implement SEL. Therefore, an in-case analysis disseminated an in-depth understanding and description of the research throughout various phases of the data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All teachers at Jones Elementary received SEL training, including understanding and applying the competencies and the CASEL 5 (Borowski, 2019) action theory as a continuous framework to implement and evaluate SEL and student achievement. Teachers also received professional development on CRP, and lesson plans reflect the ongoing use of various strategies throughout all contents.

Participants and Sampling

I selected five teachers through purposeful sampling according to professional, personal, and campus experience to show varying perspectives on SEL and CRP related to the implementation at Jones Elementary. The criteria for selecting participants in a qualitative case study depend on what the researcher wants to learn, the researcher's worldview, research design and methods, and the study's connection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Maximal variation sampling and criterion sampling were the most appropriate strategies for this qualitative research design. Participants were initially purposefully chosen to reflect varying views to provide an excellent qualitative study with a complex vision of the phenomenon of SEL and CRP (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Maximal variation sampling is a typical sampling strategy appropriate for a phenomenology study. I sought to include participants who held different perspectives, such as race, job assignment, and personal and professional experience on the central phenomenon of SEL through CRP (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). As this qualitative research was also a case study, criterion sampling was appropriate. Each participant's criteria consisted of the site selection of Jones Elementary and training and implementation of SEL and CRP (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I chose five teachers for the data collection of this qualitative study based on their teaching assignments, experience, and tenure at Jones Elementary.

Jones Elementary employs ethnically diverse teachers and staff in an attempt to reflect the student population. Of the five teachers selected for this study, two teachers identified as African American, one teacher identified as Hispanic, one teacher identified as White, and one teacher identified as two or more races. Subpopulations among staff

addressed the primary research question to explain how CRP impacts teachers' perceptions and relationships with ethnically diverse learners.

I purposefully selected five teachers to participate in the study. In qualitative research, the sample size relates to the research question and design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Teacher assignments ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade allowed me to observe campus-wide classroom structures, environments, and artifacts to analyze the language and behaviors of connecting CRP to SEL implementation at Jones Elementary. As this research study was a phenomenological case study, the sample size was small to provide in-depth information regarding the central phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Years of teaching experience ranged from 1 year to 20 years. Years employed at Jones Elementary extended from 1 year to 7 years as classroom teachers. The teachers' personal and professional experiences allowed me to further understand the variances of perceptions and observations, understanding the essence of the phenomenon through the description of SEL and CRP implementation at Jones Elementary. For this study, I selected participant representatives from each of the following categories based on tenure at Jones Elementary to gain a broad perspective of the essence of the experience of the phenomenon of relating CRP to SEL implementation:

1. Two teachers hired before the current principal.
2. One teacher hired the same year as the current principal.
3. One teacher hired the year of SEL implementation through CRP.
4. One teacher hired at the beginning of research and data collection.

As the principal, I established the existing relationship with the participants and held meetings to discuss the research study and understand how their experiences would

further shape the phenomenon. As teachers were already familiar with the research as a campus initiative, I sent an email providing a consent form and an official letter explaining the research in detail following the meeting. The results of this research study were specific to Jones Elementary. Therefore, this study did not qualify as human subjects' research and did not require prior approval from an institutional review board.

Data Collection Procedures

I collected multiple data sources to develop an in-depth understanding of the essence of the lived experiences, including questionnaires, a semi-structured focus group interview, observations with artifact collection, and one-on-one follow-up interviews in this phenomenological-case study. In a good qualitative study, the researcher “employs rigorous data collection procedures” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 87). I collected various data forms to summarize the data in detail and spent an appropriate amount of time in the field to provide an in-depth understanding of the problem and research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data collection process consisted of four phases: (a) pre-interview questionnaires, (b) semi-structured face-to-face focus group interviews, (c) observations with artifacts, and (d) one-on-one follow-up interviews. Figure 2.1 highlights each phase and time frame of the data collection process. I also followed the additional steps of collecting data, recording information, exploring field issues, and storing data protocols throughout the data collection process as well.

This phenomenological case study examined the teachers' lived experiences of relating CRP through SEL implementation, confirming how the CASEL 5 (Borowski, 2019) action theory concepts combined with CRP components provided meaning to the experiences of teachers participating in the phenomenon at Jones Elementary.

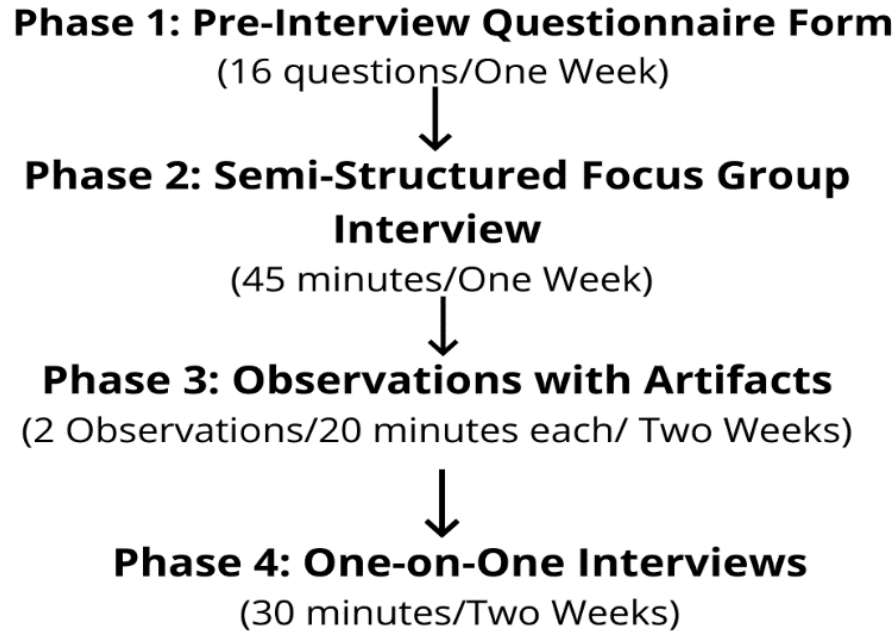


Figure 2.1. Phases of the data collection process and timeline.

I began the data collection process by administering a questionnaire to collect preliminary data for this qualitative study as the purpose was to collect information using open and closed-ended questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additional data sources used to conduct this phenomenological case study consisted of in-depth and multiple interviews from participants using open-ended questions, questionnaires, audiovisual materials, and classroom observations with artifacts such as a collection of morning greetings, calming stations, student data binders, student agendas, and goal setting. Table 2.1 illustrates the data collection methods for the research questions. I also collected multiple data sources, including field notes and documents such as lesson plans and artifacts from the research study participants.

Table 2.1

Summary of the Data Collection Methods for Research Questions

Research Question	Data Collection
Primary Question	
What are teachers' experiences and perceptions connecting culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) to support social emotional learning (SEL) implementation at Jones Elementary, a low socioeconomic status school?	Interviews Questionnaire Observations Artifacts
Secondary Questions	
1. What SEL competencies do teachers feel best allow the implementation of CRP?	Interviews Questionnaire
2. What language and behaviors of CRP are used in correlation to SEL?	Interviews Questionnaire Observations Artifacts
3. What attributes to the student successes based on the implementation of SEL by incorporating CRP?	Interviews Questionnaire

Phase 1: Pre-Interview Questionnaire Form

Before the interviewing phase, participants completed a brief questionnaire form about professional background experience and any initial knowledge or application of SEL and CRP before and while working at Jones Elementary. The questionnaire verified the validity of the chosen sampling strategies of maximal variation and criterion. I also used the questionnaire to prepare and develop the initial set of open-ended interview questions to guide focus group conversations and follow-up one-on-one interviews in Phases 2 and 4 of the research.

Participants answered 20 open-ended questions about their professional and personal experiences that contributed to their understanding of SEL and CRP, experiences of CRP and SEL implementation in their instructional practices, and professional development and training opportunities. I chose open-ended questions to

gauge the participants' perceptions of their lived experiences with CRP and SEL at Jones Elementary. I probed for more detailed answers in the semi-structured focus group interview based on the responses provided from the open-ended questionnaire in Phase 1.

Phase 2: Semi-Structured Focus Group Interviews

The first phase of the interviewing process consisted of one semi-structured face-to-face focus group interview. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), "interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinion from the participants" (p. 187). The recorded 45-minute interview consisted of five to seven open-ended questions to answer the central research question and secondary questions. Specifically, I moved from personal experiences in the classroom to campus-wide experiences to further understand the essence of connecting CRP to SEL implementation at Jones Elementary. I facilitated sufficient spacing between the questions to take notes of the participants' responses. I utilized the Zoom (2021) online video conferencing platform and Otter.ai (2021) to support the transcription of the participants' responses. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), in qualitative research interviews allow one to "understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience" (p. 230). Main, follow-up, and probing questions elicited depth and detail to support the qualitative research design. Each teacher was interviewed as part of a focus group to determine the lived experiences and perspectives of implementing SEL through CRP. The advantage of utilizing focus groups allowed the participants to collectively share information to discuss similar experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A feature of the Zoom (2021) online platform and the Otter.ai (2021) web-based platform is that both allow meetings to automatically record and transcribe (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I also used an interview write-up based on research questions and sound recordings to organize the data collected. To confirm the accuracy of these transcriptions, I reviewed the original recording and handwritten notes compared to the Otter.ai (2021) transcripts. The use of these recordings and transcriptions was a way to ensure validity and reliability. Other protocols for interviews included consent from all participants for semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with the proper identification of interviewers.

As qualitative interviews should follow a conversation compared to a structured interview, a semi-structured focus group interview allowed the participants to collectively reflect and speak openly and candidly about their experiences related to Jones Elementary (Yin, 2018). I probed deeper into “how and why” questions to analyze data and draw conclusions while clarifying any misconceptions in the discussion.

Phase 3: Observations with Artifacts

The role of a good qualitative observer changes during the observation process from a non-participant to a participant or vice versa, as observing is the act of noting the phenomenon in the field setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of qualitative research observations is that it permits the researcher to take notes in the field regarding the participants’ behaviors and activities (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I observed participants in their classroom environments to answer the secondary research question to determine CRP’s language and behaviors related to SEL. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), “Observation protocols consisted of determining an appropriate method for recording notes in the field using both descriptive and reflective notes in an organized

way” (p. 170). Figure 2.2 provides the SEL/CRP observation protocol used for classroom observations for each participant to understand SEL and CRP language and behaviors that intersect during daily instruction. I observed specific principles of CRP that aligned with SEL competencies and noted from language or behaviors used in the classroom and similar and specific artifacts that all participants used to facilitate learning.

SEL/CRP Observation Protocol

RQ: What language and behaviors of CRP are used in correlation to SEL?

Teacher:	CRP Principle	SEL Component	Notes
Language			
Behaviors			
Artifact 1			
Artifact 2			
Artifact 3			
Observational Notes:			

Figure 2.2. SEL/CRP observation protocol.

The observation protocol also consisted of two rounds of 20-minute interviews in each of the five participants’ classrooms. In the first round of observation, I took on a nonparticipant role to watch and take field notes about the classroom environment, student greeting, and lesson implementation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The SEL/CRP Observation Protocol was used to understand the language and behaviors that supported CRP principles as discussed in the literature review and recognition of specific SEL competencies.

To gain further insight into data collection, I took a participant as an observer role in the second round. I gathered artifacts to answer the subsequent research questions concerning language and behaviors (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In both observational series, I used an observation protocol to determine the correlation and congruency of SEL and CRP in each classroom. I also used Otter.ai (2021) as an audio tool to record notes later rather than in the field during this observation phase.

Phase 4: Follow-Up One-On-One Interviews

Single interviews were most customary, specifically when access to participants was difficult (Moustakas, 1994). I conducted follow-up one-on-one interviews for this qualitative study to answer the central research question and clarify any questions based on observations and the review of participant documents submitted. Follow-up one-on-one interviews allowed me to elicit further descriptions and explore more in-depth interview questions to participants individually about their systematic approach to SEL implementation experiences through CRP. The follow-up one-on-one interviews increased understanding of the content and the meaning of the participants' experiences, allowed participants to expand on any additional content from focus group interviews individually, and clarify any misconceptions from the first interview (Knox & Burkard, 2009). The one-on-one follow-up interviews further validated the credibility of the qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants reviewed the research data collected and gave feedback on how the description of the findings corresponded to this phenomenological case study's lived experiences. Following data collection protocols was essential to the data analysis spiral of managing and organizing various data forms in the qualitative research study in the following section.

Data Analysis Procedures

As data collection and data analysis occurred simultaneously, this qualitative research aimed to make meaning from the various data collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Because the data collection covered a broad spectrum of qualitative research information, the data analysis procedures had a more significant impact when I could winnow the data, condensing the data into three to five essential themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data analysis allowed me to determine and apply meanings to codes resulting from the participants' experiences and perspectives. This phenomenological case study's data analysis process centered on Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral, as represented in Figure 2.3.

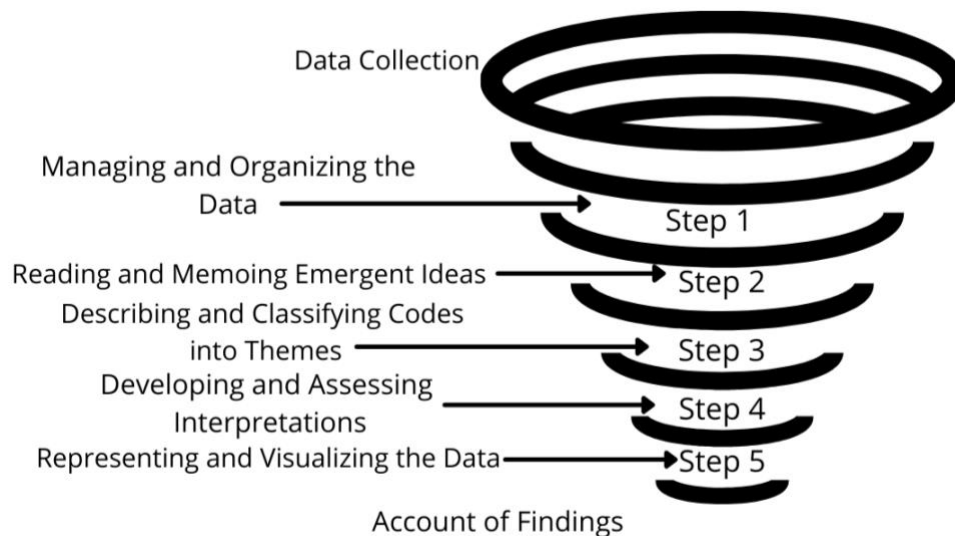


Figure 2.3. The data analysis spiral.

Note. Adapted from *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, by J. W. Creswell and C. N. Poth, 2018, p. 255. Copyright by Sage. Reprinted with permission.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), “The processes of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process as they are interrelated and often go simultaneously in a research project” (p. 254). This data spiral is an ongoing process for qualitative research as the researcher encounters various aspects of analysis going through the loop (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The process began with the management and organization of the data. The data consisted of the questionnaires, transcripts from the semi-structured focus group and one-on-one interviews, and the SEL/CRP observational protocol notes. I organized the data into digital files and created a file naming system for interview transcripts, documents, artifacts, observations, and recordings. I used a password-protected flash drive, Otter.ai (2021), and Zoom (2021) software to store all the information for the sole use of the phenomenological case study.

The next step in the spiral data analysis consisted of reading interview transcripts numerous times and writing notes in the margins of the field notes or transcripts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The notes consisted of memoing, short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occurred, prioritizing the data, and developing a system to retrieve the data as codes and themes quickly emerged. I reduced the data into themes through the process of coding and condensing the codes. As the theories presented for this phenomenological case study focus on the CASEL 5 (Borowski, 2019) action theory and components of CRP, themes expected included (a) a sense of community, (b) cultural relatability for ethnically diverse learners, (c) meeting the needs of ethnically diverse learners, (d) positive social interactions, (e) ways to close the achievement gap, (f) improved behavior, and (g) increased teacher capacity. In this part of the data analysis process, I analyzed the

themes into a general description of SEL's individual case experience as the research study was a phenomenological case study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The following loop in the spiral consisted of describing, classifying, and interpreting the data through coding and is the core of qualitative data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I provided detailed descriptions of teachers' lived experiences by implementing SEL with CRT in this study. In this phenomenological-case study, I created and organized data files consisting of interviews, participant and direct observations, and documents with thick descriptions to make notes and develop codes. I used open coding to categorize the data collection and axial and selective coding to narrow the focus to support the chosen research method for this phenomenological case study. To classify these initial codes into possible themes, I described teachers' personal experiences through epoché or bracketing to implore the essence of the phenomenon of connecting CRP to implement SEL using a systematic approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Bracketing allowed me to set aside personal experiences and take a fresh perspective of the connection of CRP through SEL by examining the experiences of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Following Moustakas' (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenology allowed further focus on the descriptions of the participants' experiences rather than my interpretations to avoid biases or assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data analysis in this loop allowed me to collapse these categories and develop emerging themes regarding SEL implementation experiences through CRP.

According to Moustakas (1994), to provide a clear and articulate process for organizing a report, the steps in the analysis include "identifying significant statements, crediting meaning units, clustering themes, advancing textural and structural descriptions,

and ending with a composite description of textural and structural descriptions of the essence of the experience” (p. 316). This hand-coding process helped me to engage in the transcripts by listening to each participant’s voice to understand their experiences from what they stated and how they provided each response. Yin (2018) stated “one general strategy of analyzing case study data is to follow the theoretical propositions that lead to the case study” (p. 168). I developed and assessed the data’s interpretations in several categories through the process of categorical aggregation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I found commonalities in various demographics and gender analyses and used categorical aggregation to establish possible themes to interpret the data collected in written form (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through the categorical aggregation, relevant trends emerged from the data, allowing themes related to the teachers’ experiences of connecting CRP to implement SEL.

The data analysis spiral’s final loop allows the representation of the data in a visual image (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I created a table to display how the research questions correlated to the theoretical framework using emerging themes from the data analysis for this qualitative study. I represented the data in figures, tables, or a discussion in the last step of the data analysis process in a qualitative narrative (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I provided a specific approach to analyzing data for a phenomenological case study in the following sections. The analysis described was used to understand the essence of teachers’ lived experiences that related CRP to implement SEL at Jones Elementary.

Validation Strategies: Trustworthiness, Authenticity, and Credibility

The purpose of validation strategies in qualitative research includes specific strategies to validate research accuracy. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), validation in qualitative research is “an attempt to assess the ‘accuracy’ of the findings, as best described by the researcher, the participants, and the readers” (p. 338). I incorporated various evaluation standards for the phenomenon and case study criteria to ensure validity through trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), checking for validity means assessing if the information gathered from the qualitative data collection is accurate by examining the extent to which the information is deemed credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. I confirmed the study clearly and concisely articulated a phenomenon and identified the case study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) organized validation strategies into three groups in qualitative research—researcher’s lens, participant’s lens, and reader’s or reviewer’s lens—recommending that researchers engage in at least two of the strategies in a qualitative study. For qualitative research, validation comes from the researcher, participants, and reviewers to determine the validity of the data collection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Table 2.2 represents the strategies suggested for qualitative research. Research strategies integrated into this phenomenological case study included: (a) clarifying reflexivity, (b) triangulation, (c) member checking, and (d) generating rich thick descriptions.

I embedded opportunities to write and discuss connections developed from past experiences and perspectives throughout the research from my lens as the researcher. As I served in the principal’s role at the site, clarifying reflexivity allowed me to address biases, prejudices, and orientations that possibly shaped the study’s interpretation and qualitative approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Embedding reflexivity throughout the

research allowed ethical considerations. Being reflexive acknowledges and monitors biases, assumptions, emotional responses, and motivations and is essential to the integrity of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During qualitative research data collection and analysis stages, I used a reflexive journal to remain aware of my perspectives and positionality. I used reflexivity based on personal experiences as a school leader at Jones Elementary. My positionality in connecting CRP to SEL implementation supported the qualitative study's purpose.

Table 2.2

Summary of Validation Strategies

Lens of Validation Strategy	Validation Strategy
Researcher's Lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Triangulation of Multiple Data Sources - Discovering of Negative Case Analysis or Disconfirming Evidence - Clarifying Researcher Reflexivity
Participant's Lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member Checking - Prolonged Engagement in the Field - Collaborating with Participants
Reader's or Reviewer's Lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External Audits Use - Generating Rich, Thick Description - Peer Review or Debriefing the Research Data and Process

Note. Table contents from *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, by J. W. Creswell and J. D. Creswell, 2018, p. 341. Copyright by Sage.

The triangulation of data sources added to the validity of the study by establishing credibility. I collected data through questionnaires, interviews, and observations with artifacts as multiple forms of data for this qualitative study. Using multiple data sources

to provide meaning to the participants' experiences helped triangulate the data by establishing several themes based on their perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Member checking measured the trustworthiness and was critical for establishing credibility with participants. I returned the data collection and analysis to participants to verify the qualitative study's accuracy and credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants provided feedback to ensure accurate representation of the essence of their experiences during the study to avoid any misinterpretation of the data.

As this study's goal warranted support from participants and continued use of the theoretical underpinnings, I collaborated with participants to determine appropriate data collection protocols and included their data analysis interpretation to involve the participants through the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants proposed artifacts and documents to note as I completed observations in Phase 3 of the research.

Finally, to further validate the data, I used rich, thick descriptions employing a purposeful sample of participants that offered many perspectives of the SEL and CRP phenomenon at Jones Elementary and conveyed the research findings. Using rich, thick descriptions allows the reader to understand the setting and discussions of the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I addressed reliability in this qualitative research by establishing a detailed case study protocol. I also arranged a database system using detailed field notes, checked the accuracy of transcriptions in digital form, and examined artifact descriptions to ensure data collection matched the visual representation to record and analyze data to establish a coding protocol (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To conclude this section, the validation strategies identified included perspectives from the

researcher, participants, and reviewers to ensure the trustworthiness and authenticity of the data collection in this phenomenological case study.

Ethical Considerations

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested specific approaches for addressing ethical concerns by fielding the issues related to the different stages of qualitative research to provide safeguards for participants through verbal and written communication. In qualitative research, ethical considerations occur “prior to conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during data collection, in conducting data analysis, in reporting the data, and in publishing a study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 95). I provided written communication and discussed the purpose and objective of the study, consent forms and participants’ rights, data collection phases, and data procedures to all participants.

I submitted the research proposal to the Baylor University Institutional Review Board prior to conducting the study. The Board determined that the study did not qualify as human subjects research (see Appendix D) because the study results were not generalizable to a broader population due to the sole focus on a specific program at a particular school (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Although this research did not fall within regulations, I conducted the study ethically, as discussed in the Belmont Report. Prior to submitting the research proposal to the Baylor Institutional Review Board, permission was granted from Tyler ISD to conduct the study in their district (see Appendixes E and F).

Communication with the site and participants occurred at the beginning of the study to disclose the study’s purpose and throughout the data collection process (Creswell

& Poth, 2018). I had immediate access to the site to collect data for this phenomenological case study as the building principal. However, I drafted a letter to supervisors and the school district, as they were the ultimate gatekeepers of all campuses in the organization. The letter included information about the chosen site, actions during the research study, the time needed, an explanation of how I would report the results, and reciprocity resulting from volunteering as a participant in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; see Appendix G).

I drafted consent forms (see Appendix H) to gain permission needed from teacher participants with an option to voluntarily withdraw at any time during the research process. The consent form provided the participant with the study's central purpose to understand teachers' lived experiences as they implemented SEL through CRP and specific data collection procedures. Details of the consent forms included protecting confidentiality, any known risks associated with the study participants, and signatures from the participant and the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Another ethical consideration when analyzing and reporting data entailed respecting the participants' privacy, clear communication, avoiding plagiarism, and avoiding one-sided reporting of data in this qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I included the participants through member checking to ensure the data's validity and reliability and reported any contrary findings to ensure trustworthiness. All participants also had access to the data that they specifically provided during the research process. The use of pseudonyms with the disassociation of responses and composite file development during the data collection process assured anonymity and respect for participants' privacy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I followed the American Psychological

Association's (2020) *Publication Manual: The Official Guide to APA Style* guidelines to eliminate plagiarism in citing others' works and reporting the study participants' data.

Ethical considerations for the study's publication included "sharing information from the research with participants and stakeholders," ensuring that the language used was practical for a broad audience and completed a proof of compliance and lack of interest consent letter (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 99). I presented the phenomenological case study findings in a campus meeting and provided copies of the report to all participants, faculty at Jones Elementary, and district leaders.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations in research are design characteristics that impact or influence the data's interpretation and affect reliability and validity. The data in this qualitative study consisted of several limitations outside of my control. A primary limitation was the research method used as a qualitative study. A phenomenological researcher's charge is to "see" the logic or meaning of an experience rather than to discover causal connections or patterns of correlation, which requires an extensive study of a small sample, allowing the participants to speak for themselves and to reveal the logic of their experience as lived (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The chosen qualitative research method may suggest partiality, bias, and generalizability issues. I aimed to understand the essence of teachers' lived experiences implementing a phenomenon. Researcher bias requires transparency and honesty. I am the principal of the chosen research site.

Because of the subjectivity, another limitation of this study was the participants' perspectives in the semi-structured interviews and the lack of statistical data to support the collected data's validity and reliability. Teaching assignments, professional

development, and experience bound the participants in this qualitative study. Therefore, their attitudes and beliefs may not reflect attitudes that will generalize to other teachers on the campus or within the district. As this was a phenomenological case study, this study was bound by time without consideration of changes that may occur in teacher participation and the structure of SEL and CRP implementation over time. Additionally, as this was a case study, a final limitation was the small sample size. Similar research should use a larger sample size of low-SES schools to validate SEL implementation through CRP findings further.

Delimitations in research are boundaries purposefully not controlled or considered for the intended purpose of the study. Although the small sample size was a limitation, a small sample was also a primary delimitation for this research. As a phenomenological case study, the participants' purposeful sampling for data collection allowed an in-depth analysis of the data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I sought to understand teachers' perspectives regarding connecting the use of CRP to the implementation of SEL at Jones Elementary. This research targeted a low-SES school with ethnically diverse learners that implemented a SEL program utilizing CRP to understand five teachers' perceptions of the program. Furthermore, the study findings revealed various student achievement outcomes after implementing specified social skills over a sustained amount of time.

Conclusion

The methodology section bounded the study's rationalization and purpose and provided a summary of the research methodology. The qualitative research design, a phenomenological case study, enabled me to use a questionnaire, a semi-structured focus

group interview, observations, and one-on-one follow-up interviews to determine appropriate interview questions exploring teachers' reality implementing SEL through CRP for ethnically diverse learners in a low-SES school. Explaining the data collection, rationale, and process ensured the validity and congruency of the research questions. This chapter began by restating the purpose of the research. The primary goal was to find ways to close the achievement gap for ethnically diverse learners in low SES. Another goal was to understand how teachers perceive implementing SEL through connecting CRP. Interweaving CASEL's theoretical frameworks compelling ethnically diverse learners to close the achievement and opportunity gap and CRP, specifying how educators must reach these learners, bounds my research. The following chapter details the results and implications from the data collection and analysis of this research.

CHAPTER THREE

Results and Implications

Introduction

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) in low-SES schools serves as a vital way to close the achievement and opportunity gap for ethnically diverse learners. This phenomenological case study explored the theoretical frameworks of SEL and CRP and addressed the research inquiry of teacher perceptions of connecting CRP in implementing SEL using a systematic approach. The overarching purpose of this study was to explore and describe the lived experiences of teachers using CRP to support SEL implementation at Jones Elementary. I sought to answer the primary research question: What are teachers' experiences and perceptions connecting culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) to support social emotional learning (SEL) implementation at Jones Elementary, a low socioeconomic status school?

A questionnaire, a semi-structured focus group interview, observations, and one-on-one follow-up interviews provided data to review. I analyzed and answered the research questions through theoretical frameworks guided by CASEL's (2020) theory of action framework for SEL and Ladson-Billings' (1995a) work on CRP. I attempted to reveal the experiences from teachers at Jones Elementary of relating CRP to implement SEL to support student achievement.

Throughout this chapter, I outlined this qualitative study's central findings and presented an overview of the participants. Through the presentation of the single case

study, I provide insights into five teachers' lived experiences at Jones Elementary. The common phenomenon experienced by the participants related to using CRP to implement SEL in their classroom and campus-wide initiatives. The in-case analysis focused on applying the theoretical framework guided by CASEL's (2020) theory of action framework for SEL and Ladson-Billings' (1995a) work on CRP to the following secondary research questions:

- SQ1. What SEL competencies do teachers feel best allow the implementation of CRP?
- SQ2. What language and behaviors of CRP are used in correlation to SEL?
- SQ3. What attributes to the student successes based on the implementation of SEL by incorporating CRP?

After conducting an overview of each case, I identified the emergent themes across the cases that answer the primary and secondary research questions guiding this study. Presenting the study findings by the primary and secondary research questions supports understanding the phenomenon of teachers' experiences at Jones Elementary implementing SEL while connecting CRP to increase student achievement.

Finally, I discussed the practical implications for low-SES schools with ethnically diverse learners. I offered specific recommendations for closing the achievement and opportunity gap by connecting CRP to SEL implementation to teachers and school leaders at campuses within and outside of the district, district leaders, and community organizations supporting K-12 public schools. Adopting these recommendations by school stakeholders will contribute to implementing ways to support the social and emotional development of ethnically diverse learners based on their cultural needs to support student achievement.

Participants

A purposeful sample of Jones Elementary teachers, ranging from teaching assignments of Kindergarten to Grade 5, who implemented SEL using CRP served as participants for this study. The primary data source for this study consisted of a questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interviews, observations, and follow-up one-on-one interviews. Additional data provided during this study consisted of artifacts and documents noted and supplied during the observation phase of the research. I selected the teachers for this study based on race, job assignment, professional experience, and tenure on campus to provide a broad perspective of teachers' lived experiences implementing SEL through CRP at Jones Elementary. Participants have also seen the progression of the SEL implementation since its inception. As subunits in a phenomenological single case study of SEL implementation, the participants' individual stories provide insight into the lived experiences to understand the essence of the phenomenon of relating CRP to implement SEL at Jones Elementary using a systematic approach. The following section offers a description of each participant and their unique story of the phenomenon and the analysis of research questions for this study.

Case Descriptions and Thematic Analysis

To position the narratives and reinforce the diversity of the participants in this research, Table 3.1 provides an overview of the participants and their background information regarding age, experience, race, and current teaching assignment. This discussion presents the teachers in order from most to least experienced. The five participant descriptions follow the same format, which includes: (a) a description of the participant's demographics and teaching experience, (b) a depiction of their unique story

of the phenomenon of relating CRP to implement SEL at Jones Elementary, (c) research question analysis from each participant, and (d) an overall summary of findings. These descriptions include their individual stories and experiences of relating CRP through SEL at Jones Elementary. Each participant shared personal experiences or a personal story of understanding and implementing SEL and CRP further to understand their background and overall perceptions at Jones Elementary. They then told their story about their experience of incorporating CRP to implement SEL.

Table 3.1

Participants

Participant	Age	Years of Experience	Race/Ethnicity	Current Teaching Assignment
Ms. Perez	42	20	Hispanic	5 th Grade Reading/Social Studies
Mrs. Moore	54	17	African American	3 rd Grade Reading/Social Studies
Mrs. Blake	30	8	American Indian/White	5 th Grade Math/Science
Ms. Jackson	26	3	White	Kindergarten
Ms. Parker	25	1	African American	3 rd Grade Math

Ms. Perez: 20 Years in Tyler ISD

Ms. Perez is a 42-year-old Hispanic female. All her 20 years of experience have been in Tyler ISD. She holds the following certifications: bilingual, EC-4 generalist, 4–8 reading/language arts, and has taught bilingual second, fifth, and sixth grade reading language arts, reading and writing academies, and AVID elementary. Ms. Perez came to Jones Elementary five years ago as a master teacher. She joined the school the same year

the principal arrived. In the five years at Jones Elementary, she worked as a Media Technology Specialist before her current role as a fifth grade reading and social studies teacher.

Ms. Perez gave a personal account of her upbringing by discussing her Hispanic culture, neighborhood, and parents' background. She grew up in a Hispanic family where the primary language was Spanish. Her parents always spoke Spanish; however, in her neighborhood, the primary language was English. She also realized that "no one in the community looked like her," as she described her community members having "blonde hair and blue eyes." Because of this experience, Ms. Perez explained that she always felt like an outsider and "not always quite welcomed" by her peers. As she began teaching, she wanted her students to be proud of their culture. She related her personal story to them to encourage them to be proud of who they are by accepting and celebrating their culture. She explained her teaching of diverse students by saying,

I could see the embarrassment in them for speaking another language or for being different from their peers. I always embrace that. And, you know, share a little bit of my story. My father, you know, did not finish college, neither did my mother, my dad still drives a dump truck. And so very much blue-collar worker, my mother cleaned houses and watch children.... I let them know I went to college. I got these things and I do these things as an adult because I have that choice.

She encourages her students to work hard and be proud of who they are and where they come from and to "not be ashamed or embarrassed that they're different."

In sharing her overall perception of Jones Elementary, Ms. Perez discussed the initial struggle due to students' lack of respect for adults, each other, and school property by stating,

They were just rough. And you could tell they wanted to be loved and cared for. And when you got near them, their spikes would go out, so to speak. And not only to you as the adult but to each other and just name-calling and things like that. And it was a struggle going into those classrooms and teaching.

I asked Ms. Perez during the one-on-one interview in the final phase of the data collection how she would tell her story about her experience of incorporating CRP to implement SEL. Ms. Perez described the change in students' behavior and the trajectory of positive school culture by showing concern for students and modeling desired behaviors. She noted the school culture and climate have changed "to the positive."

Response to secondary research questions. I asked Ms. Perez a series of questions that addressed the following secondary research questions in a questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interview, and one-on-one interview. Observations with artifact collection answered Secondary Research Question 2 as well.

In the questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interview, and one-on-one follow-up interview, I asked Ms. Perez to address what SEL competencies best allow the implementation of CRP. Ms. Perez discussed how her fifth-grade students needed the most support with self-awareness and self-management to better prepare for middle school and "to make smart choices and control impulses of things they want to say" by thinking first. As they mature more, they need to understand themselves, develop their own perspectives, and consider how their actions affect others around them.

In the questionnaire, one-on-one follow-up interview, classroom observations, and artifact collection, I noted the language and behaviors of CRP used in correlation to SEL in Ms. Perez's class. Ms. Perez discussed how students needed to build their confidence to set attainable goals to support academic achievement. Regarding the language of CRP used to support SEL, Ms. Perez has fifth graders use affirmations every week to promote positive and SEL competencies of self-awareness and self-management. Establishing positive relationships through positive affirmations with students supports

CRP. Ms. Perez was able to demonstrate how she incorporates CRP through SEL competencies of self-awareness and self-management:

We start doing affirmations on Fridays, which is positive self-talk. So, I give the student a card with an affirmation on it, and I have a mirror. When I greet them on Friday mornings, they shake my hand and say the affirmation in the mirror. We've done it 3 weeks in a row now, the first Friday, they felt silly, they wouldn't look in the mirror, they would, didn't want to say it.

After providing positive affirmations to her students, students begin developing their own affirmations and relating those affirmations to their goals and data. She explained how some students create their own affirmations with an understanding that “positive talk starts within themselves.” Ms. Perez also explained the importance of students displaying confidence as they prepare for middle school and exposure to new peers to create positive social connections.

Two observations supported findings to answer the research question to understand language and behaviors of CRP used in correlation with SEL. One observation detailed the morning greeting and the calming station. Figure 3.1 provides a pictorial description of the calming station in Ms. Perez's classroom.

As Ms. Perez walked her students to the classroom, they each lined up outside the door and entered one-by-one. As they entered the room, Ms. Perez greeted each student with eye contact and their name. Also, if students initiated a handshake or a hug, Ms. Perez engaged them. If the student did not prefer or initiate physical touch, she consistently greeted them by saying hello and “I am so happy you are here today” or “Good to see you today!”



Figure 3.1. Ms. Perez's calming station.

One student walked in with his head down and not making eye contact, Ms. Perez spoke to the student separately and asked if the student needed a moment to get ready for learning for the day. While other students completed their circle talk to get the day started, the student quietly moved to the calming station and started journaling something quickly. Ms. Perez quietly walked to the student, read the notes, and confirmed what the

student shared with a pat on the back. The participant then placed the sand timer in the student's view, which meant that the student had a minute to rejoin the class. As the timer moved to close the minute, the student joined the circle talk and began participating in the class. Ms. Perez explained the benefit of utilizing areas in her room, including her calming station, for students who need a moment to disconnect.

Along with the calming stations, Ms. Perez also has "several areas throughout the room where students can take a break" such as yoga balls, window seats, and a carpet and pillow section to avoid distractions and focus on classwork. The classroom greeting and morning meeting aligned to the SEL competencies of social awareness and relationship building. According to CASEL's (2020) framework, the implementation process promotes SEL for students by developing staff and student relationships.

According to CASEL's (2020) framework, the reflection on data for continuous improvement helps to ensure goal attainment. In another observation, Ms. Perez facilitated a data reflection with students where they updated their data binders according to the progress made on a district assessment. Students created bar graphs for each standard or skill tested according to the percentage scored correctly and developed SMART goals. SMART goals are set by the students such as accomplishing a master rating on the STAAR test (Texas Education Agency, 2021). Students asked questions to determine what they can accomplish on the following assessment to show growth. CRP intersects SEL implementation of continuous improvement through promoting academic success. Utilizing the SEL/CRP observation protocol, I determined that Ms. Perez implemented self-awareness and opportunities to experience academic success from

classroom observations. Students displayed ways to self-regulate, and the use of data binders supported a growth mindset among all learners.

In the questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interview, and one-on-one follow-up interview, I asked Ms. Perez to discuss what attributes to the students' successes based on the implementation of SEL by incorporating CRP. Ms. Perez noted in her questionnaire that the benefits of connecting CRP to SEL at Jones Elementary were that students connect better with the teacher and their learning. During interviews, she also stressed the importance of building a community of learners and relationships that support student achievement in her classroom and throughout the campus at Jones Elementary. Ms. Perez expressed the need for relationships and making connections when asked to describe what ethnically diverse students at Jones Elementary needed for success by stating, "once they have those connections, they have an ally on campus. I feel that they feel comfortable so that they can open up with you and, they don't want to let you down." Therefore, relationships are essential to the success of ethnically diverse learners to build trust.

Mrs. Moore: 17 Years of Experience

Mrs. Moore is a 54-year-old African American female. She came to Jones Elementary seven years ago, prior to the current principal, as a second-grade teacher. In the seven years at Jones, Mrs. Moore also taught third self-contained and third-grade math and science before her current role as a third-grade reading and social studies teacher. She holds the following certifications: EC-4 generalist, ESL supplemental, gifted and talented, reading and writing academies, and AVID elementary. Mrs. Moore has served as an educator for 17 years. She has also served as an ESL pullout interventionist

and the English component of the Gomez and Gomez Bilingual Program (G&G Dual Language Consultants, Inc., 2021) in another school district.

When she shared her personal experiences or a personal story of understanding and implementing SEL and CRP to understand their background further, Mrs. Moore recounted her upbringing and college educational experiences prior to entering the education profession. She described her experience in growing up in a “modest African-American family environment” while attending school and college with “predominantly Caucasian teachers and classmates.” In describing her college experience as an African American student in dental school, she explained,

When I attended college to become a dental hygienist, I, along with a classmate from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, were the first African Americans to be a part of the program. That entire process felt forced as not a day went by without being reminded of being an anomaly and the fact that my culture as a whole did not embrace dental health.

The experiences that Mrs. Moore faced provide an opportunity to better relate to students of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

To better explain how Mrs. Moore experienced the phenomenon of relating CRP to SEL implementation, she provided her overall perceptions at Jones Elementary. When asked during the one-on-one interview in the final phase of the data collection how she would tell her story about experiences of incorporating CRP to implement SEL skills to help students at Jones Elementary be successful, Mrs. Moore said,

My story would say that I am very intentional and very purposeful about how I instruct students and interact with them to boost their confidence and to boost their value. I’m a champion for kids. And I advocate self-love first. High achievement, high expectations, it just changes your perspective of the world because you’re part of it. And it just doesn’t turn the same way unless you are a part of it. And that’s what I express to my kids.

Although Mrs. Moore has had extensive professional training and development during her career, her personal experiences related to her upbringing and educational experiences greatly influenced her ability to connect to students at Jones Elementary.

Response to secondary research questions. I asked Mrs. Moore a series of questions that addressed the following secondary research questions in a questionnaire, a semi-structured focus group interview, and a one-on-one interview. Observations with artifact collection answered Secondary Research Question 2 as well.

In the questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interview, and one-on-one follow-up interview, I asked Mrs. Moore to address what SEL competencies best allow the implementation of CRP. Mrs. Moore discussed how self-awareness and self-management helped students verbalize their feelings when entering her room for morning greetings utilizing her emoji board posted. She explained how students use the emoji board upon entering the classroom to identify their feelings at that moment. Figure 3.2 provides a pictorial. A short discussion of ways to stay proactive even though they may have negative feelings provides an outlet to share the emotions and “stay on green.”

Regarding staying on green, I asked Mrs. Moore to clarify what the color means to students. She described the zones of self-regulation and what other colors represented and students staying on green throughout the day. She stated, “... like the best zone is green is meaning that you’re aware of yourself and also aware of others around you in the learning community.”



Figure 3.2. Mrs. Moore's classroom greeting emoji chart.

Mrs. Moore also described how students can self-manage in that “the kids have learned the best way to uplift themselves is to uplift others. The best way to uplift yourself is to

be a part of something positive.” Self-awareness and self-management competencies speak to one criterion of CRP of cultural competence. Teachers utilize their students’ culture to help them acknowledge and appreciate their own culture.

In the questionnaire, one-on-one follow-up interview, classroom observations, and artifact collection, I noted the language and behaviors of CRP used in correlation to SEL in Mrs. Moore’s class. Mrs. Moore explained specific language and behavior expectations in her classroom include leadership qualities and the ability to show that they understand their actions and consequences to follow through self-responsibility. She stated the expected behavior when students make “an inappropriate choice” is to self-reflect and “have apologies ready” using language that exemplifies their internalized actions and understanding consequences. Once students can make better choices through reflection, the expectation is to peer tutor classmates that need support.

Two observations supported findings to answer the research question to understand language and behaviors of CRP used in correlation with SEL. I noted the classroom greeting and the calming station while conducting one observation. Figure 3.3 provides a pictorial description of the calming station in Mrs. Moore’s classroom.

Students lined up outside and utilized the emoji chart to express their current emotions. As students pointed to a feeling that indicated that they were happy or cheerful, a handshake, hi-five, fist bump, or hug followed as students quietly entered the room. One student walked up to the teacher and pointed to the very bottom of the emoji chart, indicating an angry emotion. Mrs. Moore moved the student to the opposite side of the line behind her. After all other students entered the room, she had a brief discussion with the student to allow him an opportunity to express why he was feeling angry. After the

brief conversation, the student went to the calming station on his own initiative. Initially putting his head down, the student began to use the figure eight handout on the desk momentarily.



Figure 3.3. Mrs. Moore’s classroom calming station.

Mrs. Moore moved her class forward with the lesson, moved to the calming station, and spoke quietly to the student. The student pointed to a smiling emoji posted on the wall at the calming station, and the response to the question was simply the word “green.” The student moved to his assigned seat and quickly integrated with the class. This observation revealed the specific language and behavior that supports the intersectionality of SEL and CRP. Based on the observation and utilizing the SEL/CRP

observation protocol, I found Mrs. Moore taught her students self-awareness and self-management social skills. She understood the student's expressions based on commonalities of cultural experiences. Therefore, Mrs. Moore equipped the student for academic success, allowing him to quickly move past an emotion that could have limited learning for that day.

In the second observation, students completed a poetry routine as a warm-up exercise. The students moved to the back of the room, where the teacher had a poem posted. The students used academic vocabulary as they answered questions about poetry in complete sentences. When a student answered correctly, Mrs. Moore facilitated a variety of classroom applauses to recognize students for their responses. When it was time to recite the poem, the students stood up. Mrs. Moore stated that they would read with expression and movement. As the teacher read and modeled moves for each line, the students enthusiastically repeated after her and demonstrated the movements. Once the reading was complete, the students transitioned back to their desks to continue the lesson. Mrs. Moore noted that she is aware that she has related CRP through SEL implementation in her classroom when "students are engaged in my lessons, [and] use targeted vocabulary" with the teacher in "classroom conversations and assignments." CRP intersects with SEL implementation by promoting academic success as Mrs. Moore created a classroom environment conducive to learning and utilized various communication strategies.

In the questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interview, and one-on-one follow-up interview, I asked Mrs. Moore to discuss what attributes to the students' successes based on the implementation of SEL by incorporating CRP. In the follow-up

one-on-one interview, Mrs. Moore addressed the specific needs of ethnically diverse learners at Jones Elementary. She noted that students need “a voice” and explained a priority at Jones Elementary focuses on providing the necessary skills for effective written and verbal communication. Mrs. Moore also discussed how relating CRP through the implementation of SEL gives meaning to the educational and socio-emotional aspects (IGI Global, 2021) for students and teachers. She also discussed having high expectations for students and the importance of relationships with students and families.

Mrs. Blake: 8 Years of Experience

Mrs. Blake is a 30-year-old American Indian and White female. She came to Jones Elementary six years ago, before the current principal, as a kindergarten teacher. In the six years at Jones Elementary, Mrs. Blake taught first grade before her current role as a 5th-grade math and science teacher. She holds the following certifications: EC-4 generalist, ESL supplemental, gifted and talented, reading and writing academies, and AVID elementary. Mrs. Blake has served as an educator for eight years and holds two degrees in Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education. She also served as a kindergarten teacher in another school district with similar demographics as Jones Elementary.

Mrs. Blake also shared her personal experiences of understanding and implementing SEL and CRP. Mrs. Blake gave a personal account of her college experience and upbringing by stating, “it started in college” when she took an SEL course called Children at Risk. Throughout the course work, they researched and learned different reasons students can act the way they do. She also explained how her family

dynamics of not having a biological mom growing up and often moving because her father was in the military helped her better understand students who encounter change and frequent instability at home. She explained that her mother was not there for her as she left when Mrs. Blake was three years old. She relates to students at Jones Elementary when they share similar family dynamics, thus allowing her to use past experiences to make connections with students. She further explained,

I've been there, like, my dad's been through three divorces, and I've moved a lot, you know, all over the country. Yeah, we moved every three years. So, I understand the moving and the constant going and the constant shift and change.

As a result of this experience, Mrs. Blake would like students to understand that current situations do not determine their future.

To better understand how teachers experience the phenomenon of relating CRP to SEL implementation, Mrs. Blake shared her overall perceptions at Jones Elementary. I asked Mrs. Blake during the one-on-one interview in the final phase of the data collection how she would tell her story about the experiences of incorporating CRP to implement SEL to help students be successful at Jones Elementary. Mrs. Blake described her story in the way of not giving up on students when it gets hard. Allowing students to have a safe space to share personal situations to “get it out of their system” and setting high expectations to be successful is another way that she supports students’ success. She explained that because of the relationships built over time with students, they know “she’s gonna listen to me, she’s gonna be there. But she still cares about my education.” Mrs. Blake explained how this connects with SEL and cultural relevancy in understanding that students “have things going on. And they know that no matter what, I’m still going to show up and push them because I know they can” be successful.

Response to secondary research questions. Mrs. Blake responded to a series of questions that addressed the following secondary research questions in a questionnaire, a semi-structured focus group interview, and a one-on-one interview. Observations with artifact collection answered Secondary Research Question 2 as well.

In the questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interview, and one-on-one follow-up interview, I asked Mrs. Blake to address what SEL competencies best allow the implementation of CRP. Mrs. Blake described experiences implementing self-awareness and self-management as SEL competencies that support integrating CRP. She explained ways that students make choices based on the ability to self-regulate. Building relationship skills with students at Jones Elementary is another avenue of relating CRP to SEL implementation. She explains the benefits of “having those relationships period helps with the teacher and the student” communication and helps students understand different perspectives rather than becoming angry or frustrated. She further explains that “all three competencies kind of all go hand-in-hand” from student to student and teacher to student interactions.

In the questionnaire, one-on-one follow-up interview, classroom observations, and artifact collection, I noted the language and behaviors of CRP used in correlation to SEL in Mrs. Blake’s class. The use and description of the calming station and allowing students to express their emotions in various ways showed how CRP correlates with SEL. Mrs. Blake explained how “sometimes students don’t have the words to say,” so a calm down area is a “good opportunity for them” to gather their thoughts and emotions. Mrs. Blake also uses quotes for motivation daily. Figure 3.4 provides a pictorial example of

the greeting quote posted at her door. Upon entering the room, the participant facilitates a discussion about the quote and its relation to student success.

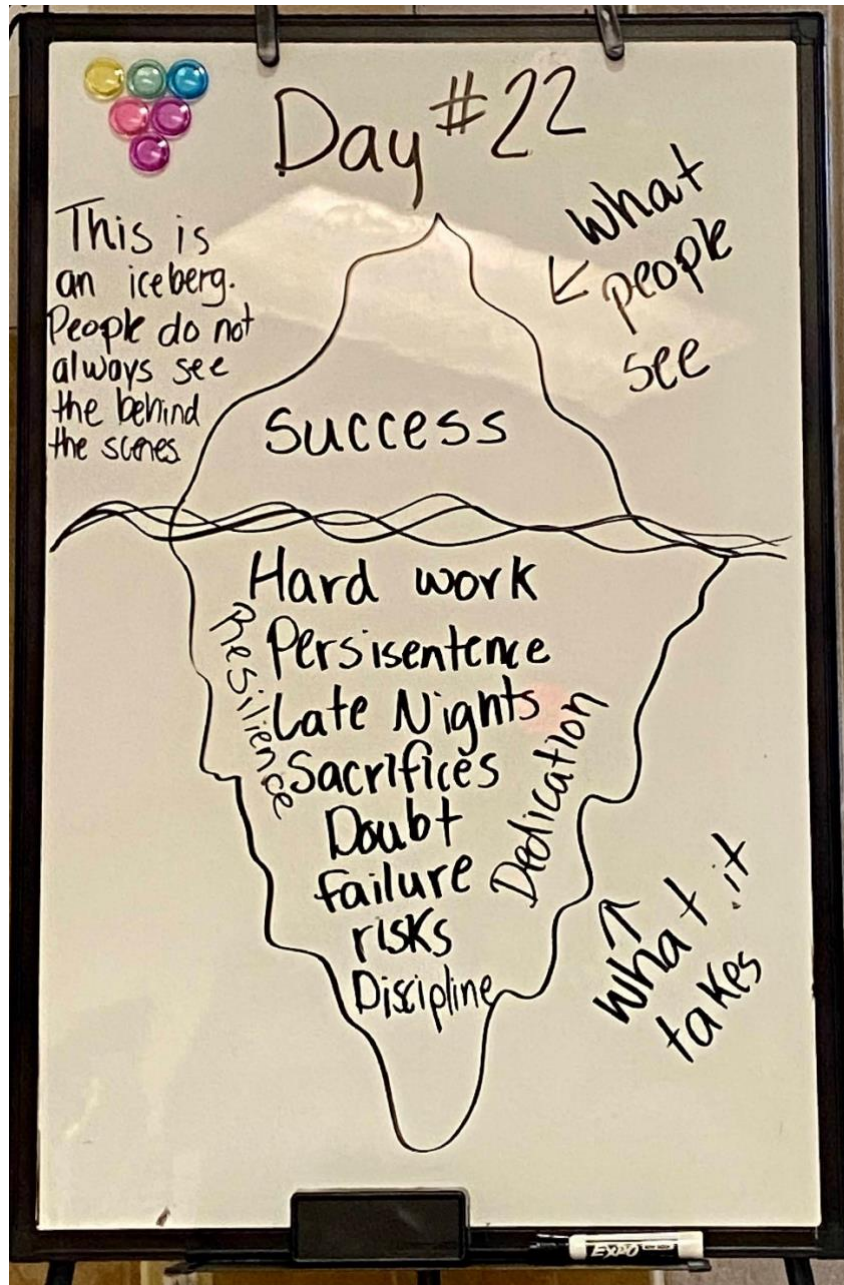


Figure 3.4. Mrs. Blake's classroom greeting quote.

Two observations supported findings to answer the research question to understand language and behaviors of CRP used in correlation with SEL. In one observation, I noticed the classroom greeting and calming station. Figure 3.5 provides a pictorial description of the calming station in Mrs. Blake's classroom.



Figure 3.5. Mrs. Blake's classroom calming station.

As fifth-grade students enter the classroom, the participant allows them to decide on their preferred greeting via handshake, hug, or high-five and make eye contact with each student and greet them by name. After the greetings, Mrs. Blake stated, “I’m so glad you’re here today. We’re gonna have a fun experiment with science! We missed you yesterday.” As Mrs. Blake began the lesson, the students started to review for an upcoming assessment.

The soft, calming music played turned into a popular hip-hop beat that all the students seemed to know. As students completed math problems, Mrs. Blake posted memes of hip-hop artists and celebrities celebrating accurate responses. As students worked, one student moved to the calming station to sit on the blanket against the pillows and put on headphones through the subsequent three math problems reviewed. As the students continued to work, Mrs. Blake went to the calming area and stated to the student, “Way to go for making sure you were able to focus and concentrate. Looks like you got all of them correct! Tutorials are paying off.” From this observation, the calming station displayed a way for the student to regain focus and exhibit self-awareness in eliminating noise and collaboration with others. Students become more aware of what works best for them in various learning environments as they understand self-management.

The second observation took place after students took an assessment, and Mrs. Blake facilitated students writing SMART goals. Figure 3.6 is a pictorial representation of how students set math goals.

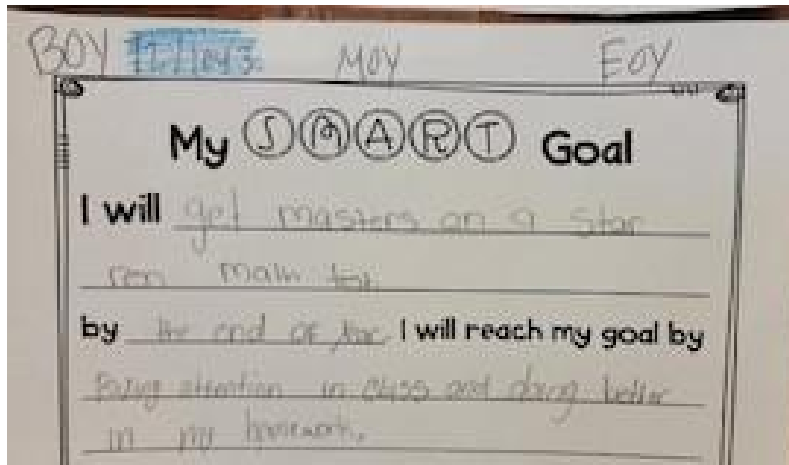


Figure 3.6. Mrs. Blake's SMART goal worksheet.

Mrs. Blake circulated around the room to check students' graphs in their data notebooks to ensure that students understood how to develop measurable goals to monitor progress. Students determine what they would accomplish on the following assessment to show growth based on the beginning of the year district assessment. According to CASEL's (2020) framework, the reflection on data for continuous improvement helps to ensure goal attainment. Utilizing the SEL/CRP observation protocol, I determined that Mrs. Blake's observation displayed how CRP intersects SEL implementation of continuous improvement through promoting academic success through setting high expectations.

In the questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interview, and one-on-one follow-up interview, I asked Mrs. Blake to discuss what attributes to the students' successes based on the implementation of SEL by incorporating CRP. In the follow-up one-on-one interview, Mrs. Blake addressed the specific needs of ethnically diverse learners at Jones Elementary. She stated that appropriate and ongoing "social interactions build trust." Mrs. Blake discussed the overall benefits of connecting CRP to implement

SEL at Jones Elementary by expressing how she ensures high expectations based on the relationships developed with students. She explains that as a result, students are “more open, comfortable, engaged, motivated, and more eager to come to class” each day. Providing a welcoming classroom environment supports high expectations as students feel like the classroom is “their home too.” Mrs. Blake also expressed that “teaching with a focus on students’ needs” connects cultural and social aspects of learning by encouraging students that they can achieve their goals. When they can see their growth, students learn how they can achieve “success in the future.” High expectations connect to Ladson-Billings’ (1995a) CRP theoretical framework components of academic success. Through goal setting and data analysis, Mrs. Blake sets high expectations to motivate her students to achieve academic success.

Ms. Jackson: 3 Years of Experience

Ms. Jackson is a 26-year-old White female. She came to Jones Elementary three years ago as a first-grade teacher. In the three years at Jones Elementary, she taught first grade for two years before her current role as a kindergarten teacher. Ms. Jackson began at Jones Elementary just as the focus on SEL implementation began. She holds the following certifications: EC-4 generalist, ESL supplemental, gifted and talented, reading and writing academies, and AVID elementary. Ms. Jackson has served as an educator for three years. She has also served as a second-grade teacher in another school district with similar demographics as Jones Elementary.

Like the other participants, Ms. Jackson also gave a personal account of her classroom experience by stating that “even as an adult sometimes we don’t even understand our own feelings, and they change every year.” The experience of

understanding and implementing SEL and CRP helped her to understand better how to help students and not take their “anger and upsetness” personally. Ms. Jackson used questions such as, “How are you feeling? Why are you feeling this way? How can we get you to, you know, back into that green? How can we get you to have a better day?” to help students learn and develop social skills needed and control their emotions as well as her own emotions.

To better understand how teachers experience the phenomenon of relating CRP to SEL implementation, I explored their overall perceptions at Jones Elementary. During the one-on-one interview in the final phase of the data collection, I asked Ms. Jackson how she would tell her story about her experiences with incorporating CRP to implement SEL to help students at Jones Elementary reach success. Ms. Jackson expressed her tenure thus far at Jones Elementary. She chose to move from first grade to kindergarten. She described the experience of coming from another school in her first year of teaching and coming to Jones Elementary as a “huge change in a positive way.” She explained the climate and culture by expressing,

The staff was more inviting and wanting to seem like you want to come to work every single day, and students want to come to the school every day. The students, the families, then being here for as long as they have been even, and the teachers that have stuck around here, for those kids, those families really make me feel like I want to stick around here. Like, I want to see my first kids that I had come in here go to fifth grade and then graduate.

She discussed needed change and the positive difference in joining the Jones Elementary staff. She further expressed,

I don’t want to leave this school because of the, I guess, positivity that has grown on me like the people here have grown on me for that reason. Yeah. But it’s true. I don’t really feel I know, like at some point, I’m probably going to have to go somewhere else. But it’s just I don’t feel like I want to go anywhere else because of the way that I’ve been treated here. It’s true.

Ms. Jackson's professional relationships, experiences, and commitment to her work support her ability to connect with ethnically diverse learners at Jones Elementary.

Response to secondary research questions. Ms. Jackson responded to a series of questions that addressed the following secondary research questions in a questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interview, and one-on-one interview. Observations with artifact collection answered Secondary Research Question 2 as well.

In the questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interview, and one-on-one follow-up interview, I asked Ms. Jackson to address what SEL competencies best allow the implementation of CRP. Ms. Jackson describes experiences implementing self-awareness and social awareness as SEL competencies that support integrating CRP. As a kindergarten teacher, teaching students to appreciate who they are is essential to making cultural connections based on students' backgrounds and experiences from home. She stated, "students can especially connect to reading comprehension lessons when they can bring something they have experienced at home into the story." Ms. Jackson used the phrase, "be proactive," referencing a character-building program that supports self-awareness and social awareness. She describes the simplicity of conveying the information to a kindergartener in explaining that the "hand signals that go along with being proactive" consist of students "pointing to themselves" as a way to remember that they "are in charge" of themselves to regulate their emotions and actions and "set personal goals for success."

Ms. Jackson further explained in her one-on-one interview how social awareness for kindergarten students supports "play and share time" in the classroom and at recess. As students learn foundational skills, these social skills relate to the literature review in

the discussion of sociocultural theory, concluding that learning occurs through social interaction and play (Kurt, 2020). Therefore, the evidence validates the literature review in noting that students learn from one another in social settings, proving the need to teach social awareness to support academic success.

In the questionnaire, one-on-one follow-up interview, classroom observations, and artifact collection, I noted the language and behaviors of CRP used in correlation to SEL in Ms. Jackson's class. Ms. Jackson discussed her classroom environment, stating that the "classroom setup is a big one because you want to be educational, but you also want students to feel welcome." She also expressed the importance of developing relationships with each student, their families, as well as "having each student develop relationships with each other is important." Building background by "activating prior knowledge" to ensure students understand new information was another way to incorporate CRP to support SEL implementation for student academic and behavioral success.

Two observations supported findings to answer the research question to understand language and behaviors of CRP used in correlation with SEL. One observation consisted of the classroom greeting. Figure 3.7 provides a pictorial description of the morning greeting poster outside of Ms. Jackson's classroom.

As students left the gym from the morning meeting, each lined up at the door and waited to enter the room. Utilizing the morning greeting poster, students selected a picture to show how they wanted to greet the teacher for the day. Greetings consisted of verbal and nonverbal greetings along with a touch or no contact greetings such as hugs, dabs, elbow bumps, handshakes, or dance. As kindergarten students selected their

preferred greeting, Ms. Jackson made eye contact and shared a smile with all students to make them feel welcomed. The morning greetings provided a personal interaction between the teacher and students and aligned with CASEL's (2020) framework of implementation in promoting SEL for students by demonstrating social awareness.



Figure 3.7. Ms. Jackson's morning greeting chart.

Ms. Jackson conducted a read-aloud during a language arts lesson and utilized the calming station in another observation. Figure 3.8 provides a pictorial description of the calming station in Ms. Jackson's classroom.



Figure 3.8. Ms. Jackson's classroom calming station.

Students moved to the carpet in their assigned area in preparation for reading. The participant stated the objectives of the lesson to signal to students the purpose for reading. The goal of the reading lesson was to make connections to personal experiences. The participant then posed the essential question that would be answered at the end of the lesson, "What made Alma change her mind about her name? Ms. Jackson began the lesson,

Today we are going to read a story about a girl named Alma. Alma doesn't like her name. Do you like your name? Have you ever asked how you got your name? This is the story of how Alma Sofia Esperanza Jose Pura Candela got her name.

As Ms. Jackson read the story, she allowed students to make predictions and connect to the story with a partner on the carpet utilizing collaborative strategies and sentence stems to frame their scholarly communication. As students discussed the text, one partner group began arguing. The teacher quietly moved to the students and reminded them that “we are nice to our friends and use nice words.” One student moved to the calming station, and the teacher encouraged the student to read a book.

The lesson presented during the observation aligned to the components of Ladson-Billings’ (1995a) framework for CRP that ensures students’ academic success through high expectations and cultural competence. The story incorporated a Hispanic character and allowed students to make connections based on background knowledge. The lesson also aligned to the SEL competency of self-awareness as students discussed their names and the importance of being proud of the name given. According to CASEL’s (2020) framework, it is crucial to encourage and develop family connections in promoting SEL for students. In this lesson, students had an assignment to go home and ask their parents how they got their name if they did not already know to connect with the story and share it with the class.

In a follow-up one-on-one interview, Ms. Jackson described her experiences in utilizing calming stations to support student behavior. She expressed how students learn about the calming station at the beginning of the school year. “It helps support them when they have feelings they don’t understand how to control yet. They can take a minute to breathe and find their control again.” She also explained resources and manipulatives at the calming station such as social story picture books, stress balls, pictures to help students understand and communicate emotions, and brain exercises.

In the questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interview, and one-on-one follow-up interview, I asked Ms. Jackson to discuss what attributes to the students' successes based on the implementation of SEL by incorporating CRP. In the follow-up one-on-one interview, Mrs. Jackson addressed the specific needs of ethnically diverse learners at Jones Elementary that allowed successful outcomes. She spoke to relationship building and motivating students each day to have a growth mindset. Ms. Jackson also discussed the overall benefits of connecting CRP to implement SEL at Jones Elementary by explaining that students create positive relationships with each other and adults. She explained that students find ways to make connections to show that they understand and "take control of their academics and emotions." In the questionnaire, I asked teachers to provide the benefits of connecting CRP and SEL that attributes to students' success at Jones Elementary. Ms. Jackson described her experiences of teaching ethnically diverse learners at Jones Elementary as an opportunity to educate "diverse groups of learners that can show appreciation of their cultural backgrounds and also the cultural background of other students" as a benefit.

Ms. Parker: 1 Year of Experience

Ms. Parker is a 25-year-old African American female. She came to Jones Elementary one year ago as a second-grade teacher. Last year at Jones Elementary, Ms. Parker taught second grade before her current assignment as a third-grade math teacher. She holds the following certifications: EC-4 generalist, ESL supplemental, reading and writing academies, and AVID elementary. Ms. Parker has served as an educator for one year. She also performs various roles with a non-profit organization that provides after-school, summer enrichment, and mentoring to students in Tyler ISD.

Each study participant from Jones Elementary shared personal experiences or a personal story of understanding and implementing SEL and CRP to understand their background further. Ms. Parker gave a personal account of her college experience and her upbringing by stating,

During my undergraduate experience, I learned that culturally relevant pedagogy helps students in a variety of ways. CRP helps students make personal connections to the lesson, learn how to value other cultures besides their own, and they're able to witness their teacher support unity.

Ms. Parker provided how she relates to her students through her personal story of her mother's death at an early age. This experience and the void felt due to growing up without her mother made her more independent and slower to trust adults.

Well, from my personal story, I actually lost my mother at a very young age. And so, me and my sisters, we grew up with a certain void in our lives. And so, we looked at authority a lot differently. And so I was that student who just relied on themselves, I wanted to call the shots, and it was hard for me to buy in within a classroom. Being that I was that type of student, I just really needed someone to tell me that they love me, that they believe in me, and that I could trust them at a very hard time with trust with authority.

Ms. Parker expressed that because of her experience that she can help a student that could be "going through the same things." As a second-year teacher, she has already connected with students that she can relate to with similar stories at Jones Elementary. As a result, Ms. Parker expressed how she could take her personal experiences and use them within the classroom "to break down those barriers" and assist students in all capacities.

To better understand how teachers experience the phenomenon of relating CRP to SEL implementation, I explored their overall perceptions at Jones Elementary. I asked Ms. Parker during the one-on-one interview how she would tell her story about her experiences of incorporating CRP to implement SEL to help students achieve success at Jones Elementary. Ms. Parker discussed how "phenomenal" the first year of teaching was

in “learning new ways to teach and reach students” at Jones Elementary. She noted that she “learned quickly that the community within the classroom helps everything else run smoothly” through implementing effective strategies and routines along with “staying consistent.” She expressed how she began to impact students in a way that she had never seen before by “building the community within the classroom and understanding the different cultures in my classroom.” As a new teacher, Ms. Parker noticed the importance of relationships, and effective routines and procedures helped with the overall structure of learning.

Response to secondary research questions. I asked Ms. Parker a series of questions that addressed the following secondary research questions in a questionnaire, a semi-structured focus group interview, and a one-on-one interview. Observations with artifact collection answered Secondary Research Question 2 as well.

In the questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interview, and one-on-one follow-up interview, I asked Ms. Parker to address what SEL competencies best allow the implementation of CRP. Ms. Parker noted self-management, self-awareness, and social awareness are SEL competencies that best allow CRP implementation. As a third-grade math teacher, she explained students use various manipulatives and therefore assigned jobs that she called “task managers” to gather supplies and distribute them to other students. With this classroom procedure and routine, Ms. Parker explained that task managers know what is expected of them within a few weeks of practice without teacher guidance. CRP principles use active learning and teaching methods with manipulatives, centers, and hands-on learning. In discussing how she related CRP to self-awareness, Ms. Jackson discussed how students empathize with others in controlling their actions and

emotions. As students worked collaboratively, Ms. Parker explained that students worked with partners and in groups during workshop time and independent work. During these opportunities, the participant implemented CRP through social awareness with transitional cues and words that are familiar to students. According to Ladson-Billings (1995b), one principle of CRP includes implementing culturally diverse teaching strategies that allow teachers to connect with their students.

In the questionnaire, one-on-one follow-up interview, classroom observations, and artifact collection, I noted the language and behaviors of CRP used in correlation to SEL in Ms. Parker's class. Ms. Parker discussed classroom behaviors reflective of SEL that relate to CRP in her one-on-one interview. To support classroom behavior through self-awareness and self-management, Ms. Parker described the use of her calming station. Figure 3.9 provides a pictorial description of the calming station in Mrs. Blake's classroom.

She stated the "calm down corner" is used "whenever a student just needs to take a second to pause to get their emotions in check, and then to return to whole group instruction." Ms. Parker further described her classroom calming station as a place where students can feel safe and free from judgment as they hash out their feelings. The calming station sat in the back corner of her room, connected to a cabinet wall allowing students to feel secure and away from other students until they collect their thoughts.



Figure 3.9. Ms. Parker's classroom calming station.

Ms. Parker discussed behavior expectations during instruction with a strategy she called “SLANT.” She stated,

I expect them to come into the classroom and SLANT, ... that’s how they sit at their desk. Whenever they slant, they’re looking straight ahead at whoever is speaking. I can see their hands, they’re sitting up, and it just puts them in a position where they receive everything that they’re getting. Their eyes are on me, their ears are open, and they’re listening and learning.

Making individual eye contact with students is another behavior that Ms. Parker observed to determine their well-being. She stated, “if a student doesn’t make eye contact with me that day, I take the time some point during the class block, and just ask them what’s going on.” When the opportunity is available, she takes them outside into the hallway to briefly and privately discuss their concerns to understand better how to support them.

Ladson-Billings (1995b) described the importance of establishing positive relationships with ethnically diverse students to identify and nurture students’ strengths. Ms. Parker develops positive relationships with her students at Jones Elementary in the way of communication and expectation for behaviors.

Two observations supported findings to answer the research question to understand language and behaviors of CRP used in correlation with SEL. In the first observation, I documented the classroom greeting. Third-grade students transition from language arts to Ms. Parker’s math block. Each of them lines up quietly and in a straight line in the hallway, waiting for entrance to the classroom. Ms. Parker greets each student individually with personal handshakes with several intricacies and movements. Students easily make eye contact with Ms. Parker and smile as they enter the room. Aligned to the CRP framework, students show academic success when teachers bring culture in the classroom allowing student expression based on cultural experiences. Ms. Parker exhibited the execution of cultural competence by allowing her students to express

themselves in the classroom greetings and her willingness to learn and participate in each student-derived handshake.

The second observation answered the secondary research question regarding language and behaviors of CRP used in correlation with SEL, which consisted of a math lesson utilizing collaborative structures. As Ms. Parker completed direct instruction, she reminded students of the objectives for the lesson. Students first worked with partners and shared responses naming themselves as partner ‘A’ or partner ‘B.’ Next, a set of partners joined another set of partners to form a group of four. Students used individualized miniature whiteboards to move around the room to write and share responses. As students shared responses, posted sentence stems facilitated academic language and how students communicated with their partners or in groups. An SEL competency to support ethnically diverse students is social awareness. Combined with the CRP principle of engagement opportunities similar to community engagement or multi-generational homes, students succeed in learning environments reflective of conversation and working together towards a common goal. Ms. Parker displays collaborative structures in a way that supports students’ academic success.

In the questionnaire, semi-structured focus group interview, and one-on-one follow-up interview, I asked Ms. Parker to discuss what attributes to the student successes based on the implementation of SEL by incorporating CRP. In Ms. Parker’s one-on-one interview, I asked her to discuss the needs of ethnically diverse learners at Jones Elementary that will lead to success. She noted that students at Jones Elementary “just need someone that they can trust and feel safe with.” Ms. Parker mentioned that once students have established trust, the conversations about academics begin, “that is

when you can make sure that they can learn anything from you” with a smile. Ms. Parker discussed how motivation and engagement in the classroom provide students a sense of belonging. She stated, “The biggest benefit of CRP that I’ve seen within my classroom is how motivation and engagement keep my students intrigued in the lesson and that students feel like they belong!” She also noted relationships among staff and how the faculty at Jones Elementary experiences culturally related activities that support SEL for adults so that new learning can transfer to the classroom.

Cross Case Thematic Analysis

The goal of thematic analysis is to identify significant patterns in the data. I compared all subunits in this single case study to determine the commonalities and differences as part of the cross-case analysis. Constant-comparison analysis compares individual cases for themes and commonalities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Next, based on the individual responses from the research questions in the previous section, I developed emerging themes. The analysis concluded with comparisons of emerging themes based on each research question.

Cross Case Analysis of Secondary Research Question 1: What SEL competencies do teachers feel best allow the implementation of CRP?

Three themes emerged in the investigation of understanding teachers’ perceptions of SEL competencies that best allow CRP implementation: self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness. Table 3.2 provides an overview of these themes, followed by a detailed description in this section.

Table 3.2

Emergent Themes Related to Secondary Research Question 1

Participants	Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social-Awareness
Ms. Perez		X	X
Mrs. Moore	X	X	X
Mrs. Blake	X	X	
Ms. Jackson	X		X
Ms. Parker	X	X	X

Self-awareness. Four of the five participants noted connecting CRP to self-awareness supported the implementation of SEL. Mrs. Moore emphasized that teaching students about self-love first was instrumental in teaching self-awareness and understanding their value to the learning environment. In understanding self-awareness, Mrs. Moore discussed the importance of being aware of surroundings and cultural contributions. Some students “are not even aware of their culture; they just kind of exist.” Mrs. Blake explained how self-awareness meant being aware of “what you do” daily and how understanding yourself helps understand behaviors and how those behaviors affect others around you. Ms. Jackson and Ms. Parker discussed empathy in relating CRP to self-awareness. Mrs. Blake said she knows that she has connected CRP in implementing self-awareness “when I notice my students starting to make those connections and how they care for one another’s feelings.” Ms. Parker described observing students displaying empathy for others in the classroom. Each of the participants shared different ways of relating CRP to self-awareness. However, each participant recognized the need to support the SEL competency to understand some aspect of the student’s cultural background.

Self-management. Four of the five participants noted that connecting CRP to self-management supported the implementation of SEL. Ms. Perez commented how listening to students' dialogue amongst each other displayed self-management. The students consistently "self-monitor themselves" during transitional or collaborative times in class by using polite language such as

... hearing them say excuse me, thank you, heads up when they're playing basketball. And when someone asked to play with them, and they want to say no, and they're like, yeah, okay, we're gonna be nice and lend out that hand to everybody.

Mrs. Moore discussed relating CRP to self-management in allowing everyone in the class to manage a classroom job or complete a task in a collaborative structure. Students have to self-manage their responsibility to meet the needs and expectations of the whole class. Mrs. Blake explained self-management consisted of making choices as well. She explained to her students that managing behavior allowed for better choices. Ms. Parker used the word proactive to describe self-management. She explained, "as the students take more initiative, we use that vocabulary. I love how you all are being proactive today. They'll even say to one another. Let's be proactive." Through students' dialogue, classroom reasonability, making better choices, and teaching students to be proactive, each participant shared varying ways of relating CRP to self-management.

Social awareness. Four of the five participants noted that connecting CRP to social awareness supported the implementation of SEL. Ms. Perez discussed how students worked in collaborative structures and class discussions, citing the "culture of community" within the classroom to support social awareness. Ms. Perez also noted how she conducts herself with them in modeling respect with the expectation of receiving respect in return and students giving respect to one another. Mrs. Moore discussed

utilizing restorative circles to support students in understanding and accepting the diversity of others in the classroom and building stronger relationships in the learning environment. Ms. Jackson emphasized, “we’re a family,” implementing social awareness for her class. Relating the classroom to a family environment helps her kindergarten class understand the importance of working together.

We’re trying to get to know each other. We’re learning each other’s names and, you know, favorite colors and counting together and just kind of coming together with the fact that you know, although I might not look the same as you or you and I might not be the same age that shouldn’t matter. Like we’re all still trying to learn and come together and be more of a family.

Using manipulatives and total physical response applauses to implement social awareness and relating CRP allowed Ms. Parker to support her students through collaborative structures.

I pass out these buzzers that light up and make noise. The rule indicated that students could not hit the buzzer until everyone in the group agreed. If you find yourself disagreeing, just say I respectfully disagree and then state why.

Ms. Parker stated students encouraged one another to get the job done to lock in the answer by pressing the buzzer. This activity allowed them to work and talk with other students and listen to different perspectives. The participants emphasized collaborative structures to facilitate discussion and ways students work together to enhance learning in relating CRP to implement social awareness in the classroom.

Cross Case Analysis of Secondary Research Question 2: What language and behaviors of CRP are used in correlation to SEL?

The investigation of language and behaviors of CRP that correlate with SEL highlighted three emerging themes through teacher interviews and observations. First, participants discussed the setup and structure of their classroom environments. Next, the participants expressed the importance of communication. Lastly, participants discussed

ways of making cultural connections. This section provides an overview of the themes through Table 3.3 as well as a description.

Table 3.3

Emergent Themes Related to Secondary Research Question 2

Participants	Classroom Environment	Communication	Cultural Connections
Ms. Perez	X	X	X
Mrs. Moore	X	X	X
Mrs. Blake	X	X	X
Ms. Jackson	X	X	X
Ms. Parker	X	X	X

Classroom environment. All participants noted aspects of the classroom environment to discuss language and behaviors of CRP that correlate with SEL. Each participants' classroom had a calming station with varying resources and manipulatives to provide students with coping skills to self-manage and self-regulate behaviors to maximize instructional time in the classroom.

Mrs. Moore discussed the idea of a "my brother's keeper" classroom environment where students support and hold each other accountable for learning and positive behavior. Ms. Jackson described resources in her classroom's calming station that consisted of pictures of different emotions and worksheets that students completed indicating what kind of day they are having such as "sad day, so they're in the blue or a bad day, so they're in the red." Her calming station also had some strategies to calm students back down back to a "green level" so they can "be happy again and come back to learning."

Ms. Parker explained that using the calm down corner provides students with “whatever he or she needs to take a second. So, pause to get their emotions in check, and then to return back to whole group instruction.” Language and behaviors from calming stations allowed students to express and understand their emotions and coping strategies to support returning to good behaviors. The idea of the calming station will enable students to have behaviors validated and allow students to self-manage at an appropriate time to return to the learning environment.

Communication. All participants noted the importance of communication to facilitate the language and behaviors of CRP that correlate with SEL. Each participant discussed greeting students by name in the morning or when transitioning to their classroom each day. Ms. Perez stated she greeted students by name and said, “I’m so glad you’re here today, or I’m really glad you’re here today. I missed you, or you know if they were absent. Good morning, and I love you.” She also described the students’ expressions stated their faces lit up when they heard the words “I love you” and “leaned in for a hug.” Ms. Perez discussed emphasizing “whole body listening” and a way to incorporate non-verbal communication skills. She explained, “You don’t just listen with your ears., You look at the person. We show respect to each other by listening to really hear what is being said.”

Mrs. Moore expressed students would become more engaged during lessons when students and the teacher utilize targeted vocabulary in classroom conversations and assignments to correlate CRP to SEL implementation. Mrs. Blake expressed that when students are engaged, they feel safe communicating feelings, excitements, hurt, achievements, and failures. Once students share these feelings, they are open to

achieving academic and behavioral goals. Ms. Jackson discussed how students could listen with a caring heart to express what their partner stated. She stated, “If they’re able to tell me, that shows me that they fully understood what that activity was for, what that was about. This is what I call full-body learning and engagement.” Ms. Parker discussed her hallway greeting as students entered the classroom consisted of varying body movements catered to individual students and the importance of making eye contact. She stated that students “look forward to coming in the classroom” and “seeing someone with a smiling face, seeing someone really peppy, you know, saying good morning, or just saying, you know, I’m so happy to see you, sets the tone for learning.” Ms. Parker also explained how communicating with students helps her to get to know them by stating,

And whenever we finally form a relationship in a bond, that’s when they’re more vocal on what they need academically, and then what they need just emotionally as well. And so, when we have those conversations, I can break down barriers, continue to teach them what they need to learn, but then also nurture them.

Participants described varying verbal and non-verbal communication skills that support ways to understand how the language and behaviors of CRP that correlate with SEL support academic success.

Cultural connections. All participants noted the importance of cultural connections to contribute to the language and behaviors of CRP that correlates with SEL. Ms. Perez discussed the use of read-aloud books that have characters with diversity. She stated, “I try to pick diverse books, intentionally, and even picture books. And then we talk about the characters’ behaviors.” Students then analyze the characters’ actions and words that impact their behavior and whether it is a positive or negative trait. Students can relate to the characters in the reading selection as they understand the background knowledge from the text.

Mrs. Moore discussed that finding curriculum and resources to build quality, culturally related lessons can be a challenge. However, she has managed to “implement culturally relevant read-alouds and research projects that connect to my male, female, African American, European, and Latino audiences.” She brings a personal touch to her classroom in sharing a collection of multicultural dolls and told the story behind her collection in sharing,

I tell them that when I became a teacher, my whole objective was to teach all children, not just children that looked like me. And so that’s the story behind my dolls. And from there, we go into how, you know, everybody has a story. And our stories are all different. And some of our stories are sad. Some of our stories are good. But the thing is, we write the ending to all of our stories.

Her students also have “celebrated various scientific, mathematical, fine arts, and literacy contributions from various cultures toward the American society.” Mrs. Moore facilitates classroom discussions about how each individual contributes to positive and negative aspects of their communities, homes, families, and schools. In discussing the importance of relating CRP to SEL implementation, Mrs. Moore stated,

I have understood the importance of providing an authentic curriculum that my students can connect to build their confidence and understanding of academia and the awareness of the contributions of various cultures to our society. Also, I learned the term culture is very deep and encompasses more than gender and ethnicity.

Mrs. Blake discussed the importance of student-centered instruction and finding students’ interests through music and memes featuring their favorite artists like “Lil’ Baby.” She stated, “It was a real interest into Tik Tok listening, those types of songs, like the ‘Bow Bow Bow’ song, they were all getting up and dancing.” Ms. Jackson shared that another way to emphasize her family environment was by reading a book titled, *Our Classroom is a Family* (Olsen, 2020) to help students understand that they have a family at home and school. To support cultural diversity, the class also read *All Are Welcome*

(Penfold, 2018). The book provides pictures of kids and their families from different cultures. She stated, “And it pretty much just lets them be aware of like, if anybody’s welcome in a classroom, anybody’s welcome everywhere.” Ms. Parker discussed a celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month through a campus-wide slideshow presentation highlighting influential Hispanic people each day that provided students the opportunity to learn more about that culture and lesser-known people who impacted the culture. Ms. Parker also highlighted faculty meeting instances that utilized various genres of music that emphasized cultural relevancy among the staff. She stated,

As teachers, it pushes us to embrace other cultures. I remember, a couple of weeks ago, there was a little clap, and some teachers were like, “What are y’all doing?” ... We were like, Oh, you know, you clap like this.

The participants’ responses highlighted how various cultural connections in the classroom and even among staff contribute to the language and behaviors of CRP that correlates with SEL. All must embrace culture and diversity to support student success.

Cross Case Analysis of Secondary Research Question 3: What attributes to the student successes based on the implementation of SEL by incorporating CRP?

In the investigation of teacher perceptions and experiences of what attributes to student successes due to incorporating CRP to implement SEL, three emerging themes developed. First, participants noted high expectations. Second, participants expressed the value of relationships. Lastly, participants reported campus-wide expectations. Table 3.4 provides an overview of these themes, followed by a detailed description in this section.

Table 3.4

Emergent Themes Related to Secondary Research Question 3

Participants	High-Expectations	Relationships	Campus-Wide Expectations
Ms. Perez	X	X	X
Mrs. Moore	X	X	X
Mrs. Blake	X	X	X
Ms. Jackson	X	X	X
Ms. Parker		X	X

High expectations. Four out of five participants noted high expectations based on their perceptions and experiences that attribute to student successes due to incorporating CRP to implement SEL. Participants discussed high expectations for student behaviors and academics and systems and protocols for monitoring intended outcomes. Ms. Perez described how students use data folders to know and understand their progress in her class. Students also complete a SMART goal to monitor their progress. Ms. Perez stated that data collection and analysis “goes back to the ownership that we emphasize in daily morning meetings” in reviewing our campus theme for the year, J.O.Y. in the Journey. She explained how the campus’ theme helped students realize that they should “own their learning,” referencing the meaning of the letter ‘o’ in the acronym.

Mrs. Moore discussed high expectations in promoting students to succeed. She stated, “It’s kind of like that kid that never won anything. Then all of a sudden, they win. It turns their whole perspective around.” She also noted that once kids see themselves as winners and successful, their “attitude toward themselves and others start to change.”

Mrs. Blake discussed how students have perspectives of low achievement because of “where they are from.” She helped change students’ perspective by letting them know that they attend a top school instilling a growth mindset by setting the expectation for

growth in her example of “getting two more questions right” on the following assessment and helping students create goals. She shared an example of a fifth grader who had not passed any assessments in her school career thus far and finally received a met standard. Mrs. Blake described the celebration as joyous with tears of happiness from the student and emphasized the accomplishment by saying, “You did it!” She explained that part of having high expectations for students involves trust and love and letting them know, “I’m here for you, and I care for you, and I’m going to get you there.”

Ms. Jackson also discussed student growth and ways that students can strive to reach goals. She explained that because many students may not hear encouraging words like, “I’m proud of you or you can succeed and reach whatever you want,” it is crucial to instill these mindsets and expectations in students daily. She mentioned that if the teacher, administration, or other students in the classroom tell students, “You’ve got this!” The changed mindset begins, and students begin to understand, “Oh, like, I really can do this!” Ms. Jackson described by instilling high expectations daily, Jones Elementary has seen growth in percentages in test scores each year. As a result of growth, student efforts have increased as well.

Relationships. All participants noted the importance of relationships based on their perceptions and experiences that attribute to student successes due to incorporating CRP to implement SEL. Relationships experienced among all stakeholders—campus leaders, teachers, students, families, and community partnerships—were visible and appreciated. Ms. Perez discussed how building up the school community as a whole with shout-outs and recognitions in the morning meeting facilitates positive relationships. She further described student relationships at Jones Elementary in discussing how students

help and take care of each other. She explained that “older students help students in lower grades,” and “how fifth-grade students display leadership skills and modeling in the hallway knowing that “everyone is watching them” because of the smaller size of the school, everyone interacts with each other daily.

Mrs. Moore explained that relating CRP in relationship building requires authenticity and vulnerability. She stated, “if you are going to build relationships, you have to be authentic if you want kids to respond to you and even your co-workers in providing support.” Mrs. Moore also discussed the power of greeting students and co-workers by name as a simple way to build relationships. Mrs. Blake discussed facilitating relationships with students and parents by frequently communicating grades and behavior and sharing progress.

Ms. Jackson described her experience with parents and community partnerships involvement with activities such as grandparents’ or grand friends’ day observed and how “even aunts, uncles, and neighbors” participate in a grandparent’s place to support students. She discussed the benefits of some community partnerships that help celebrate cultural events such as Hispanic Heritage Month and Black History Month as they mentor students or provide a variety of contributions to the schools to support student success.

Ms. Jackson recognized positive interactions among the staff as another aspect of relationship building at Jones Elementary. She stated, “I like the way we encourage each other, like snaps every time someone shares something,” or the excitement when teachers discover commonalities between them and share. Ms. Parker also shared faculty and staff relationships in experiencing how professional development and training sets the example

of collaboration, moving around the room, and various ways to work with others. She stated, “I think it helps for us to get in and actually do the activity and learn how to work with other people for us to teach students how to do it effectively.” She noted that collaborating and learning with the faculty also helps stay up to date on being culturally aware. At Jones Elementary, relationships with all stakeholders prove a crucial attribute to academic and behavioral success. All participants expressed varying experiences at Jones Elementary detailing why building relationships support relating aspects of CRP to SEL implementation.

Campus-wide expectations. All participants noted the importance of campus-wide expectations based on their perceptions and experiences that attribute to student successes due to incorporating CRP to implement SEL. All participants discussed their experience with various training and professional development opportunities to further understand CRP and SEL as campus-wide expectations to support student academic and behavioral success at Jones Elementary. Ms. Perez described her experiences at staff meetings, consistent reviews of CRP and SEL, and how that translates to morning meetings and classroom expectations with students. Mrs. Moore discussed her experience with Brain Gym® Training (2021) and how “it teaches balance and coping skills,” benefiting both the teacher and the student. Mrs. Blake explained how celebrating birthdays and good behavior by awarding the brag flag each day to classes that meet morning meeting expectations with songs and chants are campus-wide expectations that focus on relating CRP to SEL implementation.

Ms. Jackson also described aspects of the morning meeting. Teachers and students celebrate each other through shout-outs regarding accomplishments and

improvements noted to encourage positive behaviors and goal attainment. Ms. Parker recognized her experience with daily morning meetings and campus-wide efforts that attribute to student success relating CRP to SEL implementation. She described the atmosphere of the morning meetings as “uplifting” and established the tone for students to feel successful. Ms. Parker stated, “I love how everyone is in the gym and gets to see one another. I like how we all have a voice like you have fifth grade getting shouted out and kindergartners leading us in the Jaguar chant.” She noted that everyone, including campus leadership, campus specialists, and even district staff and community partnerships, “show up” for the morning meeting if they are on campus for the day. Participants’ responses highlight how student success derives from everyone participating in the same campus goals to support student achievement through attending and implementing training or professional development and being a part of campus-wide daily initiatives.

Discussion

The participants in this study provided their lived experiences of the phenomena of relating CRP to SEL implementation by telling their stories and describing their experiences through questionnaires, a focus-group interview, observations, and one-on-one interviews. Through individual case analysis and cross-case analysis, common themes emerged across all cases. In this section, a discussion of the study provided findings related to the theoretical framework and the existing literature. The lack of current research on connecting CRP to SEL implementation for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools remains evident. The qualitative study results led to several findings from the experiences and perceptions of five teachers at Jones Elementary who

experienced this phenomenon. Using questionnaires, a semi-structured focus group interview, observations with artifacts, and one-on-one interviews, three significant findings related to the research questions emerged from the analysis:

- Finding 1: SEL competencies related to self-efficacy and social development allows the integration of CRP.
- Finding 2: Cultural relevancy develops from communication and supportive classroom environments.
- Finding 3: Campus-wide efforts support relationship building and high expectations.

In the following sections, I present a discussion of each finding, followed by the implications and recommendations of the results.

Finding 1: Social-Emotional Learning Competencies Related to Self-Efficacy and Social Development Allows the Integration of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.

In one secondary research question in this study, I sought to understand which SEL competencies best supported the connection to CRP. Participants' experiences and perceptions led to SEL competencies that reinforced self-value and worth by providing ways for students to understand and process emotions. The participants also highlighted the importance of teaching social interactions by relating to students' backgrounds. As mentioned in the literature review, the influence of SEL significantly benefits ethnically diverse learners from low-SES groups to recognize their full potential as contributing members of their learning community (Jagers et al., 2019). As Mrs. Moore discussed the importance of self-awareness of surroundings and cultural contributions, Ms. Jackson and Ms. Parker discussed empathy in relating CRP to self-awareness. As noted in the research, people who possess self-awareness and self-management competencies have a sense of well-being in their personal lives, contribute to their community, have

meaningful relationships, demonstrate compassion for others, and do better in academics (Minasian, 2018). Hanley (1999) noted in understanding cultural competence that an essential aspect of cultural competency is self-awareness. Therefore, ethnically diverse learners thrive best in classroom and educational settings that allow opportunities to connect background and cultural experiences to new learning. A positive self-image can be critical to success in education for ethnically diverse learners. The work of Woodson (2006) connects cultural competency to self-efficacy in the belief that people should understand their history and societal contributions to appreciate themselves and allow a greater acceptance from others.

Participants in this study confirmed the ideas of sociocultural theory (Kurt, 2020) by citing social awareness as an essential SEL competency to support CRP. Seminal research in this study discussed the work of Vygotsky in unfolding the components of sociocultural theory, explaining how learning occurs through social interaction and is also instrumental in cognitive development (Kurt, 2020). Sociocultural theory and SEL further connected the literature review in the discourse of worldwide views of collaborative learning and the value of sharing information (Walker Tileston, 2011). Further research should investigate the ideas surrounding self-efficacy and the SEL competencies that allow CRP integration to build confidence in behaviors and academics for ethnically diverse learners.

Finding 2: Cultural Relevancy Develops from Communication and Supportive Classroom Environments

In the second finding, all participants discussed the importance of the classroom environment, communication, and various opportunities for cultural connections reinforcing the benefit of cultural relevancy to support language and behaviors in the

classroom. In this research, all participants shared how they greeted students daily and had calming stations as ways to appropriately communicate and teach students how to process and regulate their emotions. Handshakes to making eye contact and calling their students by their names validated the work cited in the literature review about sociocultural theory in discussing the connection between human mental functioning and cultural, historical, and institutional settings in understanding how learning develops (Thorne, 2005). Various verbal and non-verbal communication at Jones Elementary among participants and students also supported foundational literature concerning cultural elements in openly understanding cultural variations or having cultural competence through learning from one's experiences and actions (Hanley, 1999). Cultural and communication aspects created an optimal classroom or learning environment for ethnically diverse learners when teachers provided strategies that entailed opportunities for movement and collaboration (Ukpokodu, 2003). Ms. Parker's use of buzzers and Mrs. Blake's incorporation of music and memes entailed various collaborative strategies used to support students at Jones. The communication and classroom environment supported the literature contending that ethnically diverse learners need a scaffolded curriculum with culturally relevant materials, visual examples, and language accommodations to acquire new learning (Ukpokodu, 2003). Teachers at Jones Elementary spoke about how they must learn aspects of CRP such as faculty meeting instances that utilized various genres of music that emphasized cultural relevancy and other professional development opportunities. Ladson-Billings (2009) discussed the component of cultural competence in the CRP theoretical framework. The literature review explained that teachers in ethnically diverse schools need a cultural

reference for students, families, and communities they serve to understand cultural competence. Bringing culture in the classroom to support background knowledge in learning allows students to express their cultural experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2009). All the participants in this research realized and understood that creating optimal classroom environments immersed in communication and cultural connections led to academic and behavioral success with ethnically diverse learners.

Finding 3: Campus-Wide Efforts Support Relationship Building and High Expectations

The final finding supported the secondary question of understanding the participants' experiences and perceptions that demonstrate factors contributing to student success from CRP to SEL implementation. Participants noted the importance of campus-wide efforts to support relationships and high expectations at Jones Elementary.

CASEL's SEL theoretical framework explains how a focus on continuous improvement drives high-quality implementation and helps achieve goals. Continuous improvement includes collecting, reflecting on, and sharing actionable data (CASEL, 2020). Ms. Perez described how students use data folders to complete a SMART goal to monitor their progress and how data collection and analysis referred to ownership and accountability in daily classwork. Another aspect of CASEL's (2020) SEL framework discusses organization and improvement with data collection measures to assess and facilitate a growth mindset among students and teachers.

The results of this study indicated ethnically diverse learners could meet high expectations when supporting relationships are nurtured in the classroom and campus wide. Ladson-Billings' (1995a) CRP framework suggested ethnically diverse learners need culturally responsive teachers that encourage a community of learners rather than

competition, encouraging students to learn collaboratively and be responsible for the academic success of each other. Participants in this study noted the importance of the campus-wide morning meeting and campus events that celebrate culture and bring students, families, and teachers together. Mrs. Perez discussed how strengthening the school community with shout-outs and recognitions in the morning meeting facilitates positive relationships. She further described student relationships at Jones Elementary and how students help and take care of each other. In the discussion of the tenets of her CRP theoretical framework, Ladson-Billings (2009) stated teachers must believe in the capabilities of all students as they strive for academic success.

Mrs. Johnson discussed another aspect of relationships in positive relationships among the staff. These findings suggested the implementation of CASEL's (2020) SEL theoretical framework emphasized the value of strengthening adult SEL competencies while promoting student SEL implementation (Yoder et al., 2021). As noted in the discussion of the theoretical framework in this study, the intersectionality of CRP and CRT allows teachers to support ethnically diverse learners by providing foundational support in organizing and building an effective SEL program.

This section provided emerging themes based on a cross-case thematic analysis comparing each participant's responses to the secondary research questions. In the next section, I present implications and recommendations to educators regarding the importance of understanding the need for CRP. I also encourage policymakers to mandate CRP and curriculum in K–12 schools to intentionally support the needs of ethnically diverse students in low-SES schools.

Implications

This study provides new insights about teacher experiences and perceptions of relating CRP to SEL implementation through the discussion of SEL competencies that allow a relation to CRP, language and behaviors experienced that support CRP in SEL implementation, and notions of attributions to student success due to relating CRP to SEL implementation. Additionally, the study findings reveal how the theoretical frameworks guided by CASEL's (2020) theory of action framework for SEL and Ladson-Billings' (1995a) work on CRP are catalysts for closing achievement and opportunity gaps at Jones Elementary, a low-SES school. The following provides a discussion of the implications and recommendations for future stakeholders.

Implication 1: Relationships

Appropriate relationships among students, teachers, and families are essential to the success of ethnically diverse learners. All participants in this study identified establishing positive relationships varying from interactions with students, staff, families, and the community as crucial attributes to students' academic and behavioral success at Jones Elementary. Ethnically diverse learners thrive best in communal settings where collaboration and engagement opportunities with cooperative group learning structures and peer instruction align well with the collective cultural systems (Gay, 2002). Settings include small group instruction, cultural connections with community partnerships, and allowing families to become an integral part of the learning environment.

Implication 2: Classroom and Campus-wide Environments

I utilized two secondary research questions to understand teachers' perceptions and experiences concerning language and behaviors of connecting CRP to SEL

implementation and attributes of student success. All participants spoke about the classroom environment established and the environment created at Jones Elementary as a whole campus. Participants created classroom environments that taught appropriate social skills in conjunction with creating a safe place by including varying aspects of culture to support ethnically diverse learners. According to Ladson-Billings (2009), when students are comfortable in their learning environment where culture is an essential part of the school experience, they take greater ownership of their learning. At Jones Elementary, each day, students are exposed to the reinforcement of social skills through SEL implementation in ways that support the principles of cultural relevancy such as positive relationships, communal environments, and high engagement through manipulatives and movement. The theory of CRP notes that students must experience academic success through cultural connections in learning. Culturally relevant teachers hold high academic expectations, support a growth mindset, and use data to inform the next learning steps (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Participants of this study at Jones Elementary discussed their experiences and perceptions of classroom and campus expectations through goal setting, acknowledging students, calming stations to self-regulate emotions, and classroom and campus occurrences that highlight cultural connections with literature and celebrations.

Implication 3: Social-Emotional Learning

The implementation of SEL can occur within core academics or serve as a stand-alone program. SEL empowers learners to establish and attain positive goals, feel and show empathy, create and sustain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Waterford.org, 2018). Using a secondary research question in this study, I sought to understand which SEL competencies allowed CRP. The most interesting finding based on

participants' responses discussed competencies related to self-efficacy, noting self-awareness and self-management. An explanation for this result may derive from the fact that elementary students in Grades K-5 are still learning who they are by using positive affirmations, understanding and regulating emotions, and appreciating cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Implication 4: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching

The intersectionality of CRP and CRT allows the teacher to support ethnically diverse learners' need for success in a traditional classroom. Ladson-Billings' (1995a) research of CRP, combined with the study from Gay (2002), known as CRT, builds durable theoretical construction to close the achievement gap for ethnically diverse learners. Participants in this study responded to the questionnaire discussing their understanding and challenges faced with incorporating or connecting CRP in the classroom. Some of their responses centered around limited or authentic curriculum and a need to understand CRP components better. Knowing this implication further develops the need for educators to understand the differences between multicultural education and CRP to support ethnically diverse learners adequately (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Understanding CRP provides a lens through which teachers perceive children and their learning. This study's results may indicate that educators need more information to fully execute tenets of CRP to become effective culturally responsive teachers.

Summary and Conclusion

Education systems face the challenge of recognizing the importance of cultural norms to support ethnically diverse learners in traditional classroom settings. Teachers

who have a cultural reference to ethnically diverse students in their classrooms can build better relationships and produce successful student outcomes academically and socially.

The need to support ethnically diverse learners in traditional school settings requires educators to understand cultural diversity in providing social and emotional skills. This study provided an avenue to better support ethnically diverse learners from various background by providing a deeper understanding of CRP to SEL when implemented systematically. Educators can offer equitable opportunities in public schools with a better understanding and continued experience of SEL and CRP.

This qualitative phenomenological case study design consisted of multiple data sources to understand five teachers' lived experiences and perceptions at Jones Elementary. Each participant described how their experiences implementing an SEL program with the CRP framework proved successful for ethnically diverse learners at Jones Elementary. The findings of this research show how relating CRP to SEL implementation provides an opportunity for academic and behavioral success for ethnically diverse learners at Jones Elementary, a low-SES school.

Using a phenomenological case study, I sought to understand the essence of the phenomenon of connecting CRP to SEL implementation at Jones Elementary. Five teachers participated in this study as subunits to this single case study. I collected data through participant questionnaires, a semi-structured focus group interview, observations with artifacts, and one-on-one follow-up interviews. I examined participants' experiences and perceptions in the case and cross-case analyses to frame the findings by answering the secondary research questions. Based on responses to research questions, multiple themes and patterns emerged to determine findings, implications, and recommendations.

The finding of this study informs decision-makers on how to close the opportunity and achievement gap for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools. At Jones Elementary, self-efficacy, cultural relevancy through communication and classroom environments, and campus-wide efforts through relationship-building and high expectations proved to effectively support ethnically diverse learners in traditional classroom settings. Therefore, professional development and enforcement of guidelines to support and build teacher capacity yield the most significant impact from this study. The concluding chapter will present the distribution of the findings with recommendations and a proposal of findings distribution.

CHAPTER FOUR

Distribution of Findings

Executive Summary

Because ethnically diverse students, particularly those from low socioeconomic status (SES) schools, do not come to school knowing the social skills that their peers might already know and come to school with, it becomes important to teach these social skills before implementing a social-emotional learning (SEL) program. These missing skills can include the student's academic achievement, motivation to learn, and the ability to acquire new learning (Gay, 2000). An SEL intervention program can provide a roadmap with strategies to help teachers implement social, emotional, and behavioral expectations. However, to better connect with ethnically diverse learners, the association of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) can provide cultural references to help learners connect and relate to social and behavioral norms expected in traditional classroom settings. At Jones Elementary, once teachers started intentionally teaching social skills, it improved their ability to teach SEL skills. As teachers found ways to include CRP, it improved outcomes of SEL and provided the intervention that students needed to be successful in traditional classrooms. In this qualitative phenomenological case study, I examined teachers' lived experiences and described how connecting ethnically diverse students' cultures to implement social skills development contributes to student success.

Problem Identification

In this research study, I examined incorporating cultural background knowledge to teach and apply social skills to solve the problem of increased opportunity and achievement gaps of ethnically diverse learners. As significant gaps in behavior and social skills prevent students from achieving academic success, the most appropriate character education program for diverse learners focuses on SEL. SEL implementation for ethnically diverse learners loses effectiveness without connecting cultural backgrounds that allow educators to understand and incorporate cultural exclusivity and differences to support high academic achievement (Torres, 2019). Therefore, there is an impending need to connect CRP to SEL to achieve further gains in academic achievement, instructional practices, and implementation strategies in low-SES schools.

From 2015 through 2017, Jones Elementary saw a decrease in academic performance and an increase in behavioral issues. The implementation of an SEL program guided educators in supporting ethnically diverse learners in a low-SES setting by incorporating state educational requirements for character education through a research-based school-wide program and connecting CRT to ensure equity and relevancy for students at Jones Elementary to achieve academic success. The influence of SEL benefited students from low-SES backgrounds and helped them realize their value and worth as contributing members of society (Jagers et al., 2019). Finding culturally responsive ways to support students' learning of social-emotional competencies currently remains a challenge for educators. Consequently, this research supports the need to connect CRP to SEL to see gains in academic achievement, instructional practices, and implementation strategies in low-SES schools. Through teachers' experiences and perceptions, this study investigated the phenomenon of relating CRP to SEL

implementation at Jones Elementary, a low-SES school, which encompasses this research. In this study, I filled the gap of the limited research by understanding and describing the lived experiences educators used to connect CRP to support SEL implementation in one school with a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse community (Barnes & McCallops, 2019). This research also served as an instrument to help Tyler ISD recognize practices that support ethnically diverse learners attain academic success through the implementation of practical social and behavioral strategies in a traditional classroom setting.

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

I explored teachers' lived experiences at Jones Elementary connecting CRP to SEL implementation for student success. A phenomenological case design provided in-depth data collection, allowing the participants to describe their lived experiences and perceptions of relating CRP to SEL implementation at Jones Elementary. This design also raised awareness of the needs of ethnically diverse learners in a low-SES school to limit the opportunity and achievement gap in traditional school settings. This study appeals to the theoretical framework of CASEL's theory of action framework for SEL (CASEL, 2020) and Ladson-Billings' (1995a) work on CRP to understand the intersectionality of SEL and CRP in supporting the academic and social needs of ethnically diverse learners in a low-SES school such as Jones Elementary. Both theories connect to the primary research question and secondary research questions and guide and influence the research design of this qualitative study. The primary research question that drove this study was, What are teachers' experiences and perceptions connecting

culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) to support social emotional learning (SEL) implementation at Jones Elementary, a low socioeconomic status school?

Additionally, the following secondary research questions further guided the research:

- SQ1. What SEL competencies do teachers feel best allow the implementation of CRP?
- SQ2. What language and behaviors of CRP are used in correlation to SEL?
- SQ3. What attributes to the student successes based on the implementation of SEL by incorporating CRP?

Through purposeful sampling, data collection and analysis from five teachers' lived experiences and perceptions shaped this research as a single case study relating CRP to SEL implementation at Jones Elementary. I collected data in four phases: (a) a questionnaire, (b) a semi-structured focus group interview, (c) observations with artifact collection, and (d) follow-up one-on-one interviews. The use of multiple data sources in this study provided a voice to this group of teachers by sharing specific details of their own experiences and perceptions of connecting CRP to SEL implementation at Jones Elementary (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The additional documentation and artifact collection, such as calming stations, goal setting forms, and visuals for morning greetings provided data to support the claim of student success from the implementation of SEL utilizing CRP components. During the analysis process, I used Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral continuously moving in analytic circles to meet the end of answering the research questions through the voice and perceptions of the study participants. The individual and collective experiences from the classroom to campus-wide practices during this phenomenon, followed by the interpretation of the meaning of those experiences through rich, thick descriptions brought about an emergence of themes from each secondary research question. Specifically, I analyzed each case to understand

the participants' lived experiences and perceptions at Jones Elementary relating CRP to implement SEL with ethnically diverse learners. By conducting individual and cross-case analyses, I identified themes based on the responses to the primary research question and secondary research questions.

Summary of Key Findings

Common themes emerged in the research in working to understand and define the problem. In analyzing the primary and secondary research questions, these themes developed into key findings. Specifically, this phenomenological case study highlighted three key findings including:

- SEL competencies related to self-efficacy and social development allow the integration of CRP.
- Cultural relevancy develops from communication and supportive classroom environments.
- Campus-wide efforts support relationship building and high expectations.

The first key finding resolved that SEL competencies related to self-efficacy and social development allowed the integration of CRP. Participants' experiences and perceptions led to SEL competencies that reinforced self-value and worth by providing ways for students to understand and process emotions. The participants also highlighted the importance of teaching social interactions by relating to students' backgrounds. As mentioned in the literature review, the influence of SEL significantly benefits ethnically diverse learners from low-SES groups to recognize their full potential as contributing members of their learning community (Jagers et al., 2019). As noted in the research, individuals who possess self-awareness and self-management competencies have a sense

of well-being, contribute to their community, have meaningful relationships, demonstrate compassion for others, and do better in academics (Minasian, 2018).

Participants in this study confirmed the ideas of sociocultural theory by citing social awareness as an essential SEL competency to support CRP. Seminal research from the work of Vygotsky explained how learning occurs through social interaction and is also influential in cognitive development (Kurt, 2020). Sociocultural theory and SEL further connected the literature review in the discourse of worldwide views of collaborative learning and the value of sharing information (Walker Tileston, 2011). Further research in this qualitative study should investigate the ideas surrounding self-efficacy and the SEL competencies that allow CRP integration to build confidence in behaviors and academics for ethnically diverse learners.

The second key finding determined that cultural relevancy develops from communication and supportive classroom environments. In the second finding, all participants discussed the importance of the classroom environment, communication, and various opportunities for cultural connections reinforcing the benefit of cultural relevancy to support language and behaviors in the classroom. From this research, all participants shared how they greet students each day and utilize calming stations as a way to appropriately communicate and teach students how to process and regulate their emotions. Validation from work cited in the literature review about sociocultural theory discussed the connection between human mental functioning and cultural, historical, and institutional settings in understanding how learning develops (Thorne, 2005). Various verbal and non-verbal communication at Jones Elementary among participants and students also support foundational literature concerning cultural elements in openly

understanding cultural variations or having cultural competence through learning from one's experiences and actions (Hanley, 1999). Cultural and communication aspects create an optimal classroom or learning environment for ethnically diverse learners when teachers provide strategies that entail opportunities for movement and collaboration (Ukpokodu, 2003). The communication and classroom environment supports the literature contending that ethnically diverse learners need a scaffolded curriculum with culturally relevant materials, visual examples, and language accommodations to acquire new learning (Ukpokodu, 2003). Teachers at Jones Elementary spoke about how they must learn aspects of CRP, such as faculty meeting instances that utilized various genres of music that emphasized cultural relevancy and other professional development opportunities. Ladson-Billings (2009) discussed the component of cultural competence in the CRP theoretical framework. She explained that teachers in ethnically diverse schools need a cultural reference for students, families, and communities they serve to understand cultural competence. All the participants in this research realized and understood that creating optimal classroom environments immersed in communication and cultural connections led to academic and behavioral success with ethnically diverse learners.

The last key finding affirmed that campus-wide efforts support relationship building and high expectations. The final result reinforced the secondary question of understanding the participants' experiences and perceptions that demonstrate factors contributing to student success from CRP to SEL implementation. Participants noted the importance of campus-wide efforts to support relationships and high expectations at Jones Elementary. CASEL's (2020) theoretical framework explained how a focus on continuous improvement drives high-quality implementation and helps one achieve goals.

Another aspect of CASEL's (2020) framework discusses organization and improvement with data collection measures to assess and facilitate a growth mindset.

This research indicated ethnically diverse learners could meet high expectations when supporting relationships are nurtured in the classroom and campus wide. Ladson-Billings' (1995a) CRP framework suggested ethnically diverse learners need culturally responsive teachers that encourage a community of learners rather than competition, inspire students to learn collaboratively, and motivate students to be responsible for the academic success of each other. Participants in this study noted the importance of the campus-wide morning meeting and campus events that celebrate culture and bring students, families, and teachers together.

Participants also discussed the aspect of relationship-building, noting positive relationships among the staff. These findings suggested the implementation of CASEL's theoretical framework emphasized the value of strengthening adult SEL competencies while promoting student SEL implementation (Yoder et al., 2021). As noted in the discussion of the theoretical framework in this study, the intersectionality of CRP and CRT allows teachers to support ethnically diverse learners by providing foundational support in organizing and building an effective SEL program.

Informed Recommendations

The findings of this study will inform decision-makers in education about effective ways to close the opportunity and achievement gap for ethnically diverse learners in a traditional classroom setting. Connecting CRP to implement SEL supported social, behavioral, and academic success at Jones Elementary. School administrators and

school district officials should seek to acknowledge the intersectionality of CRP and SEL as a way to support success in traditional schools for ethnically diverse learners.

Teachers must find ways to build instructional delivery methods that support cultural responsiveness in the classroom and provide environments that ensure successful learning for ethnically diverse learners. The campus should provide a culture and climate that creates a safe place for ethnically diverse learners to meet high expectations.

Educational systems must support all learners by providing professional development that adequately prepares all educators to teach all students.

Considering the key findings of this study, I offer the following recommendation for teachers to effectively relate CRP to implement SEL for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools. Ethnically diverse learners need opportunities that promote relationship building based on cultural backgrounds for academic and behavioral success. School districts with low-SES schools with ethnically diverse learners should mandate professional development concerning relationship building. Such training would support learning environments that guide teachers in developing resources and strategies to build relationships among all stakeholders in the traditional school setting that mirror communal and collaborative environments where students live. Professional development provided to teachers promoting positive relationships with ethnically diverse learners promotes cognizance to meeting students' social and behavioral needs to ensure academic success.

I recommend that further research and professional development with face-to-face training, observations, coaching and feedback, and book and case studies are needed to study self-efficacy and the correlation of cultural awareness to support SEL

implementation in elementary school settings. Based on this research and the experience and perceptions of teachers at Jones Elementary, teachers of ethnically diverse learners need more information on how to instill and support self-efficacy based on cultural backgrounds and experiences. Once educators understand how to support the development of self-efficacy through cultural connections, they can teach appropriate social skills to implement an SEL program effectively.

Teachers who lack adequate knowledge and skills to support ethnically diverse learners in understanding cultural relevancy should attend a series of mandated training. The training should occur in three parts. First, teachers need training on the theory of CRP. Ladson-Billings (1995a) provided three components of CRP: (a) academic success, (b) cultural competency, and (c) critical consciousness. Next, teachers need adequate training to understand the principles of CRP. Ladson-Billings (1995b) identified seven principles of CRP: (a) communication of high expectations, (b) active learning and teaching methods, (c) identifying and nurturing student strengths, (d) the inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse teaching strategies, (e) cultural sensitivity, (f) providing a supportive learning environment reflecting the cultures of all children, and (g) small-group instruction. Understanding CRP principles will allow teachers to offer ethnically diverse learners opportunities to thrive in traditional school settings. The last training component should include understanding how teachers can adapt and adjust lessons for CRT.

To build teacher capacity, teachers need training on ways of designing a curriculum in formal instructional plans, symbolic curriculum, and societal curriculum to present several opportunities for teaching cultural diversity (Gay, 2002). Teachers need a

clear understanding of instructional practices and delivery methods that support ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools to ensure success. After this training, I offer the following recommendation for campus and district leaders to effectively relate CRP to implement SEL for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools. Campus leaders should conduct curriculum audits and lesson planning sessions to ensure the implementation of culturally relevant practices.

To continue the expectations for classroom and campus environments conducive to connecting cultural relevancy to SEL implementation, campus leaders should create and lead a campus committee to ensure the sustainability of such climate in low-SES schools with ethnically diverse learners. Campus leadership will create a document in the form of a presentation with a checklist of classroom and campus-wide expectations that reflect language and behaviors of connecting CRP to SEL implementation and attributes of student success. Documentation will serve as a baseline to teachers, district-level support, and board of trustees to ensure buy-in to create these preferred environments to support ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools to achieve social, behavioral, and academic success.

Findings Distribution Proposal

The findings of this study contribute to the current discussion focusing on ways of closing the achievement and opportunity gap for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools. The data collected through questionnaires, a semi-structured focus group interview, observations, and interviews provide information to stakeholders on the success of relating CRP in the implementation of SEL to produce successful student

outcomes. The remaining sections of this chapter present a findings distribution proposal for the intended target audience and method for distributing the findings.

Target Audience

The findings of this study have the potential to reach three audiences: (a) the district executive leadership team, (b) campus leadership, and (c) Tyler ISD's Board of Trustees. Tyler ISD's district executive leadership team includes the superintendent and cabinet members (i.e., assistant superintendent, chief executive directors, curriculum and instruction coordinators, and specialists). The data from the research provided to primary stakeholders will support the impact and need of relating CRP to implement SEL with ethnically diverse students at campuses similar to Jones Elementary throughout the district. Tyler ISD's campus leadership includes principals, assistant principals, deans, counselors, and master teachers. The data from the research would be presented to designated potential piloted campuses to determine strategies and goals about how the implementation could prove success on their campuses. Campus and district professional development offered would clarify the research and support the understanding of CRP principles and theoretical framework. Most campuses currently have an SEL program. Jones Elementary teachers could assist with facilitating professional learning and support planning endeavors. Finally, Tyler ISD's Board of Trustees would have the opportunity to review the research and findings. Suppose the district determines the local data from one ethnically diverse campus to be favorable in achieving successful student outcomes. In that case, the board of trustees could see further needs and approve a new position that further supports diversity, equity, and inclusion in low-SES schools. The target audience is essential to determine the next steps in advancing the research within the district.

Proposed Distribution Method and Venue

The dissemination of the findings of this research will be presented to district executive leaders, campus leaders, and the board of trustees in the form of a professional presentation for key stakeholders. The professional presentation for key stakeholders such as various district executive leaders will include an electronic file of findings and data analysis and a slide presentation and pamphlet in preparation for professional development detailing the goals and expectations resulting from implementing SEL through CRP. The professional presentation for key stakeholders such as the board of trustees will include a video highlighting the goals and objectives of SEL implementation through CRP and an informational graphic with key research findings. A professional presentation for key stakeholders such as designated campus leaders will include an opportunity to administer professional development at designated campuses. District leaders will act as trainers to develop a training and coaching schedule at designated piloted campuses.

The venue for all presentations will vary depending on the scope of the presentation, requests of the key stakeholders, and time allowed. Virtual and face-to-face options will be available to accommodate the target audience. Professional development opportunities will be available as a 3-day face-to-face training or as a hybrid approach with asynchronous and synchronous learning in three parts: (a) SEL, (b) CRP, and (c) the intersectionality of SEL and CRP. I will develop and create presentation slides, manuscripts, informational graphics, and pamphlets with the support and guidance of the participants in the study. Key stakeholders such as campus leaders will use this information to provide training and ongoing professional development to customize individualized campus plans to support implementation at designated piloted campuses.

Conclusion

This study began with the evidence of increased achievement and opportunity gap for ethnically diverse learners in low-SES schools. Understanding the essence and lived experiences of the teachers of the phenomenon of relating CRP to SEL implementation provided insight into how Jones Elementary found academic and behavior success. Due to limited research on the need for cultural relevancy to support the development of social skills, I sought to examine this topic through a phenomenological case study. I analyzed the participants' experiences and perceptions utilizing the intersectionality of a systematic approach to SEL and CRP theoretical frameworks. Using a cross-case thematic analysis, the current qualitative study yielded emerging themes that resulted in the findings of this study: (a) relationships in school settings, (b) SEL implementation, and (c) the need for cultural relevance in traditional classrooms with ethnically diverse learners.

The study informed stakeholders of the need for educators to understand cultural diversity in providing social and emotional skills to support ethnically diverse learners in traditional school settings. This research answers the questions of “why” and “how” to better support ethnically diverse learners from various cultural backgrounds through a deeper understanding of CRP to ensure that they provide equitable opportunities in public schools. Moving forward, teachers in the 21st century must be aware of learning environmental factors, with consideration to curriculum and instructional practices that support cultural differences, students' interests, and various learning modalities.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol 1

Relating CRP to SEL Implementation Questionnaire

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological-case study explores and describes the experiences of teachers relating Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) implementation at Jones Elementary. We are asking you to take part in this study because you are a current teacher at Jones Elementary, a low socioeconomic school. Your lived experience adds value to the study.

Please answer all questions in detail and to the best of your ability.

Email

Full Name (For data collection purposes only)

Age

Gender

Ethnicity

Current Teaching Assignment

- 1) Please provide a description of your teaching experience including: years of experience, certifications, grades/subjects taught, and other campuses and/or districts of employment.
- 2) What personal or professional experiences have contributed to your understanding of Social and Emotional Learning(SEL)?
- 3) What components of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) have you gained an understanding of through training or experiences at Jones Elementary?
- 4) What personal or professional experiences have contributed to your understanding of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy(CRP)?
- 5) What components of CRP have you gained an understanding of through training or experiences at Jones Elementary?

- 6) What experiences have you had implementing Social Emotional Learning in your classroom at Jones Elementary?
- 7) What challenges/problems have you faced with Social Emotional Learning implementation in your classroom at Jones Elementary?
- 8) What challenges/problems have you faced with connecting Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) in your classroom at Jones Elementary?
- 9) Describe what strategies you have used to incorporate Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) to implement SEL in your classroom at Jones Elementary?
- 10) How do you know when you have connected Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) with Social Emotional Learning Implementation (SEL) in your classroom at Jones Elementary?
- 11) Describe any formal or informal professional development opportunities you have had regarding Social Emotional Learning (SEL).
- 12) Describe any formal or informal professional development opportunities you have had regarding Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP).
- 13) What classroom environment factors contribute to utilizing the language of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?
- 14) What experiences at Jones Elementary have contributed to your understanding of the needs of low socioeconomic students?
- 15) What experiences at Jones Elementary have contributed to your understanding of teaching ethnically diverse student?
- 16) Describe the benefits of connecting Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to Social Emotional Learning at Jones Elementary?

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol 2

Semi-Structured Focus Group Interview

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological-case study explores and describes the experiences of teachers relating Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) implementation at Jones Elementary. We are asking you to take part in this study because you are a current teacher at Jones Elementary, a low socioeconomic school. Your lived experience adds value to the study.

Please answer all questions in detail and to the best of your ability.

Date/Time of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

- 1) What classroom experiences have you witnessed that demonstrate Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) that connects to Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) implementation?
- 2) What campus-wide experiences have you witnessed that demonstrate Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) that connects to Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) implementation?
- 3) How having trainings influenced your overall perspective of Culturally Relevant Teaching or Social Emotional Learning?
- 4) Based on trainings or professional development on SEL or CRP, how has this influenced your instructional practices?
- 5) How do you greet students and what's the importance of greeting students to start your day or to start your instructional block?

- 6) What academic or behavior benefits do you see as a result of implementing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Social-Emotional Learning?
- 7) Are there any issues that you would like to raise that you feel are important but that you haven't had a chance to explore in this interview?

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol 3

One-on-One Interviews

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological-case study explores and describes the experiences of teachers relating Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) implementation at Jones Elementary. We are asking you to take part in this study because you are a current teacher at Jones Elementary, a low socioeconomic school. Your lived experience adds value to the study.

Please answer all questions in detail and to the best of your ability.

Date/Time of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

- 1) Please describe your experiences regarding the transformation of school culture at Jones?
- 2) How does the morning meeting benefit Jones campus wide with implementing those Social-Emotional Learning skills, and allow the incorporation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?
- 3) Can you speak more to the power of positive talk and goal setting, and how does that support social emotional learning and culturally relevant pedagogy?
- 4) Can you discuss some of the experiences that you've had with school culture and some overall trends that you've noticed within the district?
- 5) What are your personal experiences with your personal story of how you've been able to understand and better implement social emotional learning and culturally relevant pedagogy?

- 6) What specific components of SEL have you've gained an understanding through training or experience and what specific components of SEL do you feel like you use the most in your classroom?
- 7) What specific classroom artifacts or resources do you utilize to implement Social-Emotional Learning and the connection to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?
- 8) As a result of implementing Social-Emotional Learning and connecting Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, what behaviors do you expect to see from your students?
- 9) Can you discuss more about how you know when you've connected culturally relevant pedagogy, with social emotional learning implementation in your classroom?
- 10) Speaking specifically about Jones Elementary, what are the needs of our ethnically diverse learners and our low socio economic students?
- 11) What specific experiences have you had at Jones that has really helped contribute to your understanding of our ethnically diverse students?
- 12) What experience have you seen with academic trends, and how students are able to perform academically as a result of this implementation?
- 13) What specific strategies do you utilize to meet the needs of ethnically diverse learners?
- 14) If you could tell your personal story about your experience of incorporating Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to implement Social-Emotional Learning skills to help students be successful at Jones, how would you tell your story?
- 15) Are there any issues that you would like to raise that you feel are important but that you haven't had a chance to explore in this interview?

APPENDIX D

IRB Approval

Hello NaTasha,

Thanks for reaching out. Your study does not qualify as human subjects research because the results of your study would not be generalizable to a broader population due to your sole focus on a specific program at a specific school. Thus, you do not need to submit any documents to our office. Though your project does not fall within regulations, you are still required to conduct your study ethically, as discussed in the Belmont Report.

Attached is our guidance booklet if you have questions about determinations. Let me know if you have any questions.

Best regards, Jessica Trevino

APPENDIX E

Tyler ISD: Research Study Application

Research Study Application

Tyler ISD

COMPLETE ALL ITEMS ON THIS APPLICATION AND SIGN.
(YOU MAY SIGN YOUR APPLICATION DIGITALLY USING A DIGITAL SIGNATURE APPLICATION)

Researcher(s) Information

Name of Researcher: NaTasha Crain

Position/Institution: Principal/Jones Elementary

Contact Address:

City, State Zip Tyler, Texas 75702

Contact Phone:

Contact email:

Co-Researcher(s) [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Is this application for ☒ District Consent for Participation

(e.g., your sponsoring institution requires district agreement prior to approval of your research project.)

☐ Access to Data

(e.g., your sponsoring institution has already approved your study and you are seeking.)

If this is a student research project, provide the following information.

Supervising Professor: Julia Earl, Ph.D.

Institution: Baylor University

Phone:

Is this project for: ☐ Class Project ☐ Master's Degree Project ☒ Doctorate Degree Project

☐ Other: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Project Description

A description of your proposed research project should thoroughly explain each of the areas identified below.

- A. Title of Study: The Implementation of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) in Low Socioeconomic Schools: A Phenomenological-Case Study at Jones Elementary
- B. Research Question(s): What are teachers' experiences and perceptions connecting culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) to support social emotional learning (SEL) implementation at Jones Elementary, a low socioeconomic status school? SQ1: What SEL competencies do teachers feel best allow the implementation of CRP? SQ2: What language and behaviors of CRP are used in correlation to SEL? SQ3: What attributes to the student successes based on the implementation of SEL by incorporating CRP?
- C. Hypothesis/Hypotheses: This is a qualitative study. As a result of relating Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to implement Social-Emotional Learning, the hypothesis is that students will behavior and academic success. Thus closing achievement and opportunity gaps.
- D. Will the study require participation by TISD populations? Yes
 - a. If so, which populations: Five teachers at Jones Elementary
Participant #1- 5th Grade RLA/Social Studies Teacher
Participant #2- 3rd Grade RA/ Social Studies Teacher
Participant #3- 5th Grade Math/Science Teacher
Participant #4- Kindergarten Teacher
Participant #5- 3rd Grade Math Teacher
- E. Instruments to be used (e.g., forms, questionnaires, assessments, etc.):
Questionnaire, focus group interview, observations with artifacts, and one-on-one interviews
- F. Anticipated Project Dates – beginning and end: 2/15/2021-12/15/2021- past artifacts collection; 11/1/2021- 5/10/2022- Questionnaire, Focus Group Interview, Observations, and One-on-One Follow-up Interviews
- G. Data collection procedures:
The main data collection for this research will take approximately three to eight weeks and occur in four phases. Phase 1: 20 Questionnaire via Google Form will be answered and submitted individually by participants; Phase 2: Audio and Video recordings via Zoom and Otter.ai for one 45 minute Semi

Structured Focus Group Interview; Phase 3: Observations with past artifacts analysis using created SEL/CRP Observation Protocol (Two 10-15 minute observations for each participant); Phase 4: Audio recording via Otter.ai for 15-20 minute One-on-One Follow up Interviews for each participant to clarify or extend questions for questionnaire or focus group interview.

H. Data Security procedures:

Audio and video recordings are kept in a secure location consisting of password protected software and will be destroyed after data analysis; Observation Protocol and transcripts are kept in a password protected electronic file for electronic submissions; Field Notes and handwritten transcriptions are kept in a secure location in a locked file cabinet and will be destroyed after coding and data analysis.

I. Data analysis procedures:

This phenomenological case study explores the theoretical frameworks of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) and will address the research inquiry of teacher perceptions of connecting CRP in implementing SEL. Individual case analyses will answer the research questions, and the cross-case analysis will analyze the research questions to develop emerging themes and compare the findings across participants.

J. Results reporting:

Final results can be provided to district and campus leaders in Tyler ISD in written or presentation format.

-Target Audience: -District Executive Leadership: Superintendent and Cabinet Members; Campus Leadership (Designated piloted campuses); and Board of Trustees

-Communication: -Distribution will be based on the intended audience: School Board of Trustees- Discussion Forums with Resources; School Personnel- Executive Board Meetings/Workshops, Campus and District Leadership Meetings, Teachers Professional Learning Communities and/or Professional Development Opportunities (pre-service/in-service days)

-Implementation: Provide professional development to designated campus and district leaders as trainers of trainers and develop a training and coaching schedule at designated piloted campuses

Products: -School Board of Trustees- Video provided highlighting the goals of SEL implementation through CRP; information graphic highlighting findings of research; -School Leadership: Slide Presentation and pamphlet in preparation for professional development detailing goals and expectations as a result of implementing SEL through CRP; electronic file of findings and data analysis

- K. Explain why you are seeking to do your research in TISD:
The research involves a phenomenon related to Social-Emotional Learning implementation and current teachers at Jones Elementary.
- L. Potential benefit to TISD:
One goal of this research is to identify practices to support ethnically diverse learners attain academic success by implementing feasible social and behavioral strategies in a traditional classroom setting.

Supporting Documents

Additional supporting documents may be requested and should be submitted in a timely manner if you are seeking to conduct research. Supporting documents could include, copies of **ALL** instruments that will be used, Student/Participant Informed Consent letters (include translated letters as applicable), Parental Informed Consent letters (include translated letters as applicable), Professor's endorsement Form (for student research projects).

Researcher Statement

- ☒ "I understand that submission of this application **does not guarantee** that the Tyler Independent School District, or its membership, will participate in the proposed project."
- ☒ "I am responsible for the accuracy of information provided in the Research Study Application."
- ☒ "As the researcher, I understand that it is my responsibility to protect the rights and welfare of the participants in this study."
- ☒ "I will conduct this research project and subsequent result reporting in a manner consistent with ethical conduct."
- ☒ "I hereby agree to abide by the policies and regulations of the Tyler Independent School District."
- ☒ "I authorize unlimited use of the results of this research project by the Tyler Independent School District."
- ☒ "I agree to provide the Tyler Independent School District with an electronic copy of the reported findings of this study within 60 days of completion."



September 1, 2021

Signature

Date

APPENDIX F

Tyler ISD: Research Study Approval Letter



James C. Cureton II, Ph.D.
Director of Assessments and Data Analysis
Tyler ISD
807 W. Glenwood
Tyler, Texas 75701

October 25, 2021

Mrs. NaTasha Crain
[REDACTED]

Dear Mrs. Crain,

I am pleased to announce that your research proposal "The Implementation of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) in Low Socioeconomic Schools: A Phenomenological-Case Study at Jones Elementary" has been approved for future research in Tyler ISD. Please ensure you follow all protocols that were approved and submit an updated application if these procedures change.

To avoid interruption of standard operation, please conduct all research in Tyler ISD outside of normal operating hours (7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., M-F) and ensure that student and parent confidentiality is maintained. We look forward to receiving a copy of your results within 60 days of completing your project. If you have any questions about this letter or need additional information, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]
James C. Cureton II

1319 Earl Campbell Parkway - Tyler, Texas 75701 - 903.262.1000
www.tylerisd.org

APPENDIX G

Participant Recruitment Letter

NaTasha Crain

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Date

Recipient Name

K-5 Teachers

[REDACTED]

Tyler, TX 75702

Dear Recipient Name:

I am a doctoral candidate at Baylor University, Waco, Texas. I am conducting a research study on teachers' experiences of implementing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) with Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in a low socioeconomic school. This study aims to explore and describe the experiences of teachers connecting Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) implementation at Jones Elementary. In addition to, what SEL competencies do teachers feel best allow the implementation of CRP, what language and behaviors of CRP are used in correlation to SEL, and what attributes to student success based on the implementation of SEL through the incorporation of CRP?

I am emailing to ask if you would be willing to participate in my research in your work environment. I am in need of 5 participants for this research study, and you were chosen based on your experience at Jones Elementary. Participation is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without risk of any negative repercussions. Confidentiality will be protected throughout the research process by participant names not being connected with any researcher journal notes. The requirements from you for this study would be for you to agree to participate in a questionnaire, a 1 hour recorded focus group interview, provide classroom documents (e.g., lesson plans, PD records, and classroom environment), and a final 30-minute individual face-to-face follow-up interview.

If you would like to participate in this research, or need additional information, please contact me at [REDACTED].

Thank you for your time,
Sincerely,

NaTasha Crain

Enclosure: Consent Form

Note: The signatures, phone numbers, and/or emails have been removed for cyber security purposes and original signed documents are available upon request.

APPENDIX H

Consent Form

Baylor University
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Consent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: The Implementation of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) in Low Socioeconomic Schools: A Phenomenological-Case Study at Jones Elementary

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: NaTasha Crain

SUPPORTED BY: Baylor University

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this phenomenological-case study explores and describes the experiences of teachers relating culturally relevant pedagogy to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) implementation at Jones Elementary. We are asking you to take part in this study because you are a current teacher at Jones Elementary, a low socioeconomic school. Your lived experience adds value to the study.

Study activities: If you choose to be in the study, you will participate in several activities which include:

1 personal interview: The principal investigator will conduct a personal interview with the participant connecting to your experiences of relating Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

1 focus group interview: The principal investigator will conduct a focus group interview with all participants in a collaborative setting discussing their experience relating Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

1 questionnaire: The principal investigator will administer one open-ended questionnaire prior to the focus group interview.

We expect that you will be in this research study for 2-3 months. During this time, interviews will be scheduled with you at an agreed upon day and time. Each interview will be 30 minutes – one hour long. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed at a later date. A pseudonym will be used for your name in all printed and published materials. If you agree to take part in this study, we will ask you to sign the consent form before we do any study procedures.

In addition, you may also be asked to provide documents that support relating CRP in SEL implementation. These documents may include the following:

- Lesson Plans
- Classroom Environment artifacts
- Professional Development Opportunities related to CRP and/or SEL
- Additional resources if necessary.

Risks:

To the best of our knowledge, there are no risks to you for taking part in this study. However, when engaging in the interview, you may feel emotional or upset when answering some of the questions. Tell the interviewer at any time if you want to take a break or stop the interview.

Benefits:

You may or may not benefit from taking part in this study. Possible benefits include:

- Contribution in helping to shape the narrative of the benefits of connecting Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Awareness
- School personnel and teacher educators may benefit in the future from the information that is learned in this study, as it may help to prepare future teachers for successful careers in teaching in low socioeconomic schools with ethnically diverse students.
- Greater insight into lived experiences

Confidentiality:

A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information.

However, your privacy and confidentiality is of most importance to I. With that, I plans to protect your confidentiality by assigning you with a participant ID and pseudonym which helps to conceal your true identity. In addition, all information obtained from the

interview and follow-up sessions will be securely stored on I's computer which will be password protected.

In addition, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

By law, researchers must release certain information to the appropriate authorities if they have reasonable cause to believe any of the following:

- Abuse or neglect of a child
- Abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an elderly person or disabled adult
- Risk of harming yourself or others
- Alleged incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking, committed by or against a person enrolled at or employed by Baylor University at the time of the incident

Questions or concerns about this research study

You can call us with any concerns or questions about the research. Our telephone numbers are listed below:

Primary Investigator:

NaTasha Crain

Doctoral Candidate

NaTasha_Crain1@baylor.edu

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Julia Earl

Baylor University

Julia_Earl@baylor.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than I, you may contact the Baylor University IRB through the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at 254-710-3708 or irb@baylor.edu.

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to stop at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. By continuing with the research and completing the study activities, you are providing consent.

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